

THE THIRD SHADOW

Maxwell Grant

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CHAPTER I. THE MAN IN THE CAB

TRAFFIC was jammed about Times Square. The rush hour was on; a heavy drizzle added its impeding influence. Umbrella-laden pedestrians were blundering across crowded sidewalks; while taxicabs and other vehicles were skidding to sudden stops along the slippery paving.

A sallow, long-faced taxi driver was peering from the wheel of his parked cab. He was stationed on an eastbound street, fifty yards east of Broadway. Though his spot was a gloomy one, the cabby had high hopes of a passenger. On nights like this, wise persons who were seeking cabs invariably picked those that were parked away from heavy traffic.

Looking backward along the street, the cab driver was watching pedestrians on the other side. He was ready to hail any prospective customer who might be walking eastward. The cabby was counting upon a lucky break. He gained one unexpectedly. A man stepped up suddenly from the sidewalk on the right side of the cab, opened the door and clambered aboard.

The taxi driver heard the door slam. He swung about and looked through the partition to see a muffled man,

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whose overcoat collar was high above his chin. The driver spied the outline of a whitish face beneath a derby. He inquired:

"What address, sir?"

Huskily, the passenger gave an address near Park Avenue, on a side street. His voice choked as he completed the statement; and he followed with a spasm of heavy coughing. The driver started the taxi forward. The coughing ended; the passenger leaned forward and put a wheezy question:

"What time is it?"

The taxi driver pulled a cheap watch from his pocket and consulted it as he guided the cab toward Sixth Avenue. The light from a small hotel front enabled him to note the time.

"Quarter of six," said the driver. "I'll get you there in ten minutes, sir."

Swinging left on Sixth Avenue, the driver encountered trouble beneath the pillars of the elevated. Traffic was badly jammed; the cause was visible after the cab had managed to proceed one block. Smoke was pouring from the front of a little Chinese laundry; three fire trucks were on hand, dealing with the blaze.

A hoarse ejaculation of impatience came from the passenger in the cab. The driver responded. Without waiting for traffic to unsplice, he swung across to the left of the avenue; bucked oncoming cars, then thrust the cab between the "el" pillars toward his right. Skidding across the path of a southbound trolley car, he gained the slippery northbound tracks.

Safe from disaster, the driver regained control and spun for a right turn at the next eastbound street. An arm-waving traffic cop certified the driver's action. Away from the jam, the cab sped eastward.

THE cabby was still grinning over his smartness when he pulled up at the destination. He had made the trip in the ten minutes that he had estimated. A grunt of approval came from the muffled passenger. Then an inquiry:

"Do you have change for a large bill?"

The driver fished in his pocket.

"For five bucks," he stated. "Wait – maybe I've got enough change for a tenner –"

"A twenty is my smallest," interposed the passenger, huskily. "Here. Take this to the drug store." He thrust a twenty-dollar bill from a gloved hand. "Tell them it's change for Mr. Yorke. Bring the change to my house. The name is on the door-plate: 'Lucian Yorke.'"

The passenger stooped his head. The driver knew that he was reading the registration card, whereon the driver's own name – Luke Ronig – appeared with his photograph. A natural precaution, since the passenger was risking twenty dollars on Ronig's honesty. The driver saw his fare alight; he watched the muffled man ascend the brownstone steps of an old house.

Stepping from the cab, Ronig went to the drug store, which was at the corner, forty paces distant. The clerks were busy; it was a few minutes before one of them received Ronig's request to change a twenty. The clerk looked dubious, until he heard that the change was for Mr. Lucian Yorke. Then he changed the bill immediately.

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"Talking to Mr. Yorne, were you?" he inquired.

Ronig nodded.

"How was his cold?"

"Sounded pretty bad. His voice was husky; he coughed like he was goin' to crack apart."

"Too bad. He's been that way for a week. Only yesterday, I told him he ought to stay indoors. Said he was too busy – didn't even have time to see a physician."

Carrying the change in his fist, Ronig left the drug store and went back to Yorne's house. He noted the name-plate as he rang the bell. A minute passed; then the door was opened by a tall, weary-faced servant whom Ronig took for an Englishman.

"Change for Mr. Yorne," he informed. "He told me to bring it to him."

"You may deliver the money to me," informed the servant, dryly. "I am Parlinton, Mr. Yorne's butler. Kindly wait here a few moments, please."

The change amounted to nineteen dollars and forty cents. Parlinton was counting it as Ronig watched him cross a gloomy hall and enter the distant door of a lighted room, which, from its location, might have been a study.

Ronig waited; the hall was silent except for the ticking of an old-fashioned grandfather's clock that registered a few minutes past six. The taxi driver compared the time with his watch. While he was doing this, he heard the sound of Yorne's hacking cough, coming from the open door of the distant study.

Half a minute later, Parlinton returned. Eyeing the taxi driver rather dourly, the butler inquired:

"Your name is Luke Ronig?"

Ronig nodded.

"Mr. Yorne wanted to be sure," informed Parlinton. "He does not trust cab drivers, as a rule. He saw your name on the card; so he told me to make positive that you were the right man."

"What's that got to do with it?" demanded Ronig. "I showed up with the dough, didn't I? Say –"

"Here is your tip," interrupted Parlinton, frigidly. He handed Ronig forty cents. "Good evening."

RONIG pocketed the change. Parlinton opened the door; the cabby went out and boarded his taxi. He headed for an avenue, swung southward and kept on until he reached a westbound street. Turning into that thoroughfare, Ronig looked over the pedestrians whom he passed. He pulled up to the curb and hailed a shabbily dressed man who was shambling through the drizzle.

"Hey, fellow!" greeted Ronig. "You walkin' over to Broadway?"

The shabby man nodded.

"Hop aboard," invited the cab driver. "I'll give you a lift; and a dime besides, for a cup of Java."

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The shambler grinned as he climbed into the back of the cab.

"I get the idea," he chuckled. "Them coppers on Sixth Avenue won't let you jam into Broadway with an empty cab."

"You hit it, buddy," returned Ronig. "Half the cabs in town are over around Times Square, grabbing fares. The traffic cops keep us out until the lines get short. But they can't stop me if I've got a passenger."

Ronig was right. He crossed Sixth Avenue past the inspecting eye of a watchful traffic officer. When he neared the Times Square area, he spotted an opening and pulled up to the curb. The shabby man alighted and the taxi driver handed his fake passenger a dime.

"Here's your change," he said with a grin.

"And here's something for you, hackie," returned the shabby man. He held up an expensive umbrella with a gold handle. "Just found it on the floor when I was getting out. Guess your last passenger must have left it."

Ronig looked at the umbrella. Its handle bore the initials "L. Y." The cabby grunted and handed the shabby finder a quarter.

"I'll get a tip for takin' this where it belongs," said Ronig, "so the two-bits is yours, buddy. L. Y. – those initials mean Lucian Yorner. That was the name of the guy I just dropped."

"Better charge him for the full distance on the meter."

"Naw! That won't matter. I'm not takin' it back there now. Too much business around here; and there'll be plenty clear through until after the show-break. Plenty of fares from the theater crowds on a night like this."

"Yorner will have to wait until midnight for his umbrella. If he's asleep when I stop by there, I'll keep ringin' until I wake up his funny-faced flunky. Well – so long, buddy."

RONIG stood the gold-handled umbrella beside the driver's seat. The shabby man strolled away; a minute later, the cabby opened the door for two passengers who had spied his waiting taxi. Soon, Ronig was on his way again, wangling through traffic, making the most of the rainy weather that every alert taxi driver welcomes as a boon.

The umbrella was jogging by the cabby's elbow, its gold head catching the colored glimmer of passing neon lights. It would serve as a reminder of Ronig's later mission. As he drove along, the taxi man was repeating the names of Yorner and Parlington. He was wondering, too, how much of a reward he might expect when he returned the expensive umbrella to its owner.

Had Ronig been able to foresee the future, he would not have looked forward to it with pleasure. For that umbrella was due to cost him much in time and trouble. By the time Luke Ronig returned it, the law would be investigating the affairs of Lucian Yorner. For crime was abroad upon this drizzly night.

CHAPTER II. DEATH AFTER DUSK

A DOZEN minutes after Luke Ronig had driven from Lucian Yorner's, two other cabs pulled up in front of the old house near Park Avenue. Two couples alighted from each taxi. Prompt greetings were exchanged in the rain; then the four – two men and two women – ascended the steps of the house. Parlington admitted them.

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Gravely, the butler greeted the arrivals by name. One was a middle-aged man, whom Parlington addressed as Mr. Elward; the lady with him was Mrs. Elward. The other man was younger. Parlington spoke to him as Mr. Renwood. The lady with Renwood was Miss Arthur.

Parlington ushered the guests into Yorne's study. Elward spoke in surprise when he saw that the room was empty.

"Where is Mr. Yorne?" he inquired. "Ah – I see that he is somewhere about. His coat and hat are hanging here."

"Mr. Yorne has gone out, sir," put in Parlington.

"But his coat and hat!" repeated Elward. "They are here, Parlington –"

"Only because I insisted that he don fresh garments, sir. His cold is quite severe; it would have been a great mistake for him to venture forth in a soaked overcoat."

"Yorne is making a mistake to go out at all," interposed Renwood. "You should take better care of him, Parlington."

"What can I do, sir?" pleaded the butler. "It was six o'clock when Mr. Yorne arrived home. I had been awaiting his arrival since five. I thought surely that he would stay; instead, he spent only a few minutes here. He went out, despite my protests."

"Quarter past six," remarked Elward, as the big clock chimed from the hallway. "Mr. Yorne told us that dinner would be at half past."

"He told me to postpone dinner, sir," stated Parlington. "It will not be served until seven o'clock."

"Then Mr. Yorne will be back by that time?"

"I hope so, sir; but I am not positive. Mr. Yorne said that his guests should begin dinner even if he had not arrived."

WITH that Parlington left the study and crossed the hall to a kitchen. While the guests chatted among themselves, the butler brought drinks. After that, they could hear him busied in the kitchen. Parlington was a capable servant. Despite the fact that he was cook as well as butler, he kept paying frequent visits to the study to make sure that the guests were constantly supplied with preliminary refreshments.

Conversation was flowing well between the guests. Elward and Renwood were friends of some standing, although their talk showed that they had not met recently.

"It's good to see you again, Jerry," remarked Elward to Renwood. "I hope business has been picking up with you."

"Not much, Kent," returned Renwood, with a shake of his head. "Some brokerage offices have been doing fairly well; but ours has been practically at a standstill. How is the advertising game?"

Kent Elward considered the question, as he puffed at his cigar. He nodded slowly.

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"Quite good," he stated, "so far as certain types of accounts are concerned. Jerry, if there happened to be a way of promoting advertising with certain untouched industries, there would be a fortune in it!"

"You mean that certain businesses do not advertise in proportion to their earnings?"

"Yes. That is when compared with businesses that do advertise. Take Lucian Yorne's business, for example. He sells jewelry. Does he advertise it?"

"I don't think he does."

"I know that he doesn't. He is connected with the Allied Jewelry Company. Not a line of advertising comes from their offices. Those offices, by the way, are important enough to occupy a full floor of the Tower Building, on Thirty-fourth Street."

"But they are wholesalers –"

"Granted. Yet wholesalers advertise in other lines of business. But let us take a more specific case. Lucian Yorne handles retail accounts. He does not advertise."

"Yorne handles retail? Does he have a store?"

"No. He has a little office on West Forty-third Street. He meets special customers there. That is the only way he does business. I have known him to carry jewels valued at more than a hundred thousand dollars, just to display them to special customers."

"Where does he keep all those gems?"

"In the vaults of the Allied Jewelry Company. Of course, I can see why Lucian should preserve secrecy regarding his present transactions. I find no fault with that procedure. But what I can not understand is why he does not open a store of his own and keep his jewels there."

"You are right. His special customers could come to the store. He would gain other trade besides."

"Particularly if he advertised. We are back to the original premise, Jerry. If Lucian Yorne –"

Kent Elward paused as Parlinton entered. The butler had come to announce that dinner was ready. The company went to the dining room and began their repast. They dined from seven until eight. Lucian Yorne did not return.

AFTER dinner, the four guests went back to the study. Jerry Renwood remarked that Lucian Yorne must have met some special customers. Kent Elward looked worried.

"I doubt that Lucian would have forgotten us," he stated. "He should have called by telephone, to tell us that he would be delayed. Unless he forgot the time."

Renwood pointed to the desk, where a large gold watch was lying. He turned to Parlinton, who had entered with a tray of cordials.

"Is that Mr. Yorne's watch?" inquired Renwood.

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"Yes, sir," answered the butler. "Mr. Yorne forgot the watch two times today. When he went out at noon; and when he went out just after six."

"That is why Yorne has forgotten the time," said Renwood to Elward. "Don't worry about him, Kent."

An hour passed. It was after nine when the doorbell rang. Parlington answered; the guests expected to see Lucian Yorne. Renwood remarked, chuckling, that their host must have forgotten his key as well as his watch. But it was not Yorne who entered the study. The man who came with Parlington was a tall, bald-headed individual, whose face was serious.

"My name is Loftus," he announced. "Clark Loftus, from Detroit. Two friends and myself had an appointment with Mr. Yorne, at his Forty-third Street office. We were to meet him there at half past eight. He did not arrive. His office is locked."

"Mr. Yorne left here a few minutes after six," declared Elward. "We arrived about six-fifteen. We came to have dinner with him –"

"So the servant tells me," interposed Loftus. "Frankly, gentlemen, it worries me. Mr. Yorne has jewels of mine, along with others that I had not yet purchased. That is why I came here personally, to talk to him. My friends are still outside his office."

No one had a suggestion. Loftus went to the telephone.

"Does anyone object to my calling the police?"

There were no objections. Loftus made the call. He turned to the solemn-faced guests.

"Detectives are to meet me outside the office," he stated. "Do any of you wish to come along?"

Elward hesitated; then shook his head.

"No," he decided. "It would be best for us to remain here, in case Lucian arrives. We shall have him call his office as soon as he comes in."

Clark Loftus bowed, and donned his drizzle-soaked hat. Elward and Renwood followed him to the door. They saw the stranger enter a waiting taxi cab.

It was fifteen minutes later when Clark Loftus arrived at a small office building on West Forty-third Street. A police car was already there; a man in plain clothes stopped the arrival. Loftus identified himself. The dick nodded.

"Thought it was you," he stated. "Come on up. We've broken into Yorne's office. Inspector Cardona wants to see you."

Yorne's office was on the second floor. Arriving there, Loftus saw his two friends standing by the door, a detective beside them. One started to speak; the dick ordered quiet. Loftus stepped into the office. His path was blocked by a swarthy, stocky man, whom Loftus guessed to be Acting Inspector Cardona.

"What about Yorne?" queried Loftus, anxiously. "Have you found him?"

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In reply, Cardona stepped aside. Loftus stared aghast at the sight across the room. There, sprawled in a swivel chair, lay a man whose outstretched arms hung limply toward the floor. Loftus saw a bloodstained shirt front; above it, a face that was rigid in death. He recognized the countenance.

"Lucian Yorke!" gasped Loftus. "He – he is dead –"

"Murdered!" added Cardona. "Shot through the heart."

Loftus choked; his words were inarticulate. At last, he managed to gasp:

"But – but we have been here – since half past eight. I heard no shots. Did – did my friends –"

Cardona spoke to a police surgeon who was standing beside the desk. The physician responded.

"This man was slain before half past eight," he stated. "He has been dead at least three hours."

"It is nine–thirty, right now," added Cardona. "That puts the murder at six–thirty or earlier."

"Six–thirty!" exclaimed Loftus. "That is just about the time when Yorke should have arrived here. He left his residence shortly after six. It's only a dozen minutes or so, by cab."

"A good point," decided Cardona. "We'll go up to the house. I've already ordered two men to be there. But before we start, there are some questions I'd like you to answer, Mr. Loftus."

It was nearly eleven when Cardona and Loftus arrived at Yorke's residence. An hour and a half had cemented their relationship.

Joe Cardona had long been recognized as the ace detective on the New York police force. In the capacity of acting inspector, he had enlarged his fame. There were times when Cardona was quick to recognize persons who were free from blame in crime. Tonight was one of them; for Joe's initial suspicion of Loftus had ended by the time they reached Yorke's.

At the old mansion, Cardona found four very impatient people awaiting him. They were the guests, all detained by the police.

Cardona listened to Kent Elward and Jerry Renwood. He believed their statement that they had arrived at six–fifteen. More than that, Elward and his wife both established the fact that they had come directly from their home; while Renwood proved that he and Miss Arthur had been with friends at a tea dance in the Hotel Goliath.

"None of you could have been at Yorke's office," stated Cardona, "but that's not the point we're after. What I want to know is, when and where Lucian Yorke was last seen alive."

"According to Parlinton," declared Elward, "he was here between six and six–ten. Long enough to put on another coat and hat."

"So I've been told." Cardona studied the hat and coat that were hanging in the study. "An old coat and an old derby just about like the ones that Yorke was wearing when we found his body. What about these?" Joe turned to Parlinton. "Did Yorke generally wear them?"

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"No, sir," replied the butler. "He wore them this afternoon because the weather was inclement. I insisted that he change to his new hat and overcoat, despite the drizzle. He was almost drenched, sir, when he arrived at six o'clock."

"You're sure it was at six o'clock?"

"Positive, sir! He sent the taxi driver to the drug store to change a twenty-dollar bill. I received the cab man when he came to the front door."

"A twenty-dollar bill, eh?" queried Cardona. "How many of them did he have?"

"I don't know, sir. Mr. Yorne usually carried at least a hundred dollars."

"No money in his pockets when we found him. Whoever took the jewels must have lifted his cash, too. Suppose we find out who changed that money down at the drug store."

CARDONA eyed Parlinton as if he doubted the servant's story. Parlinton noted it and looked troubled. He began to protest, swearing that his account was a true one. Cardona silenced him.

"Yorne was murdered before six-thirty," emphasized Joe. "He could have left here at six-ten and gone directly to his office. But we only have one man's statement – yours, Parlinton – that Yorne was here. We need more than that –"

An interruption. An officer had arrived from the front door, bringing a man with him. The fellow was a taxi driver; he was carrying a gold-headed umbrella. Parlinton uttered an ejaculation of happy relief.

"This is the man!" exclaimed the butler. "He brought Mr. Yorne home at six o'clock! He is the taxi driver who changed the twenty-dollar bill! His name is Ronig –"

"How do you know that?" snapped Cardona.

"His boss told him," put in Ronig. "He took a squint at my license card. Wanted to lamp my mug and my moniker, in case I didn't show up with the change for his twenty. Then he was dumb enough to leave his umbrella in my hack. I didn't have a chance to bring it back here until after the show-break."

Another policeman was arriving with the clerk from the corner drug store. This fellow recognized Ronig and nodded to the taxi driver. Cardona began to quiz the hackie.

Ronig's account was concise. He gave every detail from the moment when his muffled passenger had entered the cab near Times Square. He gave an imitation of Yorne's husky voice. It was corroborated by the drug clerk; also by Elward and Renwood.

Parlinton identified the umbrella. The initials on the handle supported the butler's testimony. Cardona took final notes; then announced that his quiz was finished. He departed with Clark Loftus. On the way to the Troiter's hotel Cardona delivered an opinion.

"We've established the time of the murder," decided the acting inspector. "According to the facts at hand, it was between six-twenty and six-thirty. We knew that Yorne was killed before six-thirty; now we've found out just how long before. What's more, that time element has eliminated three persons who were pretty close to Yorne."

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"Elward – Renwood – Parlington. Those three have a clean bill. The job is to find out who else could have known Yorne well enough to guess that he had jewels on him. I've got a hunch that the murderer won't be far away. It won't be long before I pick him out."

Though often blind ones, Cardona's hunches were usually correct. Such was the case with this one. Joe Cardona might have picked out the murderer tonight, had he used deduction with his hunch. That task, however, happened to be beyond Cardona's limit.

The murder of Lucian Yorne had been a clever crime; more than the direct killing which Joe Cardona supposed it to be. The ace detective had failed to guess the flaws. So far as Cardona was concerned, the crime would remain an unsolved one. Until some keener brain intervened, the murderer of Lucian Yorne would remain unpunished.

SUCH a brain would soon enter the case. For in New York was a master sleuth, whose specialty lay in solving crimes like this one. That being was The Shadow, mysterious avenger who dealt with men of evil. Perhaps Joe Cardona's confidence was due to the fact that the ace knew of The Shadow's presence.

It was The Shadow, not Joe Cardona, who would pick out the murderer of Lucian Yorne. Yet oddly, his detection of that crime when it came, would start a chain of other, unexpected circumstances. The Shadow, from the moment when he concentrated on this case, would be upon the threshold of criss-crossed adventures that would rival any that even he had previously experienced.

CHAPTER III. THE SHADOW DEDUCES

TWO days had passed since the death of Lucian Yorne. Joe Cardona was seated at his desk in police headquarters, fuming over a stack of typewritten reports. Across from him was a stolid-faced companion: Detective Sergeant Markham. He was listening to Cardona's comments.

"It's a one-man job!" Cardona thwacked his fist upon the desk. "And there are no thugs in it! They wouldn't have let Yorne get into his office. They'd have decoyed him – or snatched him –"

Cardona paused and shook his head. He glowered at a pile of newspapers – journals that blazoned the news of murder. The very sight of those stacked sheets was irritating to Joe.

"I talked with Barstow Leland," stated the ace, referring to a report. "He's the president of the Allied Jewelry Company. The only man there who knew that Yorne had gone out with a hundred thousand dollars worth of sparklers. Yorne left that office before five-thirty. At quarter of six, he entered Ronig's cab at Times Square."

A long, streaky shadow spread across the desk. Cardona looked up to see a lanky, stoop-shouldered man entering the office. Joe grinned at the sight of the wan-faced arrival who was carrying mop and bucket. The newcomer was attired in overalls.

"Hello, Fritz!" greeted the acting inspector. "Early again, eh? Five-thirty isn't soon enough for you. Every now and then you show up at five."

"Yah!"

Fritz uttered the reply in a guttural tone. He started to work with mop and bucket. Unmindful of the janitor's presence, Cardona resumed his talk with Markham.

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"Yorne could have taken the subway to Times Square," declared the ace, "then hopped a taxi to avoid the jammed shuttle line over to the Lexington Avenue sub. Or he may have hopped a taxi right outside of the Tower Building, there at Thirty-fourth Street. If his cab got in that Times Square jam, he'd have been wise to ditch it and take another."

"He could have gone to his office," suggested Markham. "It was right there on Forty-third Street."

"I've thought of that," nodded Cardona. "But I can't see why he would have gone there once, then home and back again. If he'd gone to his little office and stayed there a half hour, that would have made sense. He could have had some work to do – some phone calls to make –"

"Maybe he stowed the jewels there, then got worried about them on the way home."

"Not a chance! There's no safe in the office. Yorne was no sap. He knew how to take care of gems when he carried them."

Glumly, Cardona began to finger the report sheets. One by one, he discussed the names mentioned there.

"CLARK LOFTUS was the only customer who knew that Yorne would be at his office at eight-thirty," declared Joe. "Half of the gems belonged to Loftus. The friends that he brought with him were reliable; they didn't know their destination until they arrived. I've double-checked on Loftus. He stands the strain."

"Kent Elward apparently knew a lot about Yorne's business. Elward is an advertising man of good standing; what's more, he has an alibi right up to the time when he arrived at Yorne's house. So the fact that he knew a lot doesn't hold against him."

"Jerry Renwood works in a stockbroker's office; he's sort of a man-about-town, so he doesn't rate as high as Elward. But Renwood didn't know much about Yorne's business. What little he learned was mentioned to him up there at the house, while they were waiting for Yorne to show up. That puts Renwood out."

"As for Parlinton, the butler, he could have known a lot about Yorne. But Parlinton was there at the house when Yorne came in at six. When Ronig, the cabby, showed up with that umbrella, it clinched Parlinton's story. So there you have it!"

"Beyond that, there's nothing. No customers of Yorne's; no friends who knew his business; no other servants who ever worked for him. I've tried to figure a team-up that might account for the crime; but that flops."

Rising from his desk, Cardona arranged report sheets in pairs and indicated them with his forefinger.

"Elward plus Renwood," he suggested. Then, with a shake of his head: "No. Their alibis are separate until they reached the house. The two women and Parlinton substantiated the time that they arrived there."

"Another combination that don't click is Ronig and Parlinton. You can't figure a cab driver and a flunky as pals; even if they were, what of it? Ronig could have laid outside the house and picked up Yorne for the trip back to the office; but how did he happen to get Yorne in the first place, except as a chance passenger?"

"Ronig is pals with the hackies who were in that line down by Times Square. Talking with some of them right up until the time he got his fare. I thought I was smart for a while, figuring Ronig as the one man in the game, but the more I quizzed him, the more I saw that he was out. And to try to tie with Parlinton only made it worse."

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Cardona picked up his report sheets. He donned hat and overcoat. Standing by the desk, he delivered final comment.

"It's a one-man proposition," he affirmed. "All five that I've mentioned are out of it, though. That's what I've got to tell the commissioner, when I see him at seven o'clock."

"Where?" inquired Markham. "At his office?"

"No," replied Cardona. "At the Cobalt Club. He's having dinner there. I'm going to grab chow before I drop in on him."

CARDONA stalked from the office; Markham followed. Fritz remained alone, conscientiously working with mop and bucket. Five minutes passed; then a change came over the stoop-shouldered janitor. A keen light awoke in his dull eyes. His frame straightened.

Even Fritz's blackened shadow seemed to gain life. Its profile formed a hawklike silhouette, as the janitor gathered implements and made for the door to the hallway. Spying no one in sight, Fritz showed briskness as he headed for an obscure locker.

There he put away the mop and bucket. From the locker, he drew forth folds of black cloth. A cloak settled over shoulders; a slouch hat fitted upon his head. Long hands drew on thin black gloves; a whispered laugh sounded from invisible lips.

This was not Fritz, the janitor. The masquerader had transformed himself into a weird, cloaked being, whose gliding course was an elusive path. A shape that belonged with night, the intruder edged out into the early evening darkness. Gloom swallowed his departing form.

He was The Shadow!

Made up as Fritz, The Shadow had listened in on Joe Cardona's findings. Thereby, he had gained his final check on circumstances involving the murder of Lucian Yorne. He had learned of Cardona's appointment with Police Commissioner Ralph Weston at seven o'clock. The Shadow had work to do before that hour.

HIS next appearance occurred within a black-walled room. A blue light clicked; focused rays spread downward upon the surface of a polished table. White hands came into the light. They fingered clippings; they made notations in ink of vivid blue, that faded away after it had dried. The Shadow was summarizing the case of Lucian Yorne.

His written comments concerned a most essential point: namely, Yorne's movements from the time that he had left the Tower Building at Thirty-fourth Street. The Shadow was banking on the testimony of Barstow Leland, president of the Allied Jewelry Company. He knew that others must have seen Yorne leave the offices of the jewelry company, even though they did not know that he was carrying gems with him.

Next: Times Square – after a gap of fully fifteen minutes. The testimony of Luke Ronig, the taxi driver. Circumstances alone had introduced Ronig to Yorne. Ordinarily, a cabby would have no guess as to the identity of a passenger, particularly on a drizzly night. That trip from Times Square to the house near Park Avenue was but a hazy episode in itself.

What gave it strength was the subsequent event: Parlinton's testimony of Yorne's arrival and immediate departure. Ronig had talked with Yorne outside; he had given money to Parlinton inside. The Shadow came to a definite conclusion that Joe Cardona had not actually considered.

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Though Lucian Yorne's progress seemed distinctly traceable from the Tower Building to his home, it actually was not a trail. Only two men who knew Yorne had testified that they had seen him and talked with him in the light. One was Leland, president of the jewelry company; the other was Parlington, the butler.

Before five-thirty; after six o'clock. Therein lay a period that interested The Shadow more than the time space between six-twenty and six-thirty, the ten minutes upon which Joe Cardona had concentrated. Evidence – chiefly testimony – had caused the ace to establish the time of the murder; and therefore to minimize other factors.

Written words became concise deductions, as The Shadow inscribed them. He was putting down other facts that Cardona had mentioned. So far as his quizzes were concerned, Joe had done well. In a sense, he had done too well. He had swept himself away along a blind trail.

The Shadow's light clicked out. A whispered laugh resounded in this room he called his sanctum.

Then came silence. The Shadow had chosen a new destination. He needed time for preparation before he approached it.

SEVEN o'clock. Police Commissioner Weston was dining in the grillroom of the Cobalt Club, when someone approached his table. The commissioner looked up, expecting to see Joe Cardona. Instead, he recognized his friend Lamont Cranston.

An interesting chap, Cranston. He formed a contrast to the police commissioner. Weston was a man of military bearing, with brisk manner and pointed mustache. Cranston was of leisurely manner; his well-molded face was masklike and impassive. A globe-trotting millionaire, Lamont Cranston had gained his share of adventure. Yet when he was present in New York, he seemed indolent and bored with life.

Weston invited Cranston to sit down for a chat. Hardly had the millionaire taken his place across the table when Joe Cardona arrived. The ace nodded to Cranston; they had met before. Weston motioned Cardona to a chair. He asked for the reports. Joe gave them.

"Very unsatisfactory, Cardona," was the commissioner's verdict. "You are getting nowhere with this case!"

"But I have eliminated five men," protested Cardona. "That is something of a start, commissioner –"

"A start that you had two nights ago." Weston snapped his fingers. "Those men were out of the case like that. Their very testimonies cleared them."

"You said to check up on them –"

"Certainly! Partly as a matter of procedure; partly to see if they could name persons concerned with Lucian Yorne. Since they know nothing, you should make inquiry elsewhere."

"I intend to do so, commissioner. But in the meantime, I must know what to do about these witnesses. Some of them may want to leave New York City."

"Then let them."

"Very well, commissioner."

Cardona arose and gathered his report sheets.

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"They will all be up at Yorne's house, tonight," he stated. "I told them to be there. That's where I'm going right now, commissioner."

"Wait here a few minutes," insisted Weston. "I shall accompany you, Cardona. Well, Cranston, would you like to come with us?"

"Sorry, commissioner." Cranston had risen. "I have another appointment. One of my own, with a man whom I must meet privately. Good evening."

A SLIGHT smile showed upon the fixed lips of Lamont Cranston, as he strolled from the grillroom. Reaching the lobby, the millionaire walked to the street; a doorman signaled to the chauffeur of a parked limousine. The big car rolled up to the door. Lamont Cranston entered.

"Drive northward," he said, through the speaking tube. "Along Park Avenue, Stanley. I shall tell you when to stop."

The chauffeur nodded. The big car pulled away. Lamont Cranston opened a small bag that lay upon the floor; from it, he extracted garments of black. A cloak slipped over his shoulders; a hat settled on his head. A soft laugh filled the closed rear of the limousine.

Like Fritz, Lamont Cranston was The Shadow. One guise served for visits to Cardona's office; another for meetings with the police commissioner. But when he traveled upon lone excursions, The Shadow preferred his chosen garb of black.

The Shadow was right when he had stated that he had an appointment with a man whom he must meet privately. But both Weston and Cardona would have been astounded had they known the name of the man and the place where the appointment was to be.

The man whom The Shadow expected to meet was the murderer of Lucian Yorne. The place that he had chosen for the meeting was the very spot to which Weston and Cardona would soon be on their way. The Shadow's meeting would take place at the home of the late Lucian Yorne!

CHAPTER IV. ONE MAN SEES

IT was nearly eight o'clock when Commissioner Weston and Joe Cardona arrived at Yorne's house. Cardona had deputed an officer to precede him. It was the bluecoat who answered the door and conducted the arrivals to a front reception room. Larger than Yorne's study, this room was a better place for such assemblage.

Elward and Renwood were present. They were seated, while Parlington was standing by the wall. Ronig was also at the meeting; the taxi driver looked ill at ease in these surroundings. While Cardona was introducing Weston to the group, the doorbell rang. The arrival was Loftus.

Commissioner Weston summarized the case. He made references to Cardona's report sheets; he repeated questions that Joe had asked before. They brought uniform responses from the witnesses. Weston was satisfied with the check-up.

"Apparently, none of you can offer further aid," decided the commissioner. "We appreciate the testimony that you have already given. We are sorry that any of you should have been inconvenienced. However, since developments are still pending, I should like to know regarding your individual plans."

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"I should like to go back to Detroit," asserted Loftus, promptly. "Naturally, I shall be available at any time. Should you gain any trace of the stolen jewels, I can come to New York immediately."

Weston nodded his approval.

"I had planned a trip abroad," stated Elward, a trifle nervously. "My wife and I arranged passage one week ago. Of course, if – well, commissioner, if you have an objection –"

"I have none."

Elward smiled in pleased fashion. He mopped his forehead with a silk handkerchief. Parlington spoke up.

"I am a British subject, sir," stated the butler. "I came to Canada a few years ago, with Sir Arthur Grendenning. I was anxious to visit the States, so Sir Arthur arranged to have me take service with Mr. Yorke. They were friends, sir."

"I can return to service with Sir Arthur. He is still in Montreal, and would be glad to have me in his household. That is where I should like to go, sir, at whatever time would be convenient. Should I be required here, I shall return at once."

"All right, Parlington."

Weston nodded as he spoke. He had referred to Cardona's report on Parlington. It contained full details of the butler's past service with Sir Arthur Grendenning.

"I shall be right here in New York," remarked Renwood. He was lighting a cigarette as he spoke; his manner lacked nervousness. "Any time you want to see me, commissioner, just put in a call to my brokerage office."

Weston nodded and looked toward Ronig. The taxi driver grinned.

"My cab's outside, waiting," he said. "I'll be in it any time I'm wanted. If you don't mind doing me a favor, commissioner, give me a pass so I can bust past them wise traffic cops on Sixth Avenue. I'd like to go right through 'em and make the show-break."

The commissioner smiled indulgently. He drew a card from his wallet and wrote a brief order of approval. He handed it to Ronig. The taxi driver started toward the door, to find Loftus waiting for him.

"I'll use your cab," remarked the man from Detroit. "I want to reach my hotel in a hurry. You can drive me there, Ronig."

THE two left. Weston looked about and noted that Elward and Parlington had also gone. He glanced inquiringly at Cardona.

"Elward's in the study," explained Joe. "He's calling Mrs. Elward, to tell her that they can take their trip to Europe. Parlington went upstairs to get his luggage. He's going to take the late train to Montreal."

Renwood was a listener to this statement. Puffing at his cigarette, the young man watched Weston and Cardona begin a review of the report sheets. Casually, Renwood strolled from the room and entered the front hall. The front door was closed; apparently the policeman had gone outside. Renwood turned about; then stopped.

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Footsteps were coming down the stairs, which lay past the door to the study, at the end of the long side hall. Renwood was standing where he could not be seen; but he chanced to notice a wall mirror that gave him a view directly to the stairway. There was a light at the foot of the stairs; hence Renwood's view was clear.

The man who had descended was Parlinton. The servant was carrying two large suitcases. He turned right; Renwood knew that he had stepped into the pantry. It was then that Renwood saw the sight that held him spellbound.

Blackness moved. It came from the end of the hall just past the stairway. Shrouded, that mass looked vague, yet living. As it advanced, Renwood thought that it would take human form; then his view was clouded, for the shape had come in front of the stairway light.

Renwood blinked as vision cleared. The shrouded figure had faded into nothingness.

Where had it gone?

Renwood had two solutions. One was the pantry, where Parlinton was; the other possibility was the study, where Elward was telephoning. The mirror gave no view of either door. Renwood had merely guessed that Parlinton had taken to the pantry, for he had seen the direction of the servant's turn. But that shape in blackness had faded too mysteriously for anyone to guess its choice.

On tiptoe, Renwood moved from his place of obscurity. He went back through the hall. He stopped between two doors that stood ajar. On the right was the study; Renwood could hear Elward talking on the telephone. On the left was the pantry; a strange stillness reigned there.

On a hunch, Renwood edged to the left and peered through the crack of the door.

THE room was dimly lighted by a globe set in a wall niche. Within its walls, two figures formed a striking tableau. One was Parlinton; the servant was standing beside the china closet in the corner. He had opened the door of the closet; from it, he had removed a stack of small black boxes. Turning, with these prizes in his grasp, he had stopped at sight of the being who had followed him.

This second figure was that of a black-cloaked intruder. Renwood could see the stranger clearly. The weird visitor was standing by the open door to the kitchen, turned half away from Renwood. Hence Renwood, though he saw the shape, was unable to spy the burning eyes that glared in Parlinton's direction.

He could guess the power of those eyes only from his observation of Parlinton's features. The butler's face had whitened; his whole frame was trembling. Then Renwood saw another threat: the muzzle of an automatic projecting from a black-gloved fist. He heard a whispered tone of suppressed challenge. He caught the words that Parlinton uttered:

"The Shadow!"

Parlinton's recognition revealed the servant's caliber. It told that he was a man of crime; one who knew the identity of the avenger who trapped him.

Renwood heard a hissed command. He saw Parlinton's hands lower. The servant laid the boxes on a shelf beneath the china closet. Trembling, he opened them. The glitter of gems sparkled in the light.

The Shadow had stepped closer to his quarry. Renwood saw one gloved hand thrust a pen and paper toward Parlinton. Still quaking, the servant took them. Then Renwood listened to a sibilant statement, as The

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Shadow dictated words to Parlinton.

"THIS confession," hissed The Shadow, "is made by –"

A pause. Parlinton, himself, blurted out the name:

"Henry Durwell!"

"Henry Durwell," repeated The Shadow, "alias Parlinton, the murderer of Lucian Yorne."

With twitching lips, Parlinton was writing the words. New statements came, in The Shadow's voice. He was speaking for Parlinton; the man was writing, despite his tremors.

"I knew that Yorne would be coming to his office." The Shadow paused to watch Parlinton write. "I waited for him there. I shot him when he arrived. I took the jewels and his money. Yorne had worn his new hat and coat; I was wearing his old ones.

"I took a cab that happened to be Ronig's." Coldly, The Shadow was still speaking for Parlinton. "I talked in a hoarse voice to imitate Yorne. I sent Ronig to change the twenty-dollar bill. I received Ronig when he arrived with the change. I pretended that Yorne was in his study.

"That was just after six o'clock. When Elward and Renwood arrived at six-fifteen, they established my alibi from that time onward. I had carried Yorne's umbrella. I purposely left it in the cab. I made Ronig think that Yorne had told him my name, so that, later, if necessary, I could have the police find him.

"I, alone, was responsible for the crime. I was glad to leave England" – The Shadow's tone was significant – "because of robberies that I had committed there. Crimes which had remained undiscovered."

Renwood stared. He wondered how The Shadow had guessed the past of Henry Durwell, alias Parlinton. Then, suddenly, the answer struck him. Parlinton's recognition of The Shadow had been the clue. It proved the servant to be a man of former crime; one who feared this avenger, whose name was dreaded by all crooks.

"With this note" – The Shadow added final statements – "I leave the stolen jewels. The gun that you will find is the one with which I killed Lucian Yorne."

A pause, while Parlinton completed the writing. The Shadow added:

"Your signature – and alias."

Fearfully, Parlinton scrawled both names by which he had been known. Then came another order from The Shadow:

"The revolver!"

AMAZED, Renwood watched Parlinton reach into his coat pocket and produce a .32. Trembling, the servant held the weapon, but dared not use it. The sight of the looming automatic made his gun seem puny.

Then The Shadow faded; his tall form blended with the darkness of the kitchen beyond the pantry. Parlinton was alone, holding his revolver.

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Yet the crook still felt The Shadow's presence. That mysterious visitor had completely sized Parlington's caliber. The Shadow knew what the crook would do, once his crime had been discovered.

Renwood watched Parlington raise the muzzle of the revolver to his temple. The murderer was bent on suicide. The shot that would produce his own death would bring Cardona on the run, to find the butler's confession lying with the reclaimed jewels.

As Renwood stared, a heavy hand clamped on his shoulder. The young man swung about, to be promptly thrust aside. The arrival was Joe Cardona. Stepping from the reception room, the inspector had seen Renwood peering at the pantry door. As he pushed the eavesdropper aside, Cardona gave a demanding growl; with his other hand, he shoved the pantry door inward.

Cardona saw Parlington, with gun still to his head. The ace sleuth spied the glittering jewels. With a roar, Joe drove inward, yanking a Police Positive from his pocket. His gun, like Parlington's glimmered in the light.

The effect was instantaneous. The Shadow's spell was broken. New murder – not suicide – became Parlington's desire.

As Cardona drew, Parlington jumped back and aimed his own gun for the ace. Renwood, back at the doorway, saw the snarling butler gain the bulge. He knew that Parlington would beat Cardona to the shot. But before Parlington could fire, a burst of flame spat from the kitchen; with it a reechoing roar that came as sequel to The Shadow's judgment.

A sizzling bullet speeded from the kitchen, to find its lodgment in Parlington's gun-wrist. A howl came from the servant's lips as his finger refused its task of pulling the trigger. Then, before the crook could recover, Cardona's own gun barked amid the echoes.

Firing instinctively, Joe drove a stream of bullets into the murderer's body. Parlington succumbed.

Renwood's gaze turned toward the kitchen door. For the first time, the eavesdropper saw the burning eyes of The Shadow. Glowing orbs from darkness, they made the startled observer drop back into the hall. As he retreated, Renwood heard the whispered sibilance of a triumphant laugh.

It was The Shadow's knell for the deserved fate that had come to a man of evil. Parlington, slayer of his master, was dead. Not by his own hand, but from the bullet justly dealt by Joe Cardona. The ace had taken quick advantage of the respite that The Shadow had given him.

WESTON and Elward were dashing into the hall to find Renwood gasping like a man who had experienced an apoplectic stroke. Renwood could barely point to the door of the pantry.

Weston and Elward kept on; Renwood managed enough nerve to follow. They found Cardona holding the signed confession and the jewels, with Parlington's body on the floor beside him.

Renwood glanced nervously toward the kitchen door. He saw no sign of The Shadow. The master sleuth had completed his appointed task. He had vanished out into the night.

In the talk that followed, Joe Cardona listened sympathetically to Renwood. The young man stated that he had seen Parlington go into the pantry; that he had wondered why the servant did not come out. He had gone to the door – so he said – just in time to see Parlington raise the revolver to his head. The sight, Renwood claimed, had unnerved him.

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Joe Cardona believed the story. He wanted to believe it, because he was glad that no mention had been made of the shot from the kitchen. Joe knew that he had been saved by The Shadow; he could guess whose influence had impelled Parlinton to turn yellow at the moment when his get-away was clear. But Joe knew also that The Shadow would prefer his part to be forgotten.

When he left the house, Jerry Renwood gave way to nervousness that he had managed to repress until he walked alone. Striding along Park Avenue, he felt the fearful sensation that eyes were watching him; that somewhere, an unseen figure was stalking his path.

Until tonight, Renwood had been calm, although he had been a possible suspect in the murder of Lucian Yorke. Parlinton's confession and death had cleared Renwood of all implication. It was odd, somehow, that he should feel terror now that the case of Lucian Yorke was solved.

There was an answer. Jerry Renwood had seen The Shadow. He had learned how that weird master dealt with evildoers. Jerry Renwood feared The Shadow; the reason, logically, was because Renwood held a secret of his own. Though blameless so far as Yorke's death was concerned, Renwood knew that he could be implicated otherwise.

Contempt for the law had been his motto. But he had quailed at the sight of The Shadow, who had stepped in where the law had faltered. Jerry Renwood had seen The Shadow; and deep within, he felt the sinking fear that The Shadow had seen him.

CHAPTER V. THE SECOND SHADOW

AT two o'clock the next afternoon, Jerry Renwood came from the doorway of a restaurant on Broadway. He spied a waiting taxicab; one look at the driver worried him. He was sure that he had seen the same man earlier that day, near the downtown brokerage office.

It was partly on account of that cab that Renwood had come uptown for lunch. He had wanted to test his hunch that he was being watched.

Renwood turned about and walked up Broadway. Looking over his shoulder, he made sure that the taxi did not turn about to keep him in sight. The cab remained stationary; but Renwood was lucky enough to spot another man who might be a follower. This stranger was a young chap who happened to stroll from the restaurant where Renwood had lunched.

Increasing his gait, Renwood thought of a hasty plan to shake off the man who was trailing him. He was on the west side of Broadway; he quickened his pace to reach the next street. There he darted into a subway entrance; pulling a nickel from his pocket, he pounded down the stairs in hope that he might gain a break.

It happened as Renwood wanted. Just as he neared the turnstile, a south-bound local rattled into the station. Renwood dropped his nickel in the slot; he pushed through the turnstile and ran for the rear car. As he passed a news stand, he suddenly changed course. Backing against the wall, he used the news stand for cover.

Another man came through the turnstiles. It was the same fellow whom Renwood had seen coming from the restaurant. The arrival managed to squeeze aboard the local just before it started. The doors closed; the train rumbled southward. Renwood grinned as he stepped from his hiding place. This was a local stop only; the pursuer – if he was such – had taken it for granted that Renwood had boarded the train.

Still thinking of the taxi driver, Renwood dashed back through the turnstile and up the steps to the street. He

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ran into a frail, hunched man at the top, and nearly bowled the fellow from his feet. Mumbling an apology, Renwood resumed his dash and reached the street. There he dived into a doorway.

He was none too soon. As he peered from the obscure spot, Renwood saw the taxi that he had observed before. It was coming eastward along this one-way street. The driver had evidently made a quick trip around the block, hoping to spot Renwood somewhere.

Grinning to himself, Renwood watched the cab roll by and turn south on Broadway.

Sneaking from the doorway, Renwood remembered the man whom he had bumped on the subway steps. He threw a suspicious glance toward the subway entrance, but saw no sign of the man. Satisfied that he was no longer watched, Renwood threaded a circuitous course along various thoroughfares until he reached an old-fashioned building east of Sixth Avenue.

The door bore a sign that read: "Marimba Cafe."

RENWOOD entered. He ascended a flight of steps and came to a room that had only a few tables.

A man was seated alone; he looked up as Renwood entered. Dark-eyed, sallow-faced, the fellow delivered a suspicious glare.

"What was keeping you?" he demanded. "When I called you up, you said you would come uptown as soon as you had lunch. What's the matter with you, Jerry?"

"Nothing much, George," returned Renwood. "I – I thought I'd better get lunch uptown. That was all –"

"You could have called here. All you have to do is ask for Mr. Corbal. They'll look for me up here."

"I know. But – but –"

Corbal arose and shut the door. His eyes narrowed; his face hardened as he studied Renwood's worried countenance. Ordinarily, Renwood had an air of nonchalance that fitted with his light, well-featured face. Today, his ease was gone.

"Out with it," purred Corbal, his tone not unfriendly. "Come on, Jerry – something has taken your nerve. It can't be this Yorne business. That was settled last night. You're in the clear, so far as that is concerned."

"I know it," acknowledged Renwood. "Just the same, I feel jittery –"

"But you didn't yesterday. So why today?"

Renwood fumbled for a cigarette. Corbal passed him one; then clapped him on the shoulder.

"Let's hear it."

"All right." Renwood nodded with an effort. "It's about Parlington. You've read the newspapers, George. Don't you think it was odd, the butler giving up just when he had the swag?"

"Yes," admitted Corbal, sourly. "And the worst part of it was that we didn't guess he had it. There you were, making friends with Yorne, so we could build up to a swindle. Along came Parlington and finished him. Kept the jewels and the gun right there in the house."

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"We could have shaken Parlinton for a divvy, if we'd known it. Bad business, maybe, dealing with a murderer; but he was a smooth one. Yes, it does look funny that the fellow turned things on himself. Why was he fool enough to write out that confession? Could you guess it, Jerry?"

"I saw him write it," stated Renwood, slowly. "I was watching, all the while."

"Did he look nervous?"

"Yes. He had reason to be nervous. That confession was dictated to him, George."

"Dictated? By whom?"

"By someone who was in the room with him – someone in black. Parlinton called him 'The Shadow' –"

AN exclamation from Corbal. Renwood was surprised at its sharpness. It reminded him of Parlinton's ejaculation.

"The Shadow," repeated Renwood. "He had the goods on Parlinton. The fellow wilted. I would have, too, if I'd been him. Black cloak – slouch hat – an automatic that looked like a cannon. That describes him, George. When he spoke, his voice was a whisper – a fearful whisper that –"

"I've heard of The Shadow," interposed Corbal, as Renwood faltered. "I never met anyone, though, who had seen him. He must have a lot on the ball, to scare the daylights out of a cool card like Parlinton. The fellow folded, you say?"

"Absolutely! He took it while The Shadow told him every detail of his crime. It left me woozy, George!"

"I'd like to have seen it."

"You wouldn't have forgotten it. Listen, George: After I left Yorne's, I'd have sworn that I was being tagged. Today, everywhere I've been, I've felt that eyes were watching me. A taxi driver – a man in the subway –"

"That's why you went to a different place for lunch?"

"Yes. Until I was sure I'd shaken off trailers, I was afraid to come here."

Corbal strolled about the room, eyeing his informant. At last he put a question:

"Getting cold feet, Jerry?"

Renwood nodded, though reluctantly.

"Don't want to go through with the next job?" queried Corbal. "Not anxious to help in the Garraway frame?"

"It's bad business, George," returned Renwood. "We don't deal in murder, either of us. Nor burglary, nor any regular crime. But we've staged blackmail –"

"Only when we've dealt with people who can't afford to squawk. There's no comeback from the law."

"I know that. But I've seen one different than the law. I've seen The Shadow."

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"And if you saw him again, would you fold like Parlinton did?"

"I don't know. I might. Anyone would."

Corbal laughed harshly. A slow hard smile appeared upon his features. At last he spoke.

"Suppose we call the Garraway job the last one," he suggested. "Make it the payoff; then travel our own ways. How would you feel about it, Jerry?"

"I'd rather quit right now."

"Suppose I can fix it so there's no comeback."

"There's still The Shadow –"

"That's what I mean – no comeback from The Shadow."

"If you're sure you can spring it, George –"

Corbal again clapped Renwood's shoulder.

"Eight o'clock tonight," he said. "You know where to meet me. At the new apartment. If you arrive ahead of me, open up the cash box and count over the swag. That will make you feel good. Then we can talk over the Garraway deal."

"You've figured a way to pull it, George?"

"Just about. We'll talk it over when we get together. I'm going out from here by the back way. You stick around, have dinner here, then go out by the back and head for the apartment. You know you haven't been trailed here, so it's a good place to stay until after dark."

WITH that, Corbal departed. He left Jerry Renwood in a strengthened frame of mind; for his words had been persuasive.

Alone, Renwood pulled a large envelope from his pocket and took out a stack of investment literature. These papers would be useful in tonight's game. Renwood had worked his racket often, always with Corbal.

Renwood, because of his brokerage connections, served as the "blind"; actual blackmail was always staged by Corbal. That had lulled Renwood in the past, for it placed the burden on his pal. As Corbal had remarked, there had never been any "comeback." But Renwood had felt some worryment, for he had frequently supplied information to Corbal.

Through various connections, Renwood gained inklings of doubtful deals that had been worked by persons of good standing. Whenever such cases showed new developments, a trimming was in order. No one knew that Renwood was acquainted with Corbal; hence they set the stage so that Renwood would be a witness to Corbal's black-mail. Always, Renwood would soothe the victim afterward, advising him to say nothing; also promising to stand by him.

Experience had shown them that a blackmailed party would come across for the first time; but from then out, would constantly devise ways to prevent a second attempt. Hence they never played the same sucker twice.

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They had gone through a fat list; the next man in line was Machias Garraway, the banker. Renwood had looked forward to this trimming. But last night, his enthusiasm had faded. Today, encouraged by Corbal's confidence, Renwood's interest was returning.

Afternoon waned. Renwood's plans were complete. The young man was nonchalant when he strolled downstairs to the cafe and ordered dinner. He sat by a front window that was heavily curtained. Peering through, he eyed the street.

A taxicab was dim beyond a street lamp. Renwood hoped that it was not the one that he had seen on Broadway.

There were few diners in the restaurant, a fact that Renwood noted with satisfaction. He saw no one who looked suspicious; nevertheless, when he left, he took the door that few persons knew about – the exit to the rear street. He walked several blocks; then became cautious as he neared a secluded apartment building.

It was nearly eight o'clock. Darkness had brought worry. More and more, Renwood had felt the strange fear that had gripped him the night before. The Shadow might be anywhere, Renwood decided. Perhaps he had learned of the Marimba Cafe; possibly he had discovered the rear exit and had lurked there.

Entering the apartment house, Renwood felt new terror as he ascended to the third floor. He had a key to the apartment; it was at the rear of the house. Its side windows overlooked the low roof of a garage that wedged almost to the apartment wall.

Renwood was nervous when he opened the window and peered out into the darkness. The roof – the narrow space between the buildings – either might have held an unseen watcher.

Steadying himself, Renwood went to a corner of the living room. Stooping, he pressed a section of the baseboard. It clicked open, to reveal a cavity that contained a large metal box.

Renwood opened this container; from it, he removed stacks of currency, bundles of securities – all labeled with the names of former owners. As he counted this swag, Renwood kept darting new glances toward the window. Strained, he could think only of that menace; he gave no heed to the locked door behind him.

It was not until he heard the slight thud of a closing door that Renwood remembered the entrance. Hands filled with spoils, the crook came to his feet and spun about. Horror seized him; his face froze rigid. Renwood, indeed, became an exact copy of Parlinton, as the crooked butler had been the night before.

The reason for Renwood's startlement was the same as Parlinton's. Within the door stood a figure garbed in black – one whose cloak collar was high about his chin; whose hat brim, turned downward, obscured his visage. A gloved fist extended from the intruder's cloak; a steady hand gripped a leveled automatic.

In one brief instant, Jerry Renwood broke. Stolen wealth dropped from his hands; his quivering shoulders sagged. He had seen The Shadow once before; this time, he was faced by that formidable foe. Terror-stricken, the cornered crook awaited The Shadow's judgment.

CHAPTER VI. SPOILS TO THE VICTOR

STAMMERED words came to the lips of Jerry Renwood. Pleading, incoherent, he was begging mercy of The Shadow. Upon the floor lay proofs of crime; the spoils that he and George Corbal had gained from blackmailed victims. Renwood was ready to part with all such wealth, could he avoid the fate that had

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overtaken Parlinton.

Renwood was not waiting for dictated terms. He was blurting all he knew; blabbing the name of Corbal; blaming all he could upon his partner in crookery. The vengeful form in black came closer. Renwood tried to back away. Quaking pitifully, he slumped to the floor, his hands raised piteously.

A harsh laugh sounded. Venomous, rather than sinister; yet the gibe had effect. To Renwood, the mere sight of The Shadow's shrouded shape had been sufficient. He expected instant flame from the looming gun muzzle. He buried his face in his hands. The laugh changed. It was raucous. Surprise made Renwood raise his head. He realized suddenly that no burning eyes were peering from beneath the hat brim. He wondered.

The slouch hat whisked backward as a gloved hand impelled it. The same hand threw aside the collar of the cloak. As the automatic lowered, Renwood saw a face he recognized. The man in black was not a strange unknown; he was Renwood's partner, George Corbal.

"YOU – you were at Yorne's last night?" Renwood sputtered the question, almost unbelieving. "You were – you were The Shadow?"

"No." Laughing, Corbal was laying aside his garments. "It was The Shadow who was there last night. The real McCoy. You gave me an idea when you spitted your story, Jerry. I rigged up this trick outfit, after I left you at the cafe. I wanted to see how it would work on you."

Renwood was losing his sheepishness. Fists clenched, he had risen from the floor. He was angered, now that his terror had passed. Corbal purred quieting words.

"Don't act sore, Jerry," he argued. "I had to spring this gag on you. I wanted to see how it would work. So you would be set for what's to come."

"You made a sap of me," interjected Renwood. "Because I was on the level; because I let you know that I was nervous –"

"Easy, Jerry. I could be peeved, too. You squawked a lot while I had you covered. Mentioned my name, as I remember. I'm willing to forget that part of it."

Renwood subsided.

"This rig is a swell idea," resumed Corbal, placing his discarded garb upon a chair. "It worked even better than I thought it would. I don't think that it would shake you, though, if you knew that I was inside it. That's why we're going to use it again tonight."

"Use it tonight?"

"Sure! After you've dropped in to see Machias Garraway!"

Renwood looked bewildered. Corbal chuckled.

"All this swag of ours," said Corbal, indicating the securities and the cash, "was plucked from people who had duped others. Garraway is just another in the crowd. You know why he wants to talk to you, Jerry. Garraway had juggled the trust funds of several estates. He switched bum stocks for good ones. He wants to unload the worthwhile paper.

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"Garraway figures you're too dumb to know it. He wants to use you for a fence. Your job is to keep on playing dumb. Mine is to walk in when he's showing you the stuff; to tell him what it is and to make him come across. The trouble was just how to work it. I've found the answer."

"You – you're going there as The Shadow?"

"That's it! Remember that I'm the man behind this batch of crepe and watch Garraway for your cues. Act just about half as scared as he does. Come along, Jerry – pull yourself together."

Corbal was stooping on the floor, picking up bundles of currency that Renwood had scattered. He saw his companion steady. Corbal motioned to the door.

"Slide on up to the Hotel Dothan," ordered Corbal. "You know Garraway's suite – No. 1200 – and he's told you that he'd like to see you. Breeze in on him. I'll come later."

"But what about the cloak –"

"I'll put it on after I get to the twelfth floor. I'll carry one of the suitcases that we have here in the closet. It will do to lug the swag, as well."

Renwood donned hat and coat. His shaken confidence had been regained. He strolled to the door and nodded wisely as he gave a parting wave.

"I'll be there in ten minutes, George," he assured. "Waiting for you to show up. Pull the stunt as strong as you did; but make the laugh a little smoother. That's the one touch it needs."

RENWOOD made the trip in the time that he had estimated. Arrived at the Hotel Dothan, he went up to Garraway's suite. He rapped at the door. A slouchy, bald-headed man admitted him. This was Garraway, himself.

"Well, well!" greeted the banker. "So you have come to see me, Mr. Renwood! I had not expected you tonight, or I would have kept my servant here. He knows how to prepare refreshments better than I do."

"I have come on business, Mr. Garraway," returned Renwood, briskly. "About investments. I have prepared some lists that may interest you."

As they walked into the suite, Renwood pulled an envelope from his pocket. He noted that Garraway did not latch the door; that fact pleased Renwood at the outset. By the time they had reached a room that served as an office, Renwood had extracted papers from the envelope. He spread these upon the banker's desk.

"My assumption," stated Renwood, "is that you intend to purchase some substantial securities. Of course, I may be wrong. Sometimes I meet clients who wish to sell some of their own. In fact" – he paused wisely – "certain of my offerings are the property of customers whose names I never mention."

Garraway was looking over Renwood's data. Hearing the visitor's last remark, the banker raised his head.

"Do I understand," he inquired, "that you make a custom of handling such transactions? That you ask no questions; and answer none?"

"That has proven to be a good way of doing business, Mr. Garraway."

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"And if you could acquire securities as sound as those that you have listed?"

"I should be glad to purchase them at a few points below the current market price."

GARRAWAY arose from his desk. He went to a safe in the corner. He handled the combination; then opened the door and brought out a narrow box. From its depths, he produced a bundle of securities.

"These should satisfy you," assured Garraway. "They happen to be some stocks that a friend of mine must sacrifice. An old friend – let us say a friend who is in difficult circumstances, one who would not care to have his name mentioned."

"I understand."

"Look them over. Confidentially, of course. Perhaps you may wish to buy some of them. Of course, if it requires too much cash, we can arrange some other method of transaction."

Garraway was rubbing his hands. He was just about to make reference to the mythical friend whom he had previously mentioned. Then, suddenly, words froze upon his lips. Renwood saw the banker stare toward the door of the little office. Catching the cue, Renwood swung about.

For the third time, he was viewing a figure cloaked in black. Knowing of the part that Corbal had planned to play, Renwood had imagined that he would need to fake startlement for Garraway's later benefit. Such pretence, however, proved unnecessary. Despite himself, Renwood felt a chill of fear.

Last night's episode with Parlinton; the bluff that Corbal had staged tonight at the apartment – these had left Renwood in a jittery frame of mind. Past recollections made this spectral figure seem a living threat. The tension remained until the intruder laughed. A harshness in his mirth reminded Renwood of Corbal.

Slowly, steadily, the masquerader approached the desk. Garraway cowered before the gun muzzle. Renwood, feigning fear without great effort, heard another tone of whispered mockery. This taunt was an improvement; Corbal, apparently, had profited by Renwood's criticism. Then the intruder spoke.

"Stolen goods," he sneered, his tone smoothening as he proceeded. "Wealth that you have rifled from those who trusted you. I am The Shadow! I have come here to right a wrong! Tell me the names of those whom you betrayed." Lips quivering, Garraway confessed. He blurted names of persons; amounts of cash; the specific securities that had been transferred. All the while, he stared as though entranced, looking straight toward the black-clad inquisitor.

Renwood, standing at one side, remained motionless. "These holdings will be delivered to their owners," ordained the cloaked visitor. "I shall see that the right ones receive their property. You will do wisely, Garraway, to notify them to expect specific securities. Wise, also, if you remove the worthless paper with which you salted the trust funds.

"As for you, Renwood" – the cloaked figure wheeled – "I regard you as an accomplice of Garraway's. You are to leave this city. You are to maintain silence. If you fail to do so, you will suffer. Go, before I regret my merciful decision!"

MECHANICALLY, Renwood walked from the room, skirting wide past the figure in black. He reached the outer door; there he paused to dart a quick look over his shoulder. He could see the open doorway of the office. The figure in black was backing outward; beyond, Renwood could see Garraway.

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The banker had crumpled; he was slumped upon his desk. Terror had overpowered him.

Closing the door of the suite, Renwood crossed the hall and rang for an elevator. He was still tingling when he left the lobby of the Dothan. Corbal's impersonation had been a marvel of realism. When he reached the apartment where the swag was hidden, the young man unlocked the door. Muttering to himself, he was planning the opening remarks that he intended to give when Corbal arrived.

"Great work, George!" mumbled Renwood, grinning. "You bowled out Garraway. You forced me clear of the picture. We're set to take it on the lam – before Garraway has sense enough to get wise –"

Renwood stopped short. He had opened the door; he was on the threshold of the apartment, staring into the lighted living room. On the floor lay the metal box, opened and empty. Beyond it was a sterner sight – a figure, bound and gagged, sprawled in a large chair. A man in a crumpled cloak of black, a slouch hat wedged hard upon his head.

With a cry, Renwood bounded forward. He yanked the hat from the bound man's forehead. He stared at the face beneath. Sullen eyes met Jerry Renwood's startled gaze. The helpless man in the chair was George Corbal!

IN that instant, Renwood knew the truth. His qualms about the opened window had been real ones. A watcher had lurked outside the window; one who had followed the trail from the Marimba Cafe. The Shadow had been here, a silent, invisible observer, when Corbal had first entered in his guise of black.

The Shadow had struck as soon as Renwood had gone. He had overpowered Corbal. He had taken the spoils from the metal box. It was The Shadow, not Corbal, who had followed to Garraway's. Gone, vanished, The Shadow had added Garraway's ill-gotten proceeds to the swag that Renwood and Corbal had accumulated.

Wealth would be returned to proper owners – by The Shadow. And here was the sequel to his successful exploit, a grim jest wherein one crook discovered his companion, that both might discuss the futility of crime. To murderers, The Shadow dealt death: to such schemes as Corbal and Renwood, he dealt ridicule.

Thus had The Shadow ended the Masquerade of George Corbal, the man who had posed as a second Shadow. Upon it, he had allowed Jerry Renwood to return. Two crooks, deprived of spoils, had learned that their crimes did not pay.

CHAPTER VII. ONE MAN RETURNS

THE next morning, Jerry Renwood awoke in his old apartment; but it took him a full minute to recognize his surroundings. A deluge of scattered thoughts dominated his brain. Yorne's – the Marimba Cafe – Garraway's – the apartment where he and Corbal had kept their swag – all these formed a confused recollection. At last, he remembered releasing George Corbal; coming back here afterward.

Clear was his memory of The Shadow. A specter in black, who persisted even in daylight. Then to Renwood's ears came a repetition of the sound that had awakened him. Someone was pounding at the door of the apartment. Nervously, he donned slippers and dressing gown. He answered the summons.

A messenger was outside the door. The fellow handed Renwood an envelope and a pad to sign. Mechanically, Renwood wrote his name; then, as soon as the messenger had gone, he opened the envelope. From it, he unfolded a note that was inscribed in ink of vivid blue.

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He read as follows:

Environment aided you in crime. Therefore, my order for departure must be obeyed. Your companion in past activity will accompany you. He was the sponsor of evil deeds; it will be your part to show the way to honesty.

Urge him to follow your lead. When called upon to report, do so. Good faith will be your only hope of safety. Follow instructions as you receive them. Your countersign is one word: Black.

There was no signature. The message did not need one. Renwood knew that it had come from The Shadow. As if in final proof, the note itself performed a mysterious deed – one that matched The Shadow's own performances. While Renwood stared, the written lines erased themselves, word by word, until blankness alone remained.

There were other papers in the envelope. Examining them, Renwood found that they were one-way tickets to San Francisco – two in number. He shoved them in the pocket of his dressing gown, then crumpled the blank paper and tossed it in the wastebasket.

The Shadow's purpose was plain. He was giving the partners in crime another chance. He was depending upon Renwood to see that Corbal went straight. Somehow, The Shadow must have looked into the affairs of the pair; for those tickets to San Francisco meant more than a mere trip.

Not long ago, Renwood had received an attractive offer of employment from a Pacific coast brokerage house. He had been asked to come West and bring along any capable man whom he might recommend. Renwood had passed up the offer at Corbal's urging; but he knew that the jobs were still open. The Shadow, too, had learned that fact.

THE telephone rang. Renwood answered it, to hear Corbal on the wire. Corbal had stayed at the apartment where they had kept the swag. This morning, he had received a mysterious telephone message, telling him to communicate with Renwood. Having given that information, Corbal said that he would arrive in fifteen minutes.

Jerry Renwood engaged in sober thought while he waited. He had formed a plan of discourse by the time George Corbal arrived. As soon as the two ex-blackmailers were together, Renwood produced the railroad tickets.

"From The Shadow," he stated. "It looks like a friendly gesture, George."

"Meaning that we're to grab those jobs in Frisco?" inquired Corbal.

"That's it," nodded Renwood. "I can fix it when we get there."

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Corbal scowled.

"We'd better grab the chance," urged Renwood. "We've crossed The Shadow once. We're lucky we didn't get what Parlington did. How much money have you in the bank?"

"Five hundred bucks."

"I have about six hundred. That's eleven hundred – actually our own. Suppose we draw out the money, George. We can make a fresh start in Frisco."

"Who do you know there?"

"Only the head of the brokerage concern."

"Then we don't go to Frisco."

Renwood stared, puzzled. Corbal laughed, disdainfully.

"Maybe we did cross The Shadow," he asserted. "But what of it? Just because he piled in from the window and smeared them once is no reason that he can pull that gag again! We've lost a pile of gravy, Jerry. It's up to us to get it back."

"How? Where?"

"How? The way we did before. Where? Right here in New York."

Renwood shook his head.

"We'd be licked from the start, George," he insisted. "The Shadow has us ticketed. We've got to get out of town."

"But how can you stage the racket in Frisco? It will take you months to get acquainted well enough to build a new sucker list. If I'm in the office with you, we can't work together –"

"Not as crooks, no. But we can both make an honest living."

"Bah! So you've gone goody-goody, eh? Well, you've got your car fare. Beat it for Frisco if you want. But take someone else along with you."

"You mean that you'll stay here?"

"Yes. What's more, I'll play a lone hand. One that will drive The Shadow woozy! Listen, Jerry – I know a lot I haven't told you. While you've been getting the lowdown on respectable people, I've been looking into plenty of tough joints. That's how I happened to know about The Shadow."

"And now you've seen him, George. You know what he can do."

"What he can do, I can do!"

CORBAL eyed Renwood while making this final statement. Shrewdly, he noted the strained expression that showed upon Renwood's face. Corbal started to ask a question; then paused. Renwood spoke.

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"I'm through with the racket, George," said Renwood. "I want you to drop it, too. For your own good. You showed the way when we worked crooked. Give me a chance to lead when we go straight."

Corbal nodded. His whole face had sobered. Renwood was surprised at the sudden change. He did not realize what was going on in his companion's mind.

"You're right, Jerry," declared Corbal. "Yes, you've picked the one way out of it. Let me see those tickets."

Renwood handed them over.

"Not a bad guy, The Shadow," purred Corbal. "He's staked us to the tickets. It's up to us to make the reservations. Suppose I attend to that, Jerry."

"All right."

"I'll go down to Grand Central. I'll arrange for a compartment to Chicago; another from there to San Francisco. We might as well travel comfortably. We can afford it."

Pocketing the tickets, Corbal strolled to the door. He paused.

"There's a good train out at nine o'clock tonight," he said. "I'll meet you on it, Jerry. Ask at the gate for the compartment number, if you don't see me waiting there. I may go in ahead of you."

TO Jerry Renwood, that day became a strange one. After Corbal's departure, Renwood dressed and went down to the office. He announced that he had taken the San Francisco offer; and gave up his New York job therewith. Later, he went to the bank and drew out his six hundred dollars. After that, he wired the concern in San Francisco, stating that he and another were coming to take the jobs.

Renwood had dinner at his favorite Times Square restaurant. With that farewell to Manhattan finished, he headed for Grand Central Terminal. He arrived at the train gate at quarter before nine. He asked the gate attendant if Mr. Corbal had gone aboard.

"What's your name?" came the query.

Renwood gave it. The attendant nodded. He nudged his thumb toward the gate.

"Mr. Corbal is on board," he said. "Compartment B, Car J 3. He has your ticket with him."

Renwood beckoned to the porter who was carrying his bags. As he did so, a man beside the train gate brushed against him. Renwood did not see the fellow's face. All that he heard was the word that the man whispered:

"Black!"

Renwood nodded without turning. A folded piece of paper was thrust into his hand. Ordering the porter through the gate, Renwood followed. Walking along the platform, he opened the wadded note.

He read the message:

Signal from car door. Up and down if Corbal is aboard.

Across if not. If Corbal is still with you, wire if he keeps

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on from Chicago or decides to stop there. Address: Lenning Service, Sharon Building, New York. Expect new contact in San Francisco.

The writing faded as Renwood neared Car J 3. Renwood understood. This man who had slipped him the note must be an agent of The Shadow. One who had been on yesterday's trail. The man had been watching for Renwood, not for Corbal. He must have written the note while Renwood was talking with the man at the train gate.

Instructions from The Shadow; and Renwood was ready to follow them. Instructions without a clue, for the Lenning Service mentioned in the note was evidently a place that received telegrams and held them until the proper person called on the telephone to make inquiry. Renwood realized that he was working with The Shadow. He was pleased; for he knew that it would be to Corbal's eventual benefit.

Entering his car, Renwood reached the door of Compartment B. He started to open it; pressure blocked him. A query came in strained whisper:

"That you, Jerry?"

"Yes," replied Renwood, "What's up, George?"

"Nothing. I'll tell you later. Bring in the bags yourself. Keep the porter out."

"All right."

Renwood walked back to the platform, where the station porter was standing with the bags. He tipped the man; then waited while the porter walked away. Stepping to one side, Renwood saw a clear path to the train gate. He signaled with an up and down motion of his arm.

Corbal was aboard. That was all that Renwood had to flash. Yet he was puzzled when he walked back into the car. He could not understand Corbal's desire for secrecy. Nevertheless, Renwood stopped the car porter, just as the fellow was about to open the door of the compartment.

"I'll take the bags in."

With that remark, Renwood sent the porter on his way. Opening the door, Renwood pushed the bags into blackness. Again he heard the cautious whisper:

"Close the door before you turn on the light."

Renwood complied. When he clicked the light switch, he turned about, questioning words on his lips. He stopped short as he saw the man who was seated by the windows, backed by lowered blinds.

It was not Corbal. In his friend's stead sat a rough-faced rowdy who was holding a leveled revolver.

"Sit down!" growled the man with the gun. "Don't forget that I've got this gat. We're goin' to be friends, pal, after I've done a little talkin'; so there's no use gettin' funny!"

Renwood drew over the chair that was by the door.

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"My name's Spike Gonley," grinned the thug. "George Corbal sent me in here. I've got your ticket, too, an' his, too. I'm ridin' through with you to Frisco. He ever tell you about me?"

Renwood shook his head.

"We was all set," resumed Gonley. "Goin' to knock off the joints together; with me slippin' the info to George. We figured he'd need a mob, though. While we was still waitin', George rigged up another racket. The one you worked with.

"A good pal of yours, George is. He ain't sore just because you got cold feet. He was just wise enough to know that you couldn't stand the gaff. When he talked with you this mornin', he knowed that you was ready to pull a fast one on him, because you thought it was for his good. So he switched it. Savvy?"

Renwood nodded automatically. "Spike" Gonley was looking for such a gesture. The thug grinned.

"Hit it right, didn't I?" he jeered. "Well, I'm just tellin' you what Corbal guessed. He's a smart guy, George is. What did you do – shoot a tipoff when I seen you go back to the platform?"

Renwood realized that Spike must have peered from the door of the compartment. Looking through the passage window, the thug had seen the signal. Renwood decided that partial admission would be wise.

"Yes," he stated. "I passed the word that Corbal was aboard. I thought he was."

"An' what's the gag in Chi?" demanded Gonley. "You're to send a telegram from there, huh?"

"Yes," admitted Renwood. "To the office of the Lenning Service, in the Sharon Building. Just to say that Corbal is still with me."

"He figured something like that," clucked Gonley. "An' after that – when we get to Frisco – what's the gag then? Another telegram?"

Renwood had his opening. He nodded. A jolt told that the train was starting. Spike Gonley pocketed his gun.

"We'll split, after you send that telegram from Frisco," he stated. "Until we get there, though, I'm watchin' you. Corbal says you ain't a bad guy; so we might as well be friends. Only if you try any wise stuff, it'll be curtains for you. That's why Corbal fixed it so we'd be by ourselves while we're travelin'; he knowed I could figure a get-away, if I had to plug you."

RENWOOD forced a smile. The train was gliding northward. It was too late to get word to The Shadow. Nor would there be a chance in Chicago.

Spike Gonley evidently intended to stick close, all the way. Renwood decided that the best he could do was grin. He felt a sudden, complete contempt for George Corbal.

His former pal was a criminal at heart, and Renwood knew it. Corbal had gained a fair chance to go straight. He had preferred to stay with crime. He had made his opportunity. By the time Renwood gained contact in San Francisco, Corbal would have the start he needed. That was Renwood's only regret.

For he could guess the part that Corbal intended. The same game that he had tried to play last night. Only this time, he would thrust himself into the affairs of the underworld, seeking to strike terror in the hearts of crooks upon whom he could prey.

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Already, Renwood was picturing San Francisco, where he could shake loose from Spike Gonley, after sending a fake telegram. He could imagine himself speaking to some new agent of The Shadow, passing word that would be of value in the hunt for all evildoers.

Renwood was through with Corbal. He would be glad to tell the news that he had learned. He would state the truth as he was sure it must exist. For Jerry Renwood knew that George Corbal had remained in New York to continue the role that he had chosen.

Perhaps upon this very night, George Corbal was faring forth to crime, garbed as the second Shadow!

CHAPTER VIII. THE SHADOW LEARNS

FIVE days had passed since Jerry Renwood's departure from New York. Three nights had been quiet ones; the fourth had produced a startling event. On the streets, near the end of the fifth day, news boys were proclaiming the sensation.

"Uxtry! Uxtry! Read more about De Shadow!"

Joe Cardona heard the shouts as he entered a building. He had finished a busy day; as a sequel, he was on his way to Commissioner Weston's office. Joe knew what the subject of discussion would surely be. This matter of The Shadow.

Cardona found Weston at his desk. The commissioner looked up when Joe was ushered in. Briskly, he told the ace to be seated. Finishing with letters that he was signing, Weston planked both hands upon the glass top of the desk and put a single word as query:

"Well?"

"About The Shadow?" asked Cardona.

"That's it," returned Weston. "He's a friend of yours, isn't he?"

"I suppose so, commissioner. I know of others, though, who have counted on him in a pinch."

Weston nodded.

"Myself, for one," he admitted. "Yes, Cardona, we both owe The Shadow a great deal. And yet – this news today –"

"According to the newspapers," interposed Cardona, carefully, "The Shadow raided the Hilo Club and took what was on the tables. A pretty good haul, I guess. The Hilo Club was one of those places that we hadn't yet clamped down on."

"And after that?" queried Weston.

"The Shadow made a get-away," added Cardona, reluctantly. "Patrolman Jennings heard the shouts and tried to intercept him. The Shadow let him have it. Jennings is in the hospital. He may not live."

"That's just it!" Weston brought his fist down on the desk. "Cardona, we have allowed The Shadow leeway, because we believed that he opposed crime. Today, we know that he no longer deserves our loyalty. He has

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acted as a criminal! My order is: Bring in The Shadow!"

"It's tough about Jennings," agreed Cardona. "Yet we can't be sure that it was The Shadow who clipped him. Witnesses say they saw The Shadow fire when he reached the street –"

"If that's the case, Cardona, I'll change my present order. I want you to bring in the man who raided the Hilo Club. Bring him in dead, if you can't get him alive!"

"But that means The Shadow –"

"Does it?"

The question floored Cardona. A light came into the acting inspector's eyes. Weston had guessed an issue which, at first, had not occurred to Joe.

"I get it, commissioner!" exclaimed the ace. "You mean that maybe it wasn't The Shadow at all! Instead, the fellow who raided the Hilo Club could have been a crook rigged up like The Shadow. Some fellow smart enough to go through with dirty work – to put The Shadow in a jam with us!"

"That is my thought, Cardona."

"If you're right, commissioner," said Joe, "it explains a lot. For a guy named Zutz was outside man for the Hilo Club and it looks like he was bribed by the man in black. But we know The Shadow never deals with crooks.

"It is my suggestion we lay off this case temporarily, and let the other gambling places run wide open. Then we can wait for the being in black to attempt another holdup."

The commissioner pondered. Then he stated:

"Of all criminals, this unknown impostor has ventured far beyond bounds! His deed has been a deliberate challenge to The Shadow! Cardona, our policy is to keep hands off. The Shadow can take care of his own troubles. Come; let us discuss further details."

IT was an hour later when Commissioner Weston strolled into the grillroom of the Cobalt Club. Walking toward his accustomed table, he saw Lamont Cranston seated there. The millionaire smiled slightly as the commissioner joined him.

"Well, Weston," came the quiet remark, "I have suddenly dropped my aversion toward crime news. I have been reading of this latest development. Who is this person that they call 'The Shadow'?"

"He is a doubtful quantity, Cranston," replied the commissioner. "Once we thought that he sided with the law. Apparently, he has turned to crime."

"An odd circumstance. Well, at least he has shown his particular specialty. He raided the Hilo Club and came out a winner. From what I have heard, there are other places in town that should interest him."

"There are quite a few. We have been busy breaking the numbers racket. On that account, we have been slow in clamping down upon the gambling houses."

"This changes circumstances, however?"

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"Not at all. On the contrary, we shall allow the gambling places to continue unmolested. Inspector Cardona made that suggestion this afternoon. He reasoned that since The Shadow has turned to crime, we might as well allow him to prove serviceable to us."

Later, when Lamont Cranston had entered his limousine, his thin lips delivered a soft laugh of whispered understanding. The Shadow had learned much through his conversation with Ralph Weston. He had divined the thoughts that were actually in the police commissioner's mind.

Two men, alone, had guessed the truth that even the underworld had not suspected. Those two were Weston and Cardona. They had reasoned that the raider at the Hilo Club had been an impersonator of The Shadow. Having conjectured that fact from Weston's guarded statements, The Shadow had also visualized the course that the law would follow.

Gambling houses would remain unclamped, in hope that the false, cloaked raider would continue his career of crime. The reason for such decision was another hope; namely, that The Shadow, himself, would take to the elusive trail and deal with the impostor.

The Shadow had learned news that he could use tonight.

ARRIVED at his sanctum, The Shadow turned on the blue light. He opened envelopes that he had picked up at an obscure office on the way. One contained a telegram signed "Crofton." It was from San Francisco and it had been sent to a New York investment broker named Rutledge Mann. The telegram discussed securities; but The Shadow interpreted its meaning.

Miles Crofton, The Shadow's contact agent in San Francisco, had contacted Jerry Renwood, to learn that George Corbal had not left New York. This, however, was news that The Shadow had already guessed. Since last night, he had been working on the assumption that Corbal was still the second Shadow.

A tiny bulb glittered from the wall as The Shadow drew earphones across the table. The Shadow was putting in an automatic telephone call. A voice responded:

"Burbank speaking."

"Report!"

"Report from Marsland. Watching the Club Torreo. Hawkeye had trailed Jake Lassop, lookout due on duty at eight o'clock. Jake made two phone calls."

"Report received. Further reports."

"Report from Vincent. Will be inside Club Torreo at eight o'clock."

"Report received. Instructions will follow."

A weird laugh chilled the sanctum. The Shadow had already gained results. Through Cliff Marsland, an agent who knew the underworld, he had checked on the disappearance of Zutz, the look-out who had been at the Hilo Club. The Shadow, like Joe Cardona, had figured how his imitator had worked.

Hawkeye was a spotter who worked with Cliff. In fact, Hawkeye was the little hunched-up man who had bumped Jerry Renwood at the top of the subway stairs the day he thought he was being followed. Hawkeye was a useful trailer; he had scored another hit. The Shadow had picked the Club Torreo as the next spot that a

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raiding masquerader would choose. Hawkeye had already gained suspicions concerning Jake Lassop, one of the Club Torreo's lookouts.

A GAMBLING house deluxe, the Club Torreo was difficult to enter. Yet Harry Vincent, an agent of The Shadow, had managed to fix it for himself. He had done this through Clyde Burke, a reporter who also served The Shadow. Thus Harry would be inside; Cliff and Hawkeye outside.

The Shadow knew George Corbal to be a man who had more nerve than cunning. Somewhere in Manhattan, the fellow had a hide-out. From it, he would fare forth to further crime, impelled by his success at the Hilo Club. Crooks would not stop him; they were worried, for the present. Thinking that The Shadow himself had turned to crime, they had not guessed that a repeat performance would be next in order.

Corbal, perhaps, had figured out that much. But The Shadow knew that the rogue would be in the dark regarding moves intended by the law. He analyzed Corbal as a man who would be lulled by ignorance.

The Shadow, however, had wanted to know the plans of the police. If the law was ready to down the impostor, the law could have Corbal. If not, he would be The Shadow's quarry.

Through casual conversation with Commissioner Weston, The Shadow had learned the law's intention. Weston did not know that The Shadow passed as Lamont Cranston; nor had he guessed that through talking with his fellow club-member, he had passed the word to The Shadow.

Yet Weston had done exactly that. He had indicated fully that the law was counting on The Shadow.

Tonight, George Corbal would move to new attack. In turn, The Shadow would be present. Corbal had one aid: Jake Lassop. The Shadow would have three: Vincent, Marsland and Hawkeye. What Corbal thought would be a set-up could well be turned into a trap.

The light clicked out within the sanctum. Silence thickened with The Shadow's departure. Tonight was a time for action; a potential murderer must be thwarted in new crime. Such was The Shadow's purpose. The way was clear to end the menace of the second Shadow.

Yet no one – not even The Shadow – could foresee the episode that this night would bring. New freaks of chance were in the making. Crime was to take a new, more-startling twist. All through the sudden loss of nerve by a man whose part was small.

Jake Lassop, traitorous lookout at the Club Torreo, was the minor factor whose action was to bring about strange consequences.

CHAPTER IX. THE MAN FROM HAVANA

IT was close to eight o'clock. Business was brisk at the Club Torreo. A gambling joint was clicking merrily on the floor above a pretentious night club. Visitors were subjected to close scrutiny. No trouble was expected.

Within a secluded office, two men were engaged in conference. One was "Duke" Hydon, the bearded proprietor of the Club Torreo. The other was a tall, sharp-featured man whose presence Hydon regarded as an honor. Small wonder, for the visitor held a reputation in the world of gambling. He was "Sparkler" Meldin, lately of Havana.

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Sparkler deserved his nickname. The man had a flare for jewelry. Brilliant gems glittered from his finger rings; in his necktie, he wore an old-fashioned stick-pin with a diamond that reflected like a spotlight. Only his teeth lacked gems; they shone with plain golden glimmer whenever Sparkler grinned.

"So you'll sell the joint?" Sparkler was quizzing. "Well, I ought to be glad to hear you say that, Duke. But I'm not."

"Why not?" queried Hydon in feigned surprise. "You just told me you wanted to buy."

"So I did. Revolutions have shot the racket in Cuba. But this place of yours is paying plenty, Duke. There's only one reason why you'd feel like selling it. The police."

Duke shook his head.

"You've got the wrong idea, Sparkler," he declared. "The racket is still good; and will be. But the grind is tough. It takes somebody who is known – like yourself."

"Nobody knows me in New York."

"They know who you are. That's enough. The best customers are scared for fear that joints are phony. There's been squawks about fixed roulette wheels, paying too big a percentage to the houses. What they want is a chance that they think is as good as Monte Carlo. If you take over the Club Torreo, the news will spread around that it's on the level. I'm putting you straight, Sparkler –"

DUKE broke off as someone knocked at the door. He nodded to Sparkler. The pair arose. They went to the door and Duke opened it. A square-faced, beady-eyed man was standing there.

"What is it, Lassop?" demanded Duke. "Why aren't you covering the lookout?"

"The man I relieve is still there, Mr. Hydon. I thought I'd better speak to you before I went on duty."

"All right. Go ahead."

"But" – looking at Meldin – "I'd like to talk privately –"

"It's all right; this gentleman can hear what you say."

Lassop eyed Sparkler Meldin. The man from Havana met his gaze with shrewd eyes. Lassop twitched nervously; then spoke to Duke Hydon.

"It's just a crazy hunch, maybe," he said, "but I can't get rid of it. I'm worried – about The Shadow. He knocked off the Hilo Club last night."

"What if he did?"

"Well – it means that he may be coming here. I've heard a lot of talk about the way The Shadow pulled that job last night."

"You mean about Louie Zutz? The lookout? The fellow who sold out to The Shadow?"

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"Zutz wasn't phony. They say he was a good guy. The Shadow knocked him off. At least, that's what a lot of birds think."

Duke Hydon was stroking his bearded chin; his eyes glared toward Jake Lassop.

"So you're turning yellow, eh?" jeered the proprietor. "Afraid that maybe you'll be next? Well, that's settled, Jake. You won't be. You're fired! I'll put one of the table men on lookout, down at the side door tonight."

"You've got the wrong slant, boss," pleaded Lassop. "You'll only be putting another guy in the same jam that I'd be in. I don't want to crawl out of duty. What I want is somebody with me. Then if The Shadow does show up, there'll be two of us to handle him."

"What's more" – Lassop's beady eyes were shrewd – "it ain't fair to throw too much on one guy. Suppose The Shadow does get past him? What then? I'll tell you. They'll be saying the same things that some wise mugs have said about Louie Zutz – that stuff about going over to The Shadow."

Duke Hydon's expression changed.

"So that's the trouble, eh?" he demanded. "Why didn't you say it in the first place? Sure – you can have another fellow with you. Both of you will be inside the door. Besides that, there's the street man –"

"He doesn't stay too close. He's usually half a block away, keeping an eye out for dicks."

"He'll be near enough if you need him in a pinch. All right, Jake – you're hired again. Stick here, and I'll send one of the table men to join you."

DUKE HYDON walked away, with Sparkler Meldin following. Jake Lassop watched them turn a corner and approach the gambling tables. Apparently Duke intended to show his visitor some of the features of the gaming place. Tensely, Jake entered the office and closed the door behind him.

"Calakor."

Jake whispered this odd word, as he approached the desk. Taking paper and pencil, he printed the letters in sprawling fashion. Picking up the telephone, he began to dial. But instead of using numbers, he referred to the letters that he had written.

"C-A-L-" Jake mumbled in an undertone "-A-K-O-R -"

A turn of the dial with each letter. Jake listened; a bell was ringing over the wire. But no one answered. Jake darted a glance toward the door; then concentrated on the telephone. As he did this, his elbow brushed the sheet of paper. Lazily, it floated from the desk, fluttered over and over and finally landed near the door, the printed letters upward.

Jake did not notice the paper's fall, nor did he see the door as it opened inward. A sharpish face peered into the room. The light caught the glitter of a diamond stick-pin. Sparkler Meldin had returned to Duke Hydon's office.

Shrewdly, the man from Havana had guessed that Jake Lassop was up to something.

Sparkler was just in time to note the falling paper. Looking downward, he read the odd word "Calakor." He watched Jake; he saw the beady-eyed lookout hang up the receiver.

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Jake was impatient while he waited to make the call again. Sparkler saw him peer about for the paper. Wisely, the Havana big-shot edged back from the door.

When he looked again, Sparkler saw that Jake had found the paper. Jake was referring to it as he dialed. Sparkler guessed the game. Jake was calling someone who had not entrusted him with an actual telephone number. Instead, that person had transcribed the number into letters, by reference to a telephone dial, and had thus produced the word "Calakor."

This time, Jake received an answer. Sparkler listened intently to the look-out's conversation. Though he was hearing only one end of the talk, the man from Havana learned much.

"Listen, pal" – Jake was talking tensely. "It's going to be a give-away if I let you through, like Zutz did at the Hilo... Sure, I could take it on the lam, but that would queer your racket. No, no! I ain't pulling out. I told Gonley I'd go through with it... Only they'd have me ticketed, and it would be tough for both me and Zutz, wherever he is..."

"Listen, here's our out... Yeah, a way to work it better... The old elevator, up from the basement... Yeah, the service car – it's supposed to be on the fritz, but it ain't... I found it out this afternoon... It's your bet..."

"I'll be at the side wicket, another lookout with me. Get it? An alibi for me, to fool Duke... Sure! That's it... If you have to make a break for it, I'll stick by when you scam through the side door. But lay off unless there's no other out..."

"It ought to be a pip... Sure! All the tough mugs will think that you're The Shadow. There won't be many of them around, anyway... The front door? Don't worry about it... Yeah, the guy that covers it is downstairs with the head waiters, working outside... Sure... Any time..."

SPARKLER guessed that the telephone call was ending. He drew back from the door, closing it softly. He stepped out toward the gaming room and arrived there just as one of the roulette operators left his place and started for the office. This was the table man whom Duke had promised to Jake.

With sidelong glance, Sparkler saw Jake Lassop come from the office, just in time to meet the roulette operator. The two went toward a stairway at the side of the gaming room. Sparkler watched them descend.

He strolled to the office. Opening the door, he noted a curl of smoke coming from the interior of a tall ash tray. Jake had burned the paper on which had been written the word "Calakor."

For a moment, Sparkler Meldin looked toward the telephone, as if wondering what might happen should he call the cryptic number represented by the word "Calakor." Then a shrewd smile came over the big-shot's darkened features. Turning about, the man from Havana went out to the gaming room.

Always an opportunist, Sparkler Meldin saw a chance that might work to his advantage. He knew that he had nothing to lose; perhaps he would find gain through coming developments. Sparkler had offered to buy Duke's gambling joint, here above the Club Torreo; but it was not the only spot that he had considered as a possible purchase.

Trouble tonight might kill the Club Torreo. On the contrary, it might lead to a lower purchase price. Those were possibilities that Sparkler Meldin studied. But there was another factor that impressed him even more. Sparkler had heard of last night's raid at the Hilo Club, even before Jake Lassop had mentioned it. Like others, Sparkler had believed that The Shadow had done the job.

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He had learned that such was not the case. Chance had put Sparkler Meldin "in the know." He had uncovered a fact that would have startled all gangdom; the very one that Commissioner Weston and Joe Cardona were keeping to themselves. A fake Shadow was at large; a second worker garbed in black; a rogue who was trading on a master's reputation and damaging it.

Here was a chance to see the game in progress. Sparkler Meldin had heard of the awe that The Shadow could create. He had attributed it to The Shadow's own power; not to mere nerve, coupled with a guise of black. Though most of the customers in the Club Torreo were persons not engaged in crime, Sparkler could see a few toughs among them.

Would those ruffians wilt at the sight of an imitation Shadow? It would be worthwhile knowing. So Sparkler Meldin reasoned, as he looked about and located an obscure door in a front corner of the compact gambling room.

The door was a sliding one; obviously the entrance to the little-used elevator shaft. Shrewdly, Sparkler posted himself where he could watch it; and at the same time, he chose a spot that was near a little alcove. A good place to duck if heavy trouble started.

No word to Duke Hydon or any other. Sparkler Meldin intended to play as dumfounded as all the rest. To himself, he kept repeating a word that might be useful later. "Calakor" – the cryptic key that Jake Lassop had written, then destroyed.

Jake Lassop, through his failing nerve, had been the instrument through which a new factor had entered the game. Unwittingly, he had put Sparkler Meldin wise. Coolly, the man from Havana was awaiting the arrival of the second Shadow.

CHAPTER X. SHADOWS OF NIGHT

DOWN at the side entrance to the Club Torreo, two men were standing by a half-open door. One was Jake Lassop; the other was the roulette operator whom Duke Hydon had posted with the lookout. Jake was explaining matters.

"The street man's around here somewhere." Jake spoke nervously. "His job is to watch for dicks. He'll stop by, every now and then, to let us know he's on the job."

"How does he do that?"

"Four short raps, like this." Jake tapped his knuckles against the woodwork. "That means O.K.; if he repeats, it means he wants to say something. Then we open the door for him."

"What if he spots the bulls?"

"Two raps. Quick ones. Then we pass the word upstairs to duck the outfits. Duke can stow the wheels before the coppers bust into the joint."

"What about the front way?"

"That's safe. They'd have to go through the night club. The head waiters would shoot the word through fast. Not a chance for anyone to barge through there."

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"Anyone? You mean the bulls?"

Jake considered the question; then spoke in a hoarse whisper.

"The bulls?" he repeated. "Well, ordinarily, I'd say they might be the only guys who'd want to crash this joint. But tonight, it's different. You heard about the Hilo Club, didn't you?"

"Sure! Who hasn't? They say The Shadow knocked off that joint."

"He did. And there's a chance The Shadow may breeze in here. That's why there's two of us on the job. We'll be careful about who we let come in."

"How do you know when a customer shows up?"

"One rap – then two. If he repeats, we open the peek-hole. There's enough light to spot a guy's mug. If he's all right, we let him through."

Jake was right in his reference to the light. Though the doorway where the pair stood was dark, a street lamp threw a mellow glow to the inner edge of the sidewalk. Beyond that were dusky spots; it was from one of these that a strolling man emerged. He darted a glance at the doorway as he passed. He gave a nod when he saw Jake.

"The street man," said the lookout to the roulette operator. "Everything's all right. Come on; we'll move in and close the door."

WHILE Jake was speaking, the muffled sound of voices was audible from above. It was the noise of chatter in the gaming room, that came continually to the lookout post. The sound hushed when the barrier closed.

A figure stirred from blackness. Close against the wall, it emerged into the edge of light. A black arm raised in signal to watchers across the street. Then, as silently as it had appeared, the phantom figure faded back against the wall. Its brief appearance had been ghostlike; so was its evanishment.

This shape had been no impostor. Only The Shadow could have lurked in such narrow space of darkness. Only he could have approached so close to the conversing men; and The Shadow alone could have avoided the gaze of the stealthy street man.

The Shadow's purpose here was plain. He knew the arrangement of the Club Torreo.

The Shadow had expected to find Jake Lassop on side door duty. He knew that this would be the logical spot through which George Corbal would enter. Close at hand, The Shadow was ready to intercept his imitator. He had also provided for others to be present to take away Corbal if The Shadow found it necessary to deal with Jake or the street man.

Cliff and Hawkeye were across the street, hiding in an alleyway beside a darkened building. It was to them that The Shadow had signaled. His motion meant that the stage was set. The aids were to be in readiness. For The Shadow could already see possible complications. Jake Lassop usually performed lone lookout duty. Tonight, he had a companion.

Though familiar with the interior of the gambling hall above the Club Torreo, The Shadow did not know full details. He had not learned that the old elevator was still in operation; hence he considered the side door to be Corbal's lone way of entry and departure. Concentrated upon that assumption, The Shadow was considering

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Jake Lassop's position.

Alone, the lookout could easily pass Corbal through. With a companion, Jake would have to stage a bluff; and a good one. True, he could let Corbal – as the false Shadow – cow himself and the extra lookout; but once Corbal continued up to the gambling room, Jake would have difficulties.

The only out that The Shadow could see would be for Jake openly to turn traitor and cover his companion. That would do while Corbal was rifling the joint. Then, making a get-away, Corbal could shoot down Jake's companion, thus eliminating the only witness to Lassop's treachery.

Did Corbal have the nerve for such a game? The Shadow decided that he had. Last night, Corbal had used a gun to drop a patrolman. He had branded himself a man of murderous intent.

From now on, he would shoot to kill, whenever occasion called. The Shadow had dealt with others of Corbal's ilk. He knew their ways when they had tasted blood. Hence The Shadow waited in darkness, confident that Corbal would stage his raid, despite the fact that Jake might have warned him that a second lookout would be posted. In their conversation, neither Jake nor the other man had mentioned that Jake himself had called for a companion. That vital fact would have been a tipoff to The Shadow. Unfortunately, it had not reached him.

UPSTAIRS, business was brisk. Duke Hydon's place, though small, was large enough for two roulette tables. Both were working at full capacity. Men and women, all in evening attire, were flooding the boards with stacks of currency. Duke Hydon's stakes were high. He called for cash, not chips.

Standing near one table was a keen-faced young man who watched the players as well as the play. This was Harry Vincent, agent of The Shadow. Harry was sizing up the crowd.

As yet, he had seen no one who resembled George Corbal. Though he knew the man by description only, Harry was sure that he could spot him. Corbal's absence was proof that the crook intended to crash through from the outside. Hence there was no reason for Harry to seek contact with The Shadow.

Harry was interested also in watching any thuggish customers. There were a few about the tables; these were fellows who might figure, if gunplay broke loose. There was one man, however, whom Harry scarcely noticed. That was Sparkler Meldin, standing in his corner.

The big-shot from Havana had arrived quietly in New York. No one here had recognized him. Duke Hydon, busy with the customers, had not had time to chat again with Sparkler. Though Harry did observe Sparkler's flashing jewelry, he did not grasp its significance. He took the tuxedoed big-shot for a customer who was awaiting a chance to play roulette.

Only Sparkler was watching the elevator door. He was the sole person who saw its slight tremble. Calmly, the big-shot waited. He spotted eyes that were peeking through to study the roulette tables. Then the door slashed open with a clatter.

A man in black bounded out. From the folds of a high-tucked coat collar, the intruder delivered a harsh, almost snarling laugh.

To Sparkler, the imposition was plain. That hurried spring was a give-away that this could not be The Shadow. The laugh, too, sounded false. The high-raised collar, the low-jammed slouch hat, seemed part of a masquerade.

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Others, however, had not turned in time to see Corbal's anxious leap. The discrepancies of attire were overlooked by them, and so was the oddity of the laugh. For this false Shadow had actually brought startlement by the suddenness of his entry. More than that, he was ready with two automatics by the time the players turned.

"HANDS up!" snarled the intruder. "Hands up – and keep them up! Back away from the tables!" Sparkler Meldin acted with the others. When he raised his hands, he spread them palms forward. Only the plain gold of his jeweled rings was visible.

The cloaked impostor could not see the gems behind Sparkler's fingers. Nor could he spy the glitter of the huge stick-pin. Sparkler covered it by hunching his shoulders upward and lowering his long chin to the bottom of his neck.

The pretender who wore the guise of The Shadow was quick to size up trouble-makers in the room. He had eyed them from the elevator shaft; with both guns, he was motioning certain men into a huddled group. The few thuggish customers lined up beside Duke Hydon.

Awkwardly, the false Shadow poked one automatic beneath his cloak. Sparkler Meldin observed the clumsiness of the move; but others were still too bewildered to catch it. All except Harry Vincent. He knew who the impostor must be.

Silence held the room in its grip as Corbal stalked forward to the tables and began to gather up cash with his gloved left hand. He was hasty, almost fumbling; yet nifty enough to make his bold game pass.

Harry Vincent strained, a dozen feet away. He wanted to spring upon Corbal; but he withheld himself.

He knew that the fellow might go wild with his one gun. A barrage of frantically pumped shots could injure helpless patrons of the gambling room. It was best to wait for a better moment of action.

Particularly because Harry had a confident feeling that The Shadow, even though tricked, would arrive before Corbal made his get-away. Hence Harry waited, watching the black-clad rogue unscramble thousands of dollars from the green squares of the roulette layout.

DOWN at the side door of the Club Torreo, two men had noted the sudden hush that had begun above. Jake Lassop had been the first to sense it. Wisely, he had said nothing. But his companion, ordinarily a croupier at one of the roulette tables, had been thinking in terms of cash upstairs. The lack of buzz impressed him.

"What's gone haywire?" he questioned. "They've quit playing. Maybe we'd better go up and find out what's happened!"

"Not a chance," snapped Jake, quickly. "We're lookouts. We belong down here."

"One, of us can go up. You stick here while I –"

"No, no! We both belong here."

"But maybe the joint's been raided from the front. I'm going up!"

The croupier pulled a revolver from his pocket. Jake sensed instant complications. He knew that the false Shadow was at work. Moreover, he believed that the man would make a get-away through the elevator. Jake decided to work hard to keep his alibi.

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"Hold it," he said, gripping his companion's arm. Jake drew a revolver of his own. "We'd better tip off the street man. Wait until I see if he's around."

Jake opened the door and peered out. He came back, shaking his head. He closed the door and locked it.

"No sign of him," he stated. "That means that everything's all right. The street man would have come here to tip us, if there'd been a front raid."

OUTSIDE, a figure was gliding from the darkness of the wall, close beside the door. The Shadow had seen Jake Lassop bob into view. That, however, was not all that The Shadow had noted. Though the door had been opened for brief seconds only, The Shadow had detected the lack of distant buzz. He knew that a hush had fallen in the upstairs gambling room.

Approaching the door, The Shadow gave four short raps. He waited a moment; then repeated the signal. With his other hand, he was flashing a sign to his aids across the street. Against the door, The Shadow formed a blotted outline, his shape revealed by the street lamp.

The door swung inward. Jake had heard the signal. He thought it was the street man wanting to say something. He welcomed this opportunity to stall and help his alibi. Close beside Jake was the croupier; both men were holding their revolvers.

The Shadow stepped back instantly; from his cloak, he whisked a brace of automatics.

"The Shadow!"

Jake gasped the recognition. Startled to helplessness, he knew that this was the genuine cloaked master. His game was up; so was that of the impostor whom he served. At that moment, Jake – like the goggle-eyed croupier – was incapable of action.

Then came a break. The Shadow wheeled; his guns uncovered the two men before him.

The answer came lunging from the dark. It was the soft-footed street man, springing forward with leveled revolver. Coming back from the corner, the fellow had spied The Shadow. But he had not been stealthy enough to complete a surprise attack. The Shadow dropped as the street man aimed the revolver. While the fellow faltered with the trigger, The Shadow lunged forward; upward.

Locking with the attacker, he sent the outside man sprawling sidewise. The fellow rolled to the wall, his revolver clattering from his grasp. The Shadow wheeled and dived straight into the doorway. The croupier, jabbing forward, was the first to meet him. The Shadow jammed the man's gun arm upward; despite the thrust, the fellow offered resistance.

Jake Lassop scrambled for the stairway. He clattered upward, wildly hoping to give the alarm. He glanced madly downward, to see the croupier's body spinning about like a dummy figure. He saw The Shadow loom forward, heading for the steps. Jake made a last, terrified dive for upstairs safety.

Cliff and Hawkeye had come from across the street. Cliff had overpowered the street man while the fellow was snatching up his lost gun. Hawkeye piled upon the dazed croupier, who was sprawled across the doorway. Neither prisoner realized fully who their conqueror had been. Both helpless men were staring at new faces; those of Cliff and Hawkeye.

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JAKE LASSOP had reached the head of the stairway just in time to witness the beginning of a departure. Corbal had gathered up the swag. He had backed almost to the door of the elevator. A lone gun loomed from his right hand; his left was filled with crumpled, pilfered currency. He still held those before him at bay.

But Jake's arrival forced a change.

Instinctively, many persons turned toward the sound of the clatter. Like Corbal, they saw the wide-eyed lookout waving his revolver, ready to shout out news.

"The Shadow!" screamed Jake. "The Shadow! He's –"

As Jake shouted, Harry Vincent saw George Corbal aim. With a quick lunge, Harry dived straight for the elevator, to snatch down the impostor's gun arm.

Harry was too late. Corbal pumped two shots as he arrived.

Jake Lassop sprawled; his writhing ceased as Harry grappled hard with Corbal. The crook managed a swing with his gun. His heavy gun fist clipped the side of Harry's head and sent The Shadow's agent to the floor just outside the elevator.

But Corbal took no advantage of his chance to riddle Harry. Instead he threw the money to the floor of the elevator and tugged at the door with his left hand, while his right aimed and pumped new shots rapidly toward the stairs.

Corbal had guessed who would be close behind Jake Lassop. Those shots were meant for The Shadow; and the sizzling bullets nearly gained their mark. For, as Corbal opened angled fire, he alone saw a cloaked shape weave into view.

The Shadow dropped. Head and shoulders alone revealed, he was just below the line of Corbal's hasty fire. In slipping downward, The Shadow lost his own chance for immediate gunwork. It was not until he had gained entrenchment that he had opportunity to use an automatic. Then his .45 boomed its answering message.

The Shadow's opening came just as the elevator door clanged shut. A stream of rapid bullets mashed the steel barrier. The delayed slugs were too late. Corbal was on his way to safety. He had left one victim behind him: Jake Lassop, the man who could have blabbed.

THOSE in the gaming room heard The Shadow's shots. They thought that another lookout had fired them; for they could not see The Shadow, because of the stairway's angle. Harry Vincent's bold attempt to grab the false Shadow had also shown the intruder to be vulnerable.

With mad accord, the huddled men beside Duke Hydon began to come to action. Yanking revolvers, they fired useless shots against the closed door of the elevator shaft.

"Try to head him off!" roared Duke. "Down through the side door – down through the front – around the block! Anywhere –" The Shadow had headed down the stairway while Duke was beginning his order. Sweeping out into darkness, he hissed an order to his aids.

Cliff and Hawkeye had shoved their prisoners into a doorway; hearing The Shadow's command, the two agents followed him. The Shadow led the way through a darkened alley that extended to the next street.

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The roar of a departing car echoed from beyond. The Shadow and his agents reached their goal too late. A sparkling tail-light twinkled around a corner, almost a block away. George Corbal, the second Shadow, had made his get-away; once again, he had left murder in his wake.

When pursuers arrived from the Club Torreo, they found no trace of the pretender who had raided the gambling lair. Duke Hydon's strong-armed men ducked their revolvers when patrol cars appeared upon the scene. Stating that they were patrons of the down-stairs night club, they urged the officers to join in the search.

The quest was futile. No clue remained to tell of the invader's get-away, though officers scoured the entire area. And in their search for the false Shadow, they found no sign of the real. The neighborhood was vacant.

First to be balked, The Shadow and his agents had departed from the terrain. Their score with George Corbal was one that would require later settlement.

CHAPTER XI. A BIG SHOT PLANS

TWENTY-FOUR hours had elapsed since the affray at the Club Torreo. New headlines had gripped the front pages of the New York dailies. Again, the supposed activities of The Shadow had created a sensation. Yet a strange note of doubt had been forced upon the press.

Commissioner Ralph Weston had refused to admit that The Shadow existed. Wisely, Weston had refrained from giving the real reason for his statement; namely, his belief that The Shadow was not involved in crime. Instead, he had pretended the opinion that he had once held, long ago: that The Shadow – in name and in appearance – was merely an alias for some unknown person.

Until an actual identity could be given to the black-cloaked marauder, Weston was unwilling to declare a policy. At first, the press had stormed; then one newspaper had swung to the commissioner. That sheet was the Classic, on which Clyde Burke served as a reporter. Secretly an agent of The Shadow, Clyde had urged such procedure; and he had won his point.

Usually, other journals did not follow the example of the Classic; for it was a tabloid of yellow dye. In this instance, however, the other newspapers showed a trend toward the lead that the Classic had instituted. When a sensational daily turned conservative, editors suspected that something lay behind the actual news. Thus the soft pedal was applied to mention of The Shadow.

THIS day had been a difficult one for The Shadow. Counting heavily upon Clyde Burke, he had ordered the reporter to keep in constant touch through Burbank. Late in the afternoon, Clyde had shot through an unexpected report – one that caused The Shadow to form an immediate cause of action, for it concerned a man who had been present at the Club Torreo. Because of the tip that Clyde had gained, The Shadow appeared at the Cobalt Club, in the guise of Lamont Cranston. The time of his arrival was exactly eight o'clock.

The Shadow did not have long to wait. At ten minutes past the hour, a sharp-faced man entered the lobby of the club. Well-attired, brisk in manner, the visitor gave his name to the doorman. The attendant shook his head.

"Sorry, sir. We have orders that no one is to see Commissioner Weston even –"

Feigning the leisurely manner of Cranston, The Shadow sauntered forward. He eyed the sharp-faced man,

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then delivered a half-drawled exclamation.

"Sparkler Meldin!" ejaculated The Shadow. "Am I right?"

The arrival turned about. He nodded; his smile showed a gold-toothed gleam. He was puzzled by the face before him; yet he was pleased to know that he had found an acquaintance here. The Shadow extended his hand.

"Lamont Cranston is my name," he stated. "I met you in Havana, Meldin. Quite a fine place you had there. What are you doing in New York? Why, of all places, have you picked the Cobalt Club for a visit?"

"I want to see Commissioner Weston," returned Meldin. "I dogged his office all day. He wouldn't let me talk to him. So I came here, because some reporter told me that I might find the commissioner at the Cobalt Club."

"So you will." The Shadow nodded approval to the doorman. "Come along with me, Meldin. We shall find the commissioner in the grillroom. He is a friend of mine. Let me make the introduction."

THE friendship between Weston and Cranston was due for a severe strain. It came when The Shadow arrived in the grillroom accompanied by Meldin. One look at gleaming teeth and diamond stick-pin told Weston who the arrival was. The commissioner began to storm.

"I don't want to talk to you, Meldin –"

The Shadow interposed.

"One moment, commissioner," he remarked, in the calm tone of Cranston. "I promised to introduce Mr. Meldin to you. Really, he is a man of keen perception. I understand that he was present at the Club Torreo, last night."

"I know all about that," blustered Weston. "I have full reports on what happened at the place. If Sparkler Meldin thinks that he can tell me facts about this raider who calls himself 'The Shadow,' he will be wasting time –"

"That is not Meldin's purpose," interposed The Shadow. He gave a steady, knowing gaze to the Havana gambler. "I think, commissioner, that you will be surprised when you hear this gentleman's actual business."

Weston subsided suddenly. Meldin grinned and nodded his thanks to The Shadow. He drew up a chair and sat down across from Weston. The Shadow's cue proved to be more than mere conjecture. Sparkler did have something else to talk about.

"Commissioner," he stated, "I want to open a night club, here in New York. A place to be known as the Casino Havanola. I needed to see you, in order to gain your approval."

"What an absurdity!" exclaimed Weston. For the moment, he was totally astonished. "A gambling establishment? Here in New York? It would be in defiance of the law!"

"You heard me wrong, commissioner. I said a night club."

"Run by an outlaw, like yourself?"

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"An outlaw?" Meldin's tone was suave. "Pardon me, commissioner – the term is unwarranted. I have never defied the law."

"You ran a gambling place in Havana –"

"Where gambling was legal. You forget, perhaps, that I also had a night club in Miami – one, by the way, that was given a perfect rating as a place free from gambling. Moreover, it was an establishment where racketeers were never welcome."

Weston pondered. These facts impressed him. He looked at The Shadow. He asked: "Is this true, Cranston?"

The Shadow nodded.

"Perhaps I have been too hasty," decided the commissioner. "Yes, Meldin, I suppose that you can have a permit. After all, there is no record against you."

"None whatever," returned Sparkler. "The fact is simply this, commissioner. At present, business is hopeless in Havana. The city is too disturbed by political troubles."

"Very well. Come to my office in the morning."

"One other point, commissioner. About Duke Hydon, who ran the Club Torreo –"

"His place cannot stay open. We have sufficient evidence to close it. The Club Torreo is finished!"

"A good decision. I did not intend to ask you to permit its future operation. I merely wanted to know if I could hire Duke to work for me. I shall need a manager for the Casino Havanola – to open the place while I am absent. I must go to Cuba, to complete some business."

Once again, Sparkler Meldin had scored a surprise hit. Again, Weston gave agreement.

"Very well," decided the commissioner. "If you can show Duke Hydon the path to an honest living, I shall have no objection. My proviso, though, is that he shall have no financial interest in the business."

"None whatever. Thank you, commissioner. And you, Mr. Cranston."

Wholeheartedly, Sparkler extended his hand. With a bow, he turned and walked from the grillroom.

WESTON twisted the points of his mustache: then glared at The Shadow.

"This was your doing, Cranston," he chided. "What did you bring the fellow in here for?"

"You had a right to refuse him," returned The Shadow, calmly.

"Perhaps," said Weston, sourly. "But he, too, has some rights; and Meldin is smart enough to know them. After all, the man has no court record against him. He could obtain an injunction – or try to get one – preventing the police from refusing him a license."

"He did not state so."

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"Because he preferred to be friendly. He wanted a favor: that matter about Duke Hydon. So I granted it on policy. But we shall keep an eye on this new night club. You're leaving, Cranston? Well, we shall see each other later. When you have no new friend to introduce."

Weston was chuckling over his little jest when The Shadow strolled away. The commissioner did not observe the smile that appeared upon the thin lips of the supposed Lamont Cranston. This interview had developed certain possibilities that had been to The Shadow's liking. There was reason for his prompt departure. He intended to learn the sequel of Sparkler Meldin's interview with Weston.

THIRTY minutes later, The Shadow arrived at the Club Torreo. The gay night palace was glittering no longer. It had been closed by police order. Tables and furnishings had been removed. Two watchmen were on duty. They failed, however, to see the blackened shape that entered through the unlocked door. The Shadow had donned garb of black.

The front way to the second floor was open. Silently, The Shadow ascended. He reached the darkened gambling room. He saw a glimmer of a light beyond. Advancing, The Shadow reached the door of the office. It was ajar; the sound of voices reached The Shadow's ears.

"I'll fix it all tomorrow, Duke," The tone was Sparkler Meldin's. "The place – the time of opening – the personnel. You had a tough break here last night. As manager of the Casino, you'll receive a percent on the take. A chance to make a comeback."

"But it will go against us, Sparkler." The speaker was Hydon. "What chance have we got to make a cleanup, unless we have a roulette layout behind the front?"

"That's just what we will have", assured Sparkler. "But it won't come right away, Duke. We'll bluff Weston for a while; then we'll open wide. I know plenty of tricks that will foul the wise commissioner."

A chuckle from Duke.

"You ought to know them, Sparkler –

"All right. I'm in on it. When do you leave for Havana?"

"Three days from now. I'll leave the train at Miami, spend a day there, and fly to Cuba. Meanwhile, Duke, I'll make a complete list of the things I want done. The rest of the job is yours."

THE two men were coming to the door. The Shadow drew back in darkness. Sparkler and Duke went by. Their footsteps faded upon the front stairway.

A soft laugh whispered through the gloom. The Shadow had checked upon what he had already surmised. Sparkler Meldin was planning a New York gambling house, with the proposed Casino Havanola as the blind.

Moving to the side stairs, The Shadow descended. He found the look-out door boarded shut. He pried away the inner fastening and stepped out into the night. The sequel had ended. The Shadow had placed the part that Sparkler Meldin had planned to play. The man from Havana could be forgotten for the present. The task of locating George Corbal was paramount.

In this assumption, The Shadow was not wrong. Yet he was only partially correct. Sparkler Meldin did intend to open the Casino Havanola, to turn it into a gambling den deluxe, ready for profits that would put the Club Torreo in the shade. His new place would be a blind, with Duke Hydon as its capable manager.

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But there was another purpose behind Sparkler's game; one so well veiled that it had slipped past The Shadow. That other purpose concerned the second Shadow. Sparkler had not forgotten the facts that he had learned by listening in on Jake Lassop. Nor had he failed to remember the amateurish deeds of the cloaked pretender who had raided the Club Torreo.

Another sequel came when Sparkler sat alone, in the bedroom of an elaborate hotel suite. By a window that opened high above Manhattan, the Havana big-shot reviewed a list of telephone numbers. Sparkler was working out the meaning of the word "Calakor." He had marked out a circled diagram that represented the dial of a telephone.

The first hole of the dial contained the number: one, but no letters.

ABC were the letters in the second hole of the dial. From these, Sparkler had decided that the exchange name must begin with two such letters. A telephone book listed an exchange as Abbott-5. A and B fitted. In hole No. 5 appeared the letters JKL. Thus "1" became 5.

The letter "a" – after "1" – stood for the figure: two. The letter "k," like "1," appeared with the number five. The "o," Sparkler had decided, must mean six. Since PRS appeared on the dial with seven, the final figure was established. The complete number became Abbott 5-2567.

SPARKLER had already called that number, with no success. He picked up the telephone and called the hotel operator. He asked for Abbott 5-2567. A bell began to ring; Sparkler listened for half a minute. Suddenly, a click reached his ear. A voice followed, growling the word, "Hello!"

Sparkler responded. Suavely, he asked if this was the Acme Hotel. A laugh came across the wire.

"Got the wrong number, friend," said the man at the other end. "This here is a pay station."

"A pay station?" inquired Sparkler. "Are you positive?"

"Sure! I was just coming in to make a call, when I heard you ringing. Better take another look in the telephone book."

"Whereabouts is the pay station?" asked Sparkler, casually. "I'd like to kid the sap who told me it was the right number."

"Downstairs in the Tyrone Drug Store," returned the speaker. "The one on Eighth Street, near Seventh Avenue. That's where they have the phone booths: downstairs."

Sparkler hung up. His gleaming teeth showed satisfaction. He had learned the location that Jake had called. The place where the second Shadow received telephone calls from bribed helpers who knew the key-word "Calakor." Perhaps that device – a word instead of a number – could fool such men as Zutz and Lassop; but it had not passed by Sparkler Meldin.

Moreover, the man from Havana had another guess. A hide-out could be located in that neighborhood. A crook pretending to be The Shadow would want to be quick when he ducked into cover and out. It might take a while to find the fellow; but it would be worth the trouble.

For Sparkler Meldin wished an interview with the second Shadow, one that would be brief and pointed. Sparkler had bluffed Duke when he had said that he was going to Havana. Instead, he intended to remain in New York. His evening strolls, moreover, would be in the neighborhood of Eighth Street, on the fringe of

Greenwich Village.

Sparkler had bluffed more perfectly than he had guessed. Unwittingly, he had gained a march on The Shadow. Though Sparkler did not know the identity of George Corbal, he was close to the second Shadow's trail. With Sparkler lay present opportunity for a meeting with the man The Shadow sought.

The man from Havana had thrust himself deep into the game. He would be in deeper still, before either The Shadow or George Corbal would know of his clever entry.

CHAPTER XII. THE LINK TO CRIME

FIVE nights later. The Casino Havanola was holding its gala opening. Thanks to Duke Hydon, Sparkler Meldin had gained a New York night club much sooner than he had expected. The Club Galaxy, an old Manhattan bright spot, had been losing business. Duke had arranged for its purchase.

Since the Club Galaxy was already licensed, Sparkler Meldin encountered no red tape in the transfer. Almost overnight, the place was transformed into a new establishment. Its glittering sign proclaimed it as the "Casino Havanola." Spanish entertainers, already in New York, had been engaged for the opening performances.

Sparkler Meldin had presumably left for Cuba, via Miami. Duke Hydon believed that the big-shot had gone; so did The Shadow. For both had every reason to suppose that Sparkler had found the opportunity he wanted. The Shadow, moreover, had received a report from Clyde Burke. The Classic reporter, on a special assignment in Washington, had interviewed Sparkler when his train stopped at the capital.

That had been two nights ago. The next day, Sparkler had been interviewed in Miami. A brief item to such effect had been wired to New York. Presumably, Sparkler had taken a plane to Havana. But therein lay the flaw. Though Sparkler had actually left Miami by air, his plane had secretly turned northward, instead of making for Cuba. As it was a private plane, its course was not noted.

Tonight, the big-shot was back in New York. Though he had spent the last few years in Cuba, Sparkler was an old resident of Manhattan. Familiar with every quarter of the city, he had chosen several places where he knew he could dwell unnoticed. The first of these was an apartment in Greenwich Village, catty-cornered across from the Tyrone Drug Store.

MEANWHILE, The Shadow had continued with his quest. A lull had followed George Corbal's raid at the Club Torreo. Evidently, the pretender had decided that his next move could wait. He had learned that he needed craft as well as nerve.

The underworld had been perplexed by this sudden change of policy. Men of crime wondered what The Shadow's next move would be.

They still thought that Corbal had been The Shadow. Moreover, the killing of Jake Lassop had left a tinge of mystery. Presumably, aids of The Shadow had attacked the side door of the Club Torreo while The Shadow, himself, was gathering the swag. Jake Lassop's intervention had given the bribed lookout a clean bill. No one suspected that Jake had been serving the man who had killed him. Corbal had worked a smart trick when he had shot down his excited hireling.

In consequence of the Torreo affray, crooks had ceased their criticism of Louie Zutz, the lookout at the old Hilo Club. Zutz had been under suspicion; for it was conceded that he had ducked for cover after the raid by the pretended Shadow. Gradually, the opinion had grown that Zutz was hiding out because he feared The

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Shadow – not because he had served that foe of gangdom.

The waning of suspicion had proven advantageous to The Shadow. He knew that there had been three links to crime. One was Spike Gonley; the second, Louie Zutz; the third, Jake Lassop. Each of these had dealt with Corbal. Gonley had traveled to Mexico, after parting with Jerry Renwood in San Francisco. Lassop had been shot down by Corbal. Only one of the three links remained: Louis Zutz.

The Shadow had sensed that the Hilo lookout was still in New York. Hence he and his agents had engaged in an intensive search for the missing man. So far, they had achieved no luck, although The Shadow himself had visited notorious dives, garbed as a sweated hoodlum.

Tonight, the search had spread. Cliff Marsland was scouring Brooklyn; Harry Vincent was in New Jersey. Hawkeye was making the rounds of hangouts in the Bronx.

As for The Shadow, he had declared a temporary holiday. Tonight, he had chosen to view the opening of the Casino Havanola. Attired in evening clothes, he had appeared in the guise of Lamont Cranston. Recognized by a courteous head waiter – a former employee of an exclusive hotel – the millionaire visitor had been assigned to a choice table near the entertainment floor.

Mexicans in native attire were strumming guitars, while a senorita crooned a Spanish melody. Surrounding tables formed terraced layers; the night club was two-thirds filled, although the evening was young. Apparently, the Casino Havanola was heading for a profitable business, even on a legitimate basis.

The head waiter approached The Shadow's table. Courteously, he requested that Mr. Cranston visit the office.

The Shadow arose and strolled through a curtained archway. He passed between paneled walls, and was ushered through an open doorway. His disguised lips formed a smile as his eyes perceived the persons present.

Police Commissioner Ralph Weston was seated in the office with Duke Hydon. The night club manager came to his feet. Beaming, he thrust his hand to grasp The Shadow's.

"My thanks, Mr. Cranston," he declared. "Commissioner Weston has told me that it was you who introduced Meldin to him. I appreciate the favor, sir."

Duke Hydon formed a bowing figure. His trimmed beard lent him a polish that befitted his nickname; for with it, Duke affected the air of a foreign nobleman. Evidently Sparkler had ordered him to add class to the Casino Havanola.

"Let me show you about," suggested Duke. "I should like you both to see the new appointments of the night club. We have intended to use all the space in the two floors that are at our disposal."

The Shadow was studying the paneled walls of the downstairs office. His survey was casual; he turned when Duke bowed and indicated the door. With Weston, The Shadow left the office. Duke conducted them to a broad stairway at the front of the night club.

This led to the second floor. There they entered a passage with wide, open doorways on either side. At each stop, Duke pressed a light switch, to show an elaborately furnished room. There were four such apartments, each still undergoing decoration.

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"Rooms for special parties," explained Duke. "Each to be decorated after a different pattern. All will be ready for use within the coming week. When they are not needed for private parties, we can use them for overflow customers."

"Gamblers, perhaps?" quizzed Weston, significantly.

"No, no, commissioner," laughed Duke. "See for yourself. The entire floor is open. Above it, there is nothing but the roof. Meldin's promise remains good, commissioner. The Casino Havanola will be a night club only. Not a gambling establishment."

THEY had reached the end of the corridor. The wall ended with a dome-topped niche, wherein a fountain and its basin had been set. Duke switched on some hidden lights, to throw a glow upon the imitation marble.

"When the fountain plays, the effect will be excellent," he stated. "Colored lights upon spraying water; changing hues to add more beauty. Meldin brought the plans for this fountain. There is one like it in Havana."

On either side of the hallway were open-centered doors that served as entrances to cloak rooms. Noting the interiors of these long, narrow rooms, The Shadow saw that the walls were paneled, like those of Duke's downstairs office. More than that, he had observed a deceptive fact about this upper story.

The second floor of the Casino Havanola did not occupy as much space as the first. The grand staircase was a winding one; that accounted, in part, for the illusion.

The Shadow had counted paces as they walked along. He had made an estimate which he knew must be correct. This upper floor had a depth that was no more than two-thirds of the lower night club. In addition, there must be a space above Duke Hydon's lower office.

The supposed cloak rooms were secret entrances to the space beyond the final wall; just as Duke's office served as the hiding place of a secret stairway. Customers, once on the second floor, could be admitted to a gambling palace through an unused cloak room. Similarly, Duke Hydon could go up and down from his lower office, unnoticed.

Everything was fixed to open wide, once the Casino Havanola had established itself as a legitimate night club. Commissioner Weston had been completely deceived by the arrangement. The Shadow could see a pleased expression upon Duke Hydon's bearded visage. It was Sparkler Meldin who had arranged the layout; Duke was overjoyed to know that his chief's craftiness had scored.

THE trio returned to the night club. The head waiter spied them and approached. He gestured toward the archway that led to Hydon's office.

"A telephone call," he explained. "For Mr. Cranston. I had it transferred to your private wire, Mr. Hydon."

"That was right," nodded Duke. "Go right ahead, Mr. Cranston. The office is yours."

The Shadow went to the office. He picked up the loose receiver and announced himself in a quiet tone. It was Burbank on the wire. The contact man had news. Briefly, he gave it: a report from Cliff Marsland. The roving agent had located Louie Zutz in Brooklyn.

The report received, The Shadow strolled from the office. Outside the door, he met Weston and Hydon. The commissioner was satisfied with his inspection of the Casino Havanola, and was about to leave.

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The Shadow remarked that he had received an urgent call from New Jersey, and was therefore returning to his home. In the leisurely manner of Lamont Cranston, he went from the night club.

The limousine was not awaiting him. Instead, The Shadow took a taxi; but he was careful in his selection. He entered a cab that was parked fully half a block from the Casino Havanola. The driver did not hear him enter. In fact, his first knowledge of The Shadow's presence came when he caught the order of a whispered voice.

The driver knew the command. For this was Moe Shrevnitz, an independent cab driver who was in The Shadow's service. It was Moe who had trailed Jerry Renwood, that day on Broadway. Tonight, Moe had been in constant readiness for The Shadow's order.

There was significance in the order that The Shadow uttered. Moe interpreted its importance. He nodded to himself as he pulled away from the curb, swinging about to head in the direction of Brooklyn Bridge. Moe, like other agents of The Shadow, knew the present urgency. He could guess that The Shadow's present mission concerned the search for Louie Zutz.

The link to crime had been uncovered. The Shadow had gained his chance to resume a lost trail. Through Zutz, he might find a clue to the whereabouts of George Corbal, the skulking pretender to The Shadow's power.

Yet the mere finding of the link did not insure success. Long experience had told The Shadow that sometimes the simplest of tasks produced great complications. Small fry though Louie Zutz might be, The Shadow did not intend to seek him out too openly.

As the cab rolled onward, long hands opened a bag that lay upon the floor. Garments of black came forth; folds of cloth rolled over stooping shoulders.

Slouch hat, gloves, automatics – all these items of equipment became The Shadow's. His figure blackened within Moe's cab. A chance observer would have thought the taxi to be unoccupied. The only token of the unseen passenger was the slight whisper of a laugh that issued from invisible lips.

Louie Zutz, server of the second Shadow, would be due for a surprise tonight. Before an hour had passed, he would stand face to face with the superfoe who fought all evildoers; Louie Zutz was destined to meet The Shadow!

CHAPTER XIII. CLOAKED RIVALS MEET

MOE SHREVNITZ stopped his cab beside the blank wall of a Brooklyn warehouse, near the side door of a garage. As he extinguished the cab lights, the taxi driver heard the rear door close. The Shadow had stepped from the cab.

A voice whispered from the darkness. Cliff Marsland was here, reporting to The Shadow.

"Zutz lives across the street," informed Cliff. "I tracked him through a pal who works in the garage. Zutz just did a sneak into the garage – to make a telephone call, maybe. I think he made one a short while ago; because he was in the garage before."

The Shadow headed to the garage door. He found a small, hinged entrance in the center of the sliding panel. Entering, The Shadow found a dimly lighted interior. Past a cluster of stored cars was the door of an office. The Shadow approached; he heard a man talking breathlessly across a telephone. It was Louie Zutz, a pasty,

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rat-faced rowdy.

"Honest, I'm scared!" Louie's voice was a half whine. "I can't get no job at no other joint. There's mugs that are leery about the gag I pulled at the Hilo... Sure, I told Spike Gonley I'd work with you... Yeah, before he took it on the lam for Frisco... Well, I worked for you for a while, didn't I, at the Hilo Club?"

"I've doped it that Jake Lassop was working for you at the Club Torreo. What's that? You plugged Jake because he tried a double cross? That don't change matters. One job's all a guy can pull... If those other guys won't go through with it like they promised Spike Gonley, why should I? I ain't no fall guy... What's more, this Shadow racket ain't so hot..."

"I wouldn't worry if I ran into The Shadow himself, after seeing the way you pranced around in that black night-shirt... What's that? You want me to think it over and call again in fifteen minutes? All right..."

ZUTZ banged the receiver. Muttering to himself, he turned about. His eyes became goggly. Zutz was staring at The Shadow.

Though he displayed no weapon, The Shadow's hands were ready at the borders of his black cloak. Zutz forgot his recent boast. His impressions of Corbal, the false Shadow, were dimmed when he saw the real Shadow in person.

"I don't know nothing," whined Zutz, guessing that The Shadow had overheard his telephone call. "Honest! I was only helping a pal! Spike Gonley said I'd hear from a guy who wanted to knock off the Hilo Club. I did, and the mug told me where to call him. He came rigged up like you; but it was him, not me, that bumped the copper. I don't even know the number I just called. All I've got is a word the guy gave me. I spell it on the dial when I call him."

Zutz displayed a piece of paper. The Shadow plucked it from his fingers. On the paper, The Shadow read the word: "Calakor." Stepping past Zutz, he picked up a telephone book. His gloved finger found the page with the exchange list and marked the first exchange. The Shadow's eyes had noted the dial on the telephone. That was sufficient.

Disregarding Zutz, The Shadow called Burbank.

"Consult reverse number book," he ordered. "Report on Abbott 5-2567."

A pause; then Burbank's response:

"Abbott 5-2567. A pay station in the Tyrone Drug Store near Eighth Street and Seventh Avenue."

"H to cover," instructed The Shadow. "C may be there."

"H" meant Hawkeye; "C" meant Corbal. The Shadow's trail was settled. Hawkeye could take it temporarily. Turning, The Shadow faced Zutz, who had stood puzzled during period of the telephone call to Burbank.

"I was to lay low," blabbed Zutz. "I called tonight to ask about my cut; but the guy wants me to take on another lookout job -"

"Remain at your hide-out," ordered The Shadow, his whisper sinister. "Later you will receive my order. Obey when it arrives!"

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THE SHADOW was giving Zutz a break. Though a rat, the fellow had wanted no part in murder. The Shadow was willing to let him travel from New York.

Zutz appreciated the favor. He proved it, suddenly, when he emitted a hoarse cry of warning. Zutz was looking toward the door; The Shadow wheeled, knowing that the man had spotted some danger.

On the threshold stood a scar-faced bruiser, gripping a .38. The rogue was some unexpected killer, whose snarl told that he recognized The Shadow.

But before he could aim his revolver, The Shadow was upon him, pulling an automatic as he came. Sledging a back-hand stroke, The Shadow used his left to clip the ruffian's jaw.

The fellow sprawled clear through the doorway. The Shadow hissed an order to Zutz:

"Stay where you are!"

Springing out into the garage proper, The Shadow encountered new foemen. A squad of hoodlums had arrived at the front door; they were jabbing bullets at The Shadow. A hoarse voice roared from a touring car that stood with motor running.

"Get The Shadow! Two grand to the guy who croaks him!"

The Shadow knew the shouter. He was "Skate" Dover, the "wanted" leader of a murderous crew who had been running bootleg gas to Long Island. This garage chanced to be their headquarters; returning from a run, the thugs had found The Shadow.

Stopping short, fading backward, The Shadow thundered bullets from his automatics. Wild-stabbing revolvers were his targets. He dropped the men behind him.

Skate shouted for crooks to dive behind parked cars. As they obeyed, The Shadow leaped beyond a big sedan. He had clipped three foemen; he dropped another who came over the top of a coupe.

Skate shouted for a charge. His remaining followers closed in toward The Shadow, who bobbed suddenly into view to meet them at close range. As he fired withering shots, a new gun blasted from the side door of the garage. Cliff had heard the shots. He had arrived to deliver a flank fire.

Into the barrage came a wild-eyed man fleeing for safety, he ran straight into doom. It was Louie Zutz, forgetful of The Shadow's orders. Bullets riddled the scared rat. Louie rolled over dead, just as The Shadow and Cliff broke the charge of the foe.

As The Shadow spilled a last attacker, Cliff aimed for the touring car at the front of the garage. A door of the car wrenched open; Skate Dover came diving, aiming for The Shadow.

Cliff fired; his shot went wide. Fading, The Shadow rolled on the oily surface of the garage floor. As Skate missed a shot, The Shadow tongued a bullet upward. Skate sprawled, rolled over and lay still.

With Cliff behind him, The Shadow headed for Moe's cab. Hastily, they rode away, for sirens told that gunfire had been heard and police were heading to the spot. Moreover, The Shadow had other work ahead. He must take up the trail that he had left temporarily to Hawkeye – the trail of the second Shadow, George Corbal.

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ALREADY Hawkeye, at the Tyrone Drug Store, had spotted a man who was pacing impatiently by the telephone booths. Hawkeye was sure that this man was George Corbal. He watched the fellow glance angrily at his watch and suddenly stalk from the store.

Hawkeye trailed.

After a few short, twisted blocks through Greenwich Village, Corbal descended stairs that led to a basement apartment. Behind an old-fashioned picket fence, two doors away, Hawkeye heard Corbal click a key in a lock. After the sound ended, Hawkeye came out from cover. Shambling past Corbal's door, he noted the number.

Hawkeye kept on around the block and picked what he thought must be the rear door to Corbal's hide-out.

Hurrying back to the drug store, Hawkeye made a call to Burbank. The contact man told the spotter to stand by. Soon, a bell rang in a booth. It was Burbank; when Hawkeye answered, the contact man ordered him off duty.

The Shadow had stopped off and called while riding in from Brooklyn. He had gained Hawkeye's report. From now on, Corbal belonged to The Shadow.

WITHIN his basement apartment, George Corbal had chosen darkness; a matter of usual policy. Finally, when he reached an inner room, he risked a light. The glow showed that the room had only one small window. It was high up; Corbal had covered it with composition board so that no light could trickle through.

The sallow-faced crook opened a table drawer and produced two lists. One covered gambling houses. Corbal had already crossed off the Hilo Club and the Club Torreo. Muttering, he ran lines through the other places on the list. He was through with the risky racket of raiding such clubs.

The other list had names of individuals, half of them crossed off. This was the list that Corbal had worked with Renwood, before Renwood went West. Corbal studied the remaining names carefully. He found one that suited him. He made a check mark beside it. Corbal still saw a chance for crime.

Opening a closet door, Corbal drew out garments of black. Donning cloak and slouch hat, he picked up gloves and automatics. He took them to the table, laid them upon the lists. The apartment had no telephone; but Corbal had previously supplied himself with a directory. Opening the telephone book, he found the name that he had checked on the list. Corbal copied it as it appeared in the book, using a small piece of paper.

The pencil point snapped. Corbal threw the pencil aside. Some pages of the telephone book flipped shut upon the paper that bore the written name. Finding another pencil, Corbal was about to slide back the flipped pages when he heard a whispered tone behind him. Chilled, Corbal turned about. His fresh pencil dropped from his nerveless fingers.

Standing within the door was a figure whose attire resembled Corbal's own. Slouch hat, cloak of black – there the similarity ended. The arrival had provided himself with accouterments that Corbal had as yet neglected. He was wearing black gloves; each fist clutched an automatic.

"The Shadow!"

CORBAL gasped the name. His cry was an admission of his own imposture. The cloaked intruder gave another laugh. Corbal trembled. Here was The Shadow, almost as Corbal remembered him from that hazy night when the cloaked avenger had entered to bind and gag him and keep him from Garraway, the banker.

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"Don't – don't kill me!" pleaded Corbal. "I'll – I'll talk –"

"Proceed!" ordered the intruder, a sharp hiss to his voice. "Your life shall be spared!"

Corbal backed away from the table on which rested his own guns.

"I shot Patrolman Jennings outside the Hilo Club," he admitted, "but I wasn't out to kill him. I had to plug Lasso, because he was a double-crosser. I was through with the racket. You can see the list, with all the names crossed off."

Corbal made a pitiful sight; his black garb was flappy as he cowered.

Compared to Corbal, the new entrant was an imposing figure. With a swish, the intruder reached the table. Putting away one automatic, he lifted the list. Laying it aside, he picked up the other sheet.

"You have dropped one racket," he sneered, "but you have chosen another!"

"No, no!" protested Corbal. "The list is an old one!"

"One name is checked."

"I – I – yes. I intended to visit that man tonight, to learn if he had funds available. I never had enough on him for blackmail. He is a philanthropist; sometimes he keeps as much as fifty thousand dollars in his home. He has jewels, too."

A laugh followed Corbal's statement.

"You speak of funds," came the significant tone. "Where are those that you stole in the past?"

"In the large box." Corbal gestured toward the closet. "On the floor, to the left of the door –"

Words failed Corbal. He uttered a piteous cry. A gloved finger was ready on the trigger of its .45, beginning a squeeze.

"I confessed!" bawled Corbal. "You promised mercy –"

The automatic muzzle delivered flame. Hard on the first blast came another; then a third, a fourth. Bullets at close range, delivered for the heart of a cringing victim. Corbal sprawled crazily on the floor.

A HOLLOW laugh sounded, as a gloved hand put away the automatic.

Corbal's slayer stepped to the closet; found the box and opened it to view the swag. He picked up the lists, noted the one with the checked name and chuckled harshly as he folded the lists and added them to the contents of the box.

Stooping, he wrenched the black cloak that covered Corbal's shoulders. He raised the slouch hat, laughed as he studied Corbal's sallow face. He put Corbal's hat, guns and gloves upon the cash box; then wrapped all within the dead man's cloak. Bundling the burden, he strode through darkness and reached the front street.

There, the departer heard shouts; also the sounds of approaching sirens. His shots had been heard. Police were closing in.

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Quickly, the cloaked departer dashed for a space between two buildings. An approaching officer saw him and hurried in pursuit. The cloaked fugitive turned and fired three shots. One bullet found the patrolman's shoulder.

The fugitive dashed onward. A police car arrived on the street behind Corbal's hide-out. The wounded patrolman was clattering the cement with his club, using his good arm. Two officers came to his rescue.

"The fellow beat it!" gulped the crippled cop. "He headed off! Maybe you can nab him; but he's got a start –"

"What did he look like? Where did he come from?"

"He was all in black! He came out of a basement on the front street, where the shooting was!"

"All in black? You don't think he was –"

The wounded patrolman grimaced as his shoulder twinged with a knifelike pain. He set his lips and nodded, as he gave answer:

"That's who he was: The Shadow!"

CHAPTER XIV. THE NAME IN THE BOOK

THE law had acted swiftly this night. Within fifteen minutes after the death of George Corbal, patrol cars were scouring the terrain for blocks about. A complete cordon had been established, in case a desperate killer should still be in the vicinity.

Within thirty minutes after Corbal's death, Joe Cardona had arrived upon the scene. The acting inspector had gained word of the killing. He had come to take charge of this case which appeared to involve The Shadow.

"It was The Shadow all right. Look at this, inspector."

A detective made the statement, pointing to Corbal's body as he spoke.

Stooping, Cardona examined a trophy. It was a short strip of black cloth, twisted half about the dead man's neck, like a portion of a hangman's noose.

"This guy must have grabbed the killer's cloak," stated the dick. "Got away with a chunk of it. Funny, though, that he isn't clutching it."

Cardona started to make a comment. He stopped suddenly. He was wondering about this clue. That piece of cloth looked like a portion of a garment that the dead man had been wearing. Could someone have killed this victim; then snatched a cloak from his body?

Plausibly, yes. Yet the dead man could not be The Shadow. Cardona could not picture that sallow face as The Shadow's own; nor could he visualize The Shadow, trapped and slain, in so poor a hide-out as this one.

"He took it on the lam, The Shadow did," the detective was reporting. "Patrolman Ruskin saw him. He was carrying what looked like a box of swag. Fired three shots at Ruskin. Got him with one of them. Not wounded bad, though."

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CARDONA was nodding to himself. He was forming a reconstruction of this crime. One that did not hit the bull's-eye, yet which scored a marker. The dead man, here on the floor, had been wearing a black cloak. Therefore, Cardona knew who the dead man was. He was the one who had raided the Hilo Club; and afterward, the Club Torreo. This victim was the second Shadow.

Who had bagged him?

Not The Shadow. On that point, Cardona was positive. This episode had convinced him more than ever that a duplicate Shadow was in the game. The Shadow would not have shot down a helpless wretch, like this fellow on the floor. Nor would he have made a half-maddened run for safety, pausing only to fire back and cripple a beat-pounding patrolman like Ruskin.

More than that, Cardona had just come from another case. Skate Dover, murderer, had been found dead in his Brooklyn headquarters. With him had perished members of his crew. Others – survivors – had blabbed of a lone fighter in black; then they had turned mum. Public enemies had been eliminated; and the one fighter capable of that deed was The Shadow.

Figuring the time element, Cardona calculated that The Shadow could not have come from Brooklyn to Manhattan within the period that had passed between the two events. Someone other than The Shadow had dealt death in Greenwich Village. One crook had guessed another's game; had slain him; had deprived him of spoils, as well as his false garments.

Cardona had scored close to a perfect hit. His one error came when he tried to visualize the killing of George Corbal. Cardona's guess was that another man had dropped the imitation Shadow; then had taken cloak and hat to mask himself in the get-away.

The actual truth did not occur to the ace sleuth. He never suspected that the slayer of Corbal had been disguised in black at the beginning; that the dead man had believed himself faced by The Shadow.

Hence Cardona had no inkling of the cunning possessed by the man with whom he would have to deal. He thought that The Shadow duplication had ended.

Because of that, Cardona took it for granted that detectives had searched the place sufficiently. He finished his report then prepared to leave. He would have gone without a further clue, but for the comment of a detective present.

"FUNNY thing," remarked the headquarters man. "This guy having a phone book, but no telephone. What do you think of it, inspector?"

Cardona shrugged his shoulders.

"What of it?" he inquired. He noted the directory on the table and began to thumb its pages. "Probably he just carried it in here, along with a lot of useless truck –"

Cardona stopped suddenly. His moving thumb had struck the edge of a paper, wedged between two pages. Cardona opened the book. He found the sheet upon which Corbal had copied a name.

"Jothan Swedley," read Cardona. "That's an odd name. Wonder why this bird wrote that one, and left it here in the book. Hm–m–m. Swedley. Wait until I see if the name's listed."

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He turned the pages, going toward the back of the book. He found the name Swedley listed half a dozen times. Among the group was a J. M. Swedley.

"That's the one," decided Cardona. "The only Swedley whose first name could be Jothan. I'll tell you what this means. This dead man must have known something about J. M. Swedley, in order to write down his first name, Jothan. Where's the nearest telephone?"

"Across the street," informed a detective. "That's where we called you from, inspector."

"Show me the place. I want to make a call."

Cardona pocketed the sheet of paper. He wrote Swedley's telephone number in a notebook. He went across the street and used a private telephone.

There was no answer at the J. M. Swedley number. Coming out of the house, Cardona bumped into Markham, who had just arrived. He drew the detective sergeant to one side.

"I've got a theory, Markham," informed Cardona. "One crook bumped another. The killer took the swag – all the haul that the first guy made from the Hilo and the Torreo."

"You mean the dead man's The Shadow?" gasped Markham.

"Not at all," rejoined Joe. "You know the commissioner's decision. We're not looking for The Shadow. We're after a guy who has pulled some phony jobs, wearing a black cloak and hat.

"The dead guy across the street is the one we wanted. The killer took the cash he found there; and maybe he learned a few things besides. Like what the dead guy was going to do next, for instance. Well, in the telephone book, I found this paper. Look at the name on it: Jothan Swedley.

"There's a J. M. Swedley, and I've just called him. No answer. The man lives on East Eighty-fifth Street. That's where we're going, with a squad. Maybe the murderer will have some reason to get Swedley; and maybe he don't know about this paper that I found. Here's our chance to do two good bits of business. Protect Swedley and lay for the murderer at the same time."

TOGETHER, Cardona and Markham boarded a police car. They traveled along a narrow street, the headlamps cutting a wide swath. As they neared a corner, the glare of the lights fringed a doorway. Oddly, blackness refused to vanish in the momentary glow. That fact escaped the men in the car.

Blackness moved when it had again blended with deep darkness. A gliding figure began a silent course along the street. It drew aside when a searching patrolman went by, flicking his flashlight here and there. The officer's search was scarcely more than a routine. He did not believe that any fugitive would have doubled back so close to the scene of crime.

However, that stranger of the darkness was no fugitive. He was a different personage in black than the one who had made a wild flight from this district. The Shadow had arrived in person. He had been delayed in his approach, through the presence of a police cordon. From one spot of blackness to another, The Shadow had worked an irregular course inward to his objective.

He reached the basement doorway. He edged into darkness. There The Shadow saw the glow from the room where Corbal's body lay. Two detectives were coming out through the darkness; a uniformed policeman was following them to the door.

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"So that's where the inspector has gone," remarked the policeman. "Up to see about this fellow Swedley. What do you think his idea is?"

"Swedley's name was on that sheet of paper, wasn't it?" retorted a dick. "That means the dead guy knew something about him. Maybe the murderer found it out, too."

"Yeah. But how many guys are there named Swedley? A lot, maybe."

"With a first name like Jothan? Say – there only could be one. I saw the inspector looking through the phone book. He found a J. M. Swedley. The only one it could be."

JOTHAN SWEDLEY. The Shadow remembered the name, as he made a circling course in darkness. When he neared the lighted room, he peered over his shoulder and saw the policeman at the outer doorway, still chatting with the detective. Gliding into the room, The Shadow formed a spectral figure in the light. He spied the opened telephone book. It lay beneath the glare of the table lamp. He noted the name of J. M. Swedley. The Shadow also made careful notation of the address. Not a wealthy neighborhood, where J. M. Swedley lived. The Shadow calculated it as living close to Third Avenue.

A black glove peeled from The Shadow's left hand, as his right drew it away. A gem, The Shadow's girasol, shone iridescent beneath the light. The Shadow's fingers rubbed the book page with their tips. That touch ended, they quickly turned the pages, to a section of the directory that was closer to the front.

The Shadow stopped among the names that began with the letter J. His fingers moved along the right-hand page, while his eyes scanned the left sheet. The Shadow made a double discovery. His fingers encountered indentations. Someone had written a name, while resting a paper upon the opened telephone book. Also, The Shadow saw the name he wanted.

George Corbal copied it directly from the book. Because of that, he had written the last name first, according to the usual listing. "Jothan Swedley" meant Swedley Jothan. There, in plain view was the name that The Shadow sought. "Swedley Jothan" – with an address on Madison Avenue.

VOICES from the front room. Turning swiftly, The Shadow swung back against a rear door in the farther corner. His shape was almost invisible, away from the light.

As he stood there, waiting, The Shadow stared toward the figure on the floor. He could see the sallow features of George Corbal. He recognized the man who had played the role of the second Shadow.

Two men entered. One was the bluecoat: the other, a new detective who had come with Markham. This chap was trying to explain things to the officer.

"The inspector don't know who we're after," stated the detective. "Didn't I hear him telling that to Sergeant Markham? So here's the stiff, eh?" He viewed Corbal's body. "Well, from what Cardona says, he may have been the guy in black."

"Yeah?" quizzed the bluecoat. "Then what was he doing on the next street, running away except when he stopped to plug Ruskin? Shot off some fireworks in here to begin with, then beat it, then ducked back and committed suicide without firing a shot? Is that the way you figure it? Say – if that's the way you hear things, you'll be pounding a beat before you know it."

"Get wise to yourself!" snorted the detective. "It could have been another guy outside. Some mug who snatched the black kimono off of this one. My hearing's good enough. How's your eyesight?"

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"What do you mean, my eyesight?"

"Well, you'll have to do a lot of looking won't you? Squinting around to see if you can spot a guy in black? Now you see him – now you don't –"

THE detective stopped short. All this while, The Shadow had been softly turning the knob of the door that led into the back room of the basement. He had opened the barrier; he was fading backward into darkness. By chance alone, the talking detective had looked up to catch a glimpse of his fading shape. The light showed one momentary outline of a hawkish silhouette.

"Say!" The detective stared. "Look at that door! I'd have sworn I saw movement –"

The door was closing. The shine of its dark-stained panel replaced the deeper darkness of the room beyond. The detective grabbed the bluecoat by the arm.

"Some guy just ducked out of sight!" he cried, excitedly. "Come on! We'll get him!"

Yanking guns and flashlights, the pair sprang for the door and opened it. The glimmer of the torches flicked through the rear room, just in time to show a back door closing.

"He's gone that way! The key's still in the lock! Get him – quick!"

As the pair dashed for the back door, the inward-projecting key performed a singular action. Clipped by pincers thrust through the outside keyhole, the key itself was turning.

The detective reached the door and grabbed the knob. He tried to open the barrier. He failed.

"I can't get it opened –"

"Maybe it's still locked," put in the policeman. "That's the way it was when we looked the place over."

The detective turned the key. The lock clicked open. He turned the knob; the door swung inward.

"Well, I'll –"

The detective looked at the policeman, then shook his head.

"No guy could have locked it that quick," decided the dick. "Not with the key here in the door. Yet I saw the door closing –"

"Maybe you thought you did," interposed the bluecoat. "It sort of looked that way to me, too. But these flashlights do funny things when you swing them. Sometimes they make it look like something's moving when it isn't."

BOTH men swung beams about the rear steps. Discovering nothing, they went back into the basement, locking the door behind them. A silent, motionless figure detached itself from the wall. Gliding invisibly, The Shadow moved away.

Joe Cardona had been right; The Shadow, when he made a departure, did not take to maddened flight. The man who had slain George Corbal had been a masquerader, like the victim. The Shadow, too, had divined that fact from the talk that he had overheard between the remaining detective and the blue-coat.

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Clearly, The Shadow pieced the circumstances, adding the finishing touch that Cardona had failed to get. Another crook had guessed Corbal's game. That new worker of evil had come here to murder the man who had passed himself as The Shadow. But such a crook, clever as a ferret, would surely have come prepared. More dangerous than Corbal, he had adopted the same ruse as the second Shadow, to try its working for himself.

A third Shadow had entered the game. One who had taken Corbal's swag. One who had probably learned of plans which Corbal, now dead, could not continue. One who would amplify the slain impostor's purposes with methods of his own. One who already might be threatening a man named Swedley Jothan.

Joe Cardona had guessed in reverse. He had gone to protect a man named Swedley, whose life stood in no danger. The Shadow, also, was starting on a mission of protection, following an urge that was the same as Cardona's. Chances were that The Shadow would encounter a superfoe of crime – one whose name he had not yet learned.

But on one point, The Shadow was sure. The enemy was a supercrook who had taken up the game where Corbal had left off; a new masquerader who had profited by his elimination of the old.

The Shadow was on the trail of the third Shadow!

CHAPTER XV. SHADOW VERSUS SHADOW

SWEDLEY JOTHAN'S home was a gloomy residence that had the appearance of a mausoleum. Though it stood close to modern buildings, it was not conspicuous; for a high wall surrounded the antiquated edifice. Passers on the street did not realize that a house stood beyond that plain brick wall.

Nor was Swedley Jothan widely known. He was not a man of tremendous wealth. His own fortune was less than a million dollars; and he had acquired it purely through his connection with large enterprises in which his name had not appeared. But Swedley Jothan was a philanthropist of unusual quality.

Unassuming by nature, he had retired from business to seek seclusion in this old Manhattan house. He had contacts with old friends who were men of greater wealth. He had impressed those former associates with his own belief in charity. Hence Jothan had become the handler of many anonymous gifts to worthy causes.

Tonight, Jothan was in his second-floor study. Usually, the philanthropist retired early; he had broken his regular rule because he had work to do. Seated at a cumbersome mahogany table, Jothan was marking notes upon the margins of typewritten sheets.

Stoop-shouldered, withered of frame, he made an almost pitiful figure. Yet when he looked up in response to a rap at the opened door, his face was a revelation.

Thin gray hair topped a smiling countenance. A friendly light sparkled from keen, understanding eyes. Jothan nodded, as he saw a sober-faced servant standing at the door.

"I know it, Rodney," chortled Jothan. "The hour is long past my usual bed-time. However, I shall still be busy for a while."

"Remember, sir, the doctor said you should retire early."

"This is an exception. I have important work, Rodney. I am revising the final lists that cover a half million in

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donations. Many worthy causes will derive benefit through these gifts. Best of all, Rodney, there can be no doubt about the money. All the funds have been delivered. The entire amount is in my safe."

"That is excellent, sir! But can you not leave the work to Mr. Dalley? He is your secretary."

"Of course. But Dalley needed a night off. He will be surprised when he learns that I have attended to the details of this work. Send him up here when he comes in, Rodney. Then you and Throckmorton can lock up. Where is Throckmorton, by the way?"

"On the third floor, sir. He has retired. You said that you would not need him."

"So I did. I had forgotten. Very well, Rodney. You can go downstairs and wait for Dalley. He stated that he would be back by midnight. That allows him about fifteen minutes longer."

RODNEY went away. His footsteps echoed from a flight of stairs. Jothan resumed his work. A hush filled the large, old-fashioned room. Wall brackets formed a mellow glow; a table lamp concentrated a brighter gleam upon Swedley Jothan.

The open door where Rodney had knocked was located mid-center in a long wall. It was directly opposite Jothan's table, and the door gave access to the hall. In addition, there were two other doors, each in a separate wall. One opened into a front room; the other into a room at the back.

This second door was close to the wall that separated the study from the hall. The door was to Jothan's right; beside it stood the safe of which the philanthropist had spoken. Large, modern in design, that strong-box formed a formidable device, one which would have taxed the supreme efforts of any safe-cracker.

The door in the right wall moved slightly open, immediately after Rodney's departure. The servant could not have spied it; for the door was not quite visible from the hallway entrance.

Nor did Jothan observe the motion of the barrier. He was too deeply engrossed with his papers. Nevertheless, the philanthropist must have remembered Rodney's reminder of the lateness of the hour. A few minutes after the secretary had gone, Jothan arose and went to the safe.

He fingered the combination. He opened the big door, swinging it toward the side entrance of the room. Jothan started to put his documents away. As he did, he heard a harsh chuckle from his left. Looking up, the philanthropist saw a strange figure looming beside the edge of the safe door.

The intruder was in black. The collar of his cloak fringed his lower features. His slouch hat, slanted downward, served as a mask for his eyes. The arrival was wearing gloves. In one hand he held a businesslike automatic. He was leveling the gun toward Jothan.

"PASS over the swag," hissed the intruder, his tone an evil jeer. "I know it's here. Pass it to me!"

Jothan hesitated, trembling. His eyes glanced inadvertently toward the safe. The intruder spied the action and glimpsed a square-shaped box. Stepping forward, he thrust Jothan back with a jab of the automatic. With his free hand, the threatening intruder grasped the box.

Moving away, he laid his prize upon a chair. He yanked open the top of the box; then laughed insidiously when he saw the contents. The box held currency of large denominations; five-hundred-dollar bills, and thousands. It also contained securities.

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"What about these?" demanded the man in black. "Are they all negotiable?"

Pitifully, Jothan nodded.

"And the records of them? Are they listed on your documents?"

Jothan started to nod; then restrained himself. But the invader had caught the tip.

"Pass them across!"

Jothan obeyed the command. He drew the papers from the safe and gave them to the man who held him covered. The invader added the documents to the swag. He closed the lid of the box. Lifting the burden from his chair, he made a gesture with his gun.

"Back away from the safe!" he ordered. "Toward the center of the room!"

Jothan complied. The cloaked crook swung toward the doorway through which he had appeared. Jothan could see him past the opened door of the safe, which formed a partial barricade.

"Stand where you are," instructed the man in black. "Don't make a move!"

Instinctively, Jothan knew what was coming. Death was to be his. Murder was to follow robbery. The philanthropist was too terrified to move. He was in the open, a sure target for the killer's gun. The only point that delayed the delivery of bullets was the range. The intended murderer wanted to be sure of an immediate kill.

During those tense moments, a new motion occurred. One that neither Jothan nor the black intruder sensed. Another door was opening. It was the barrier at the front of the study. Slowly edging into the fringe of light came a figure that matched the one that Jothan faced. Another arrival cloaked in black.

This visitor differed from the first in one respect. His masking cloak collar and his down-turned hat brim did not totally obscure his countenance. They allowed a view of burning eyes – orbs that blazed from a shaded visage and sparkled with righteous fury.

Below the eyes loomed an automatic. Held in a firm, gloved fist, the .45 was leveled straight across the room. A ready finger was upon the trigger. The Shadow was present to deal with the impostor who sought murder.

Yet, for the moment, his hand was stayed; and with good reason. Swedley Jothan was almost directly in the path of The Shadow's aim.

"Move forward! Toward me!"

The snarl came from the cloaked faker beyond the safe. His command was directed to Jothan.

Faltering, the philanthropist obeyed. He knew that the move was intended as his death warrant, for it brought him to the closer range that the killer wanted.

A fierce burst of mockery filled the room. A rising, whispered taunt that commanded all attention. Jothan heard it as he was stumbling forward; it compelled the gray-haired man to turn. With the direction that he was taking, Jothan's new move threw him farther from danger. The sudden mirth gave startlement to the killer, also. The cloaked impostor saw The Shadow.

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One more instant would have spelled the killer's doom, for The Shadow held him covered. The master-fighter was pausing only to draw the murderer's aim in his own direction, that no chance shot might find Jothan.

But at that vital moment, another factor intervened. A gun shot crackled; it came neither from The Shadow nor his imitator. The weapon that spoke was a small revolver. It was fired from the main door of the room.

By Rodney. The servant had come upstairs. He had heard the sound of voices. He had arrived at the hallway door. He had heard The Shadow's laugh; he had seen the cloaked avenger aiming with an automatic. Not knowing that The Shadow was a rescuer, Rodney had chosen him as a target.

THE servant's hurried shots were wide; yet they whistled close to the folds of The Shadow's cloak. Instantly, The Shadow dropped back into the front room; but he boomed quick shots as he fell away. His bullets sizzled toward the black impostor, far across the room. They missed their mark, for The Shadow's aim was spoiled, but they served their purpose.

The threatening killer dived for security beyond the open door of the safe. Jothan, seeking safety, staggered to the front of the open strong-box. The steel door lay between him and his foe. Only by leaning around it could the desperate killer hope to drill the philanthropist.

He took a chance on such action, for he saw Rodney hurtling through the room, on his way to block The Shadow's aim.

Again The Shadow's automatic stabbed from darkness. Picking a path past Rodney, the avenger sent a warning bullet that bashed against the projecting safe door. The would-be murderer dropped away.

Plunging forward, The Shadow met Rodney head-on. The servant was aiming madly with his revolver. With free hand, The Shadow drove Rodney's gun arm upward and sent the fellow over his shoulder with a quick jujitsu grapple. Again The Shadow clanged the safe door with a bullet. Then a new antagonist was upon him.

It was Dalley. The secretary had arrived home. A thin, bespectacled man, he was coming in from the same door that Rodney had chosen. Dalley clutched at The Shadow. With a quick jolt, the cloaked battler sent the unarmed secretary rolling across the floor.

One flash of a black-clad rogue in flight. The impostor had leaped away from the space beyond the safe. The box of wealth beneath his arm, the crook fled just in time to avoid another bullet from The Shadow's ready gun.

A shot thundered, just too late. Then The Shadow took up the pursuit through the far door.

Hardly had he passed from view before Rodney and Dalley came to their feet and started a chase. They had seen only The Shadow. They pursued madly, in spite of Jothan's blurted protests.

THROUGH the rear room, The Shadow burst into a dim hallway. Here he plunged squarely upon two grappling figures at the foot of the stairway leading to the third floor. Throckmorton, the other servant, had come down from above, just in time to meet the invader who wore the imitation cloak.

With one fierce clutch, The Shadow seized the black-clad impostor. He sent the killer sprawling to the floor, headlong toward a flight of stairs that led down to the back kitchen. The box of wealth went bounding to the wall. Stepping above it, The Shadow aimed his .45 to cover the crook whom he had spilled.

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Throckmorton saw The Shadow. Dazed by a blow upon the head, this second servant thought that he had spied his former antagonist. He leaped upon The Shadow and tried to grab the avenger's automatic. As they wrestled, the crook by the stairway came to his feet.

The Shadow's .45 stabbed the dim light of the hall. The bullet went wide, for Throckmorton had grabbed The Shadow's wrist. But the shot was too close to suit the rising crook. With maddened plunge, the thwarted murderer scudded down the back stairs.

He was none too soon. Upon that instant, The Shadow broke Throckmorton's clutch and sent the servant tumbling to the floor.

The fray had required a scant four seconds; but it had carried the grapplers past the stairway. Throckmorton, groggy, sprawled wearily upon the money box. The Shadow, half off his footing, thrust out a hand to stop his fall. His fist encountered a loose door. The barrier swung inward. Slipping, The Shadow tumbled sidewise into a long, narrow linen closet.

The chance misstep halted his opportunity to pursue the fleeing murderer; and it produced another twist of circumstance. Just as The Shadow slipped from view, Rodney and Dalley came dashing into the rear hall. They saw Throckmorton rising, his hands to his head. They heard the final clatter at the bottom of the stairway to the kitchen.

Brandishing his revolver, Rodney dashed down the back stairway. Dalley followed at his heels. Neither had seen the reclaimed box. It lay beyond Throckmorton's half-huddled figure.

The Shadow, coming to his feet stepped out into the hall. He heard the descent of the pursuers. He saw the box upon the floor.

Head bowed in hands, Throckmorton had stumbled to the steps leading to the third floor. He was slumping to a seated position. He did not see the spectral, black-clad figure that stooped and plucked the box from the floor. The spoils regained, The Shadow strode back through the rear room. The first man to view him was Swedley Jothan.

The philanthropist had faltered to his table. He was seated there when The Shadow entered. A cry of alarm stopped short on Jothan's lips. For an instance, the philanthropist had thought this to be the murderer returning, for The Shadow held the precious box. Then the gleam of The Shadow's eyes told Jothan that this being was his rescuer.

The Shadow knew that Jothan, alone, had seen two figures in black. He placed the box in front of the philanthropist. He opened the cover to display the reclaimed contents. In a quiet whisper, The Shadow spoke:

"Your servants will speak of one intruder." The Shadow's words were like a prophecy. "Do not dispute their statements. Let them believe that they drove off the murderer. That you found the box yourself, in the back hall."

Jothan nodded his understanding. The Shadow resumed:

"Soon you will meet a man named Cardona"; whispered the cloaked rescuer. "He will be the police inspector in charge of this investigation. Request an interview with Commissioner Weston. Tell your complete story, with Cardona present."

"What shall I say?" asked Jothan. "Shall I tell them –"

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"State that The Shadow gave you rescue," ordered The Shadow. "Tell them that the man who robbed you was obviously an impostor. Affirm your belief that the thief will have a short career. State that he has supplanted an impostor who preceded him."

"But if I express such opinions –"

"They will believe you. They will express their thanks, for they will know the course to follow."

Footsteps were sounding from the rear stairway. The buzz of voices came from the rear room. Swedley Jothan saw The Shadow wheel about, then stride toward the doorway into the front room. His figure faded into blackness. A whispered laugh – no more than an echo – reached Jothan's ears as a final reminder. The Shadow was gone.

Dalley and Rodney entered the room, bringing Throckmorton with them. They uttered happy exclamations when they saw their master seated at his table. They gave new expressions of satisfaction when they spied the open box, with all its wealth secure.

Swedley Jothan smiled serenely when he heard his servants tell their versions of the fray. The Shadow was right; not one of them knew that there had been two black-clad visitors to this study. Jothan alone had seen Shadow versus Shadow. He had seen the real deliver bullets at the false. Shots which the servants thought had been intended for their master.

True facts would be kept until the proper moment. That time would be when Swedley Jothan held conference with Commissioner Ralph Weston. So had The Shadow ordered; and Jothan, knowing that he owed a debt of rescue, intended to obey.

CHAPTER XVI. THE SHADOW KNOWS

TWELVE days had passed since the attack at Jothan's. Startling events had gained new repetition. Again, a roaming, black-clad raider was at large. In swift, successive strokes, a new crook was spreading consternation. Like the Hilo Club and the Club Torreo, four gambling places had been pillaged by a cloaked intruder whom the underworld declared must be The Shadow.

New evening had settled upon Manhattan. Commissioner Weston was still in his office, tarrying late because of overwork. Joe Cardona was announced and admitted. Weston eyed the acting inspector with impatience.

"Well, where are the results?"

"I don't know, commissioner," admitted the ace. "We're up against something tough. But for that matter, so is The Shadow."

"Bah!" ejaculated Weston. "He has taken on too much – that is the whole trouble, Cardona. It's time that we stepped in."

"I don't think so, commissioner. I believe that The Shadow is due. Everything has worked against him since that night he rescued Swedley Jothan. It's time that a break was coming in his favor."

"Be more specific, Cardona."

"All right, commissioner. Suppose we take it from the beginning. We guessed that faker was pretending to be

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The Shadow. We decided that the best way to handle that crook was to let The Shadow cover him."

"By the faker, you mean Corbal. The second Shadow, we might term him."

"That's right. The Shadow was out to get Corbal. To turn him over to us –"

"But The Shadow failed."

"Because he was busy elsewhere, doing the law a more important turn. Another criminal found Corbal ahead of The Shadow. This new factor bumped Corbal and took up his game."

"To become the third Shadow."

Weston banged his fist as he spoke. Pounding the desk repeatedly, he stormed at Cardona.

"Jothan told us all we needed," flared the commissioner. "He practically delivered a message from The Shadow. We were ready to put the clamps on the gambling places. We waited, to give The Shadow opportunity, in case this new impostor chose to raid.

"What has happened? Four raids by the criminal! The Shadow has not stopped him. What has been gained? Nothing! Nothing, I tell you! We should have clamped the lid on every gambling room in town. At least you agree with me on that, Cardona?"

Joe shook his head. "I don't agree, commissioner," returned the ace. "I'll tell you why. If we had closed the joints, new ones would have opened. You know how they work it. Always a jump ahead of us. But by sitting tight; we've accomplished something. Do you know what the joints are doing? They're closing of their own accord.

"Yes. They're scared, commissioner. Scared because they think it's actually The Shadow who's raiding them. I've got some straight reports here. The gambling racket is nearly finished, of its own accord. The places have wilted – folded up – within the past week."

WESTON began to look somewhat mollified. Suddenly he stormed again.

"But all this while," he roared, "a murderer has been at large! He has not dealt in slaughter since he killed Corbal; but that is only because he has not found it necessary. Surely, The Shadow must recognize the menace that is abroad."

"Probably he does," assured Cardona. "That's why he has chosen the only way to get this crook he's after. Don't you get it, commissioner? Like us, the Shadow is dealing with a lone crook – a smart one – who uses no pals. The dragnet won't land him. We wouldn't know him even if he walked into this office.

"We've got to let him show himself. So does The Shadow. And if we clamp down on all the joints, where will that crook pop up? At some place like Jothan's, to murder when he robs. But as long as the joints stay open, that thief has got a racket to his liking."

"But you just stated that the gambling places are closing."

"They are. The list is narrowing. There are less places for this crook to raid. He's cornering himself, commissioner, and he doesn't know it. But The Shadow does. That's why I say he's due to get the crook. Look at this list, commissioner."

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Cardona reached for a report sheet. He pointed out a name.

"Slook's Cafe," said Joe. "Sounds like a hash house; and that's all it looks like. One of those places with arm-chairs. But upstairs, they tell me, it's got one of the fanciest layouts in New York. Roulette and faro. Plenty of people with dough sneak into Slook's. Ones who are socially prominent, too.

"It's miles ahead of any other joint in town. Any of those that are left, I mean. That's where this stickup guy is due tonight; and if he's due, so is The Shadow. Don't think The Shadow is letting us down, commissioner. The Shadow will be there."

"I'm not taking chances!" banded Weston. "At last, Cardona, you have shown some brains. Get ready. Pick your squad and join me."

"You mean we're raiding Slook's?"

"Exactly! We shall go in there and take charge. When the raider arrives, he will have to deal with us."

"But he may get wise and stay away."

"We shall take a chance on that, Cardona. We must venture, if we hope to gain."

"But The Shadow –"

"Bother The Shadow! Why should we depend upon him when our course lies open?"

ON a side street west of Broadway stood Slook's Cafe, a place that fitted Cardona's brief description. The arm-chair lunch room was a blind for the upstairs gaming house; but there were other entrances also. Street men and lookouts were many hereabouts.

One side of the gambling hall flanked a low-roofed space between this building and the next. Shuttered windows were all along the wall. One of these, at the very end, opened into a hallway that adjoined the gambling room. That passage was unwatched. Some outsider must have guessed it.

For on this important evening, an intruder was prying at the shutters. Black against the side of the wall, he was clumsily trying to jimmy the barrier. He might have failed with other windows; but this one chanced to be comparatively weak. The shutters opened with a sudden jolt. The interloper entered.

A large crowd was at play within the bare-walled gambling room. The place lacked class; but the customers were not particular. All of the fancier gambling halls had closed. This one had gained the more exclusive patronage. Tuxedoed patrons rubbed shoulders with less genteel habitue's. At one roulette table, a bejeweled dowager was staking heavily on the play.

"That's Mrs. Randolan," someone was saying. "She must have stopped here on her way to some swanky party. Look at that lot of gems. The pearl necklace –"

Someone uttered a shrill cry. All eyes turned toward the side passage. A black-clad raider was advancing: an automatic in each hand. Babbling voices ceased as the intruder uttered a fierce laugh. The automatics moved from side to side, edging players to the walls.

Croupiers heard a snarl. Nodding their willingness, they began to push money toward the center of the board. Others added house cash to the stakes that players had wagered. Quivering lips were muttering the identity

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that they thought belonged to the raider: "The Shadow!"

SHOVING one gun beneath his cloak, the raider pulled out a cloth bag and tossed it on the table. The cowed attendant hurriedly gathered the money into the bag. With a contemptuous laugh, the cloaked man stared along the wall. His eyes caught the glitter of jeweled finger rings. He beckoned to the croupier who held the bag. The man came toward him.

"Hold it out," ordered the raider. Then, to Mrs. Randolan, he added: "Shed those rings! Into the bag! And add the necklace for good measure!"

There was a snarl to the tone. Trembling, the dowager delivered the jewels and the necklace. The raider whisked the bag from the croupier. Retreating, he made his way to the passage. He tossed the closed bag through the window, then turned to make his departure.

At that instant, a door sprang open. The barrier was down the passage, at the farther end, where only the departing raider could observe it. Swinging, the impostor saw a swirling shape in black. He caught the gleam of eyes that blazed. An automatic muzzle leveled in his direction. Again, the impostor was faced by The Shadow.

Wildly, hopelessly, the crook scrambled for the window.

As The Shadow pressed the trigger of his automatic, a man sprang upon him from in back. The Shadow's aim was wide. His bullets found the open shutter; not the diving man who was going through the window. Coming in, The Shadow had overpowered one lookout; he had bound and gagged the fellow. This unexpected attacker was a second lookout who had chanced to find the first one.

Twisting, The Shadow fought to fling the man aside. Together, they staggered through the passage. There, The Shadow gave an upward heave and sent the man spinning headlong. The very power of his fling kept The Shadow moving forward. Half staggering, he stopped against the wall, just within the gaming room.

Sounds of pistol shots and scuffle had aroused the bolder persons present. Revolvers were flashing as thuggish gamblers leaped forward to begin a fight.

The Shadow wheeled. His laugh rose strident as his .45 broke loose with flame. He was firing high, above the heads of people; but his action was effective. Armed men broke; they dived for the cover of the tables.

Then came the shrill blasts of police whistles. One door splintered beneath the driving power of an ax. The Shadow turned, to choose the window through which his imitator had fled. He wanted to make pursuit before the law arrived.

The Shadow was too late. Officers were on the roof.

SPEEDING through the passage, The Shadow gained the stairway by which he had reached the gambling joint. At the bottom, he flung open the street door and sprang to the sidewalk. A policeman pounded upon him, driving down with a revolver.

The Shadow's fist caught the blue-coat's wrist. With a powerful twist, he wrenched away the officer's gun and sent it skidding along the sidewalk. Another twist and he was free.

Two dozen forward paces, as if in hasty flight. The Shadow stopped short and flattened against a wall beside a pair of steps. He did this in a space of darkness, just as the policeman fired with his regained gun.

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As the revolver sputtered, The Shadow delivered a strange, wild cry. More shots jabbed from the revolver. Again The Shadow gave a cry; this time, a trailing one that ended with an anguished choke.

The bluecoat pounded by, shouting as he ran. He thought that he had bagged his quarry. The Shadow's deceiving call had made the officer believe that a wounded man had kept on staggering. A patrol car skidded past The Shadow, to aid the bluecoat in his imaginary chase.

For a moment, the way was clear. The Shadow glided swiftly across the street and edged beneath a flight of high steps. He found an unlocked basement window; he opened it and entered a darkened house. With tiny flashlight glimmering, he picked his way through deserted rooms, opened a rear window and stepped out to a passage that led to the street beyond.

THE law's invasion of the gambling den had come too late to trap the raider whom both police and The Shadow sought. Worse than that, it had brought disaster to The Shadow's chase. His chance to overtake the impostor had ended, at least for this night. Commissioner Ralph Weston had staged a bad blunder.

Joe Cardona guessed that fact when he heard the reports of an unsuccessful search for a supposedly wounded raider. The jimmyed window looked like a spot of entry. Yet lookouts testified that The Shadow had come by the stairs at the rear. Moreover, the sparing of the officers; the weird evanishment of a pursued departer – these were proof to Joe that The Shadow had been on the raider's trail.

Cardona, however, was wise enough to keep his theory from Commissioner Weston. That worthy was in no mood for criticism.

LATER, The Shadow stood within his sanctum. Burbank was speaking quietly across the wire. The contact man was relaying a report from Clyde Burke, who had just talked with Joe Cardona. The Classic reporter had learned the details of the raid at Slook's Cafe.

The Shadow made notations. When the call had ended, he brought type-written report sheets into view. There were permanent records – statements gained through agents. Reports that The Shadow intended to keep for his archives. One was an old one. It referred to Corbal's raid on the Club Torreo.

Harry Vincent had been present on that occasion. Yet Harry had scarcely noticed Sparkler Meldin, who had also been on hand. Moreover, the jewel-sporting big-shot from Havana had escaped Corbal's notice as well. The Shadow already knew that Corbal had missed an opportunity when he had failed to lift Sparkler's diamonds.

Corbal was dead. Another raider had taken up his game. A daring, cool-headed crook who did not overlook opportunities. Tonight, according to Clyde Burke, this new impostor had grabbed more than the money on the gaming tables. He had also bagged a dowager's jewels. A direct contrast between this rogue and Corbal.

A whispered laugh pervaded the sanctum. The Shadow's hand produced a sheet of paper. It was a cablegram from Havana. Addressed to Rutledge Mann, the investment broker, and signed Marsland. One week ago, Cliff had gone to Cuba at The Shadow's order.

Though the cable referred to stocks and bonds, its actual message was a hidden one. Its wording was simply an answer to a question that The Shadow had ordered Cliff to discover. The cable told that Sparkler Meldin was not in Havana; nor had he been there since his first trip to New York.

Jewels overlooked; jewels seized. These showed a contrast between the second Shadow and the third. Only a person who had noticed Corbal's lapse would have remembered not to make one of his own, where gems

were concerned. Particularly a person who could recognize rare stones when he saw them.

The Shadow had done more than guess the identity of the third Shadow. He knew the impostor for what he was; and who. The man with whom The Shadow still must deal was Sparkler Meldin, the big-shot from Havana.

But in police headquarters, discussion still ranged over the mysteries of the gambling dens thefts.

CHAPTER XVII. WESTON TAKES ADVICE

"WELL, commissioner, our chances ended with last night. That raid at Slook's has clamped the lid. There's not a first-class gambling joint in operation."

"Good riddance, Cardona. We shall try my policy a while. I told the reporters this morning that these raids by an unknown crook will end. For the simple reason that he will have nowhere to strike."

"Which makes it tough for The Shadow, commissioner. And forces a mighty dangerous crook into new channels. Ones that we can't guess at present."

Weston made no comment. He merely passed a newspaper across the desk. It was a late edition: one that Cardona had not seen. A five o'clock final.

"There is my statement, Cardona," announced the commissioner. "The morning newspapers will pick it up and elaborate it. The public will know exactly how I stand."

"So will The Shadow," observed Cardona, ruefully. "Unless he already knows. That's not all I'm thinking about, either. The crook is going to read this stuff, commissioner."

"Let him," decided Weston. "Perhaps he will recognize the futility of his misdeeds. We must find that man, Cardona. But not by allowing him open opportunity for crime."

The telephone bell rang. Weston picked up the instrument from his desk. Cardona heard his chief's tone change from brusqueness to affability; then to surprise.

"Hello, hello," said Weston. "Ah! Judge Trostler. Glad to hear from you... Certainly. I should be glad to learn such information... What's that? The Casino Havanola?... This positively amazes me."

Hanging up, Weston turned to Cardona.

"Rumor is rife, Cardona," declared the commissioner. "Someone has informed Judge Trostler that the Casino Havanola has gone in for heavy gambling! With the highest stakes ever played in New York!"

"Where did he get that dope?" demanded Cardona. "I was down there night before last. The place looked quiet enough. Duke Hydon showed me through there."

"I have seen the place also," stated Weston. "I cannot understand how gambling could go on there. Those rooms upstairs are open. Accessible to anyone."

Again, the telephone was jangling. Weston held another brief conversation. "Hello, Parrow... Yes, I have heard... No details, however... Yes, it may only be a rumor; still, it is a likely one..."

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Hanging up, Weston stated more to Cardona.

"That was Parrow. Assistant to the district attorney. He has heard it also. There must be something to this rumor, Cardona. I wonder who else could tell us facts about the matter?"

"What about your friend Cranston?"

"Cranston?" Weston laughed. "He knows nothing, Cardona. A keen enough chap when it comes to big-game hunting. Bagging elephants and tigers. Or fishing for barracuda. But gambling is not within his range."

"He knew Sparkler Meldin," observed Cardona. "It was Cranston who introduced Meldin to you."

"That is true. I had almost forgotten. By the way, Cranston was with me when Hydon showed us about the Casino Havanola. Hydon was pleased to see him at the place. I wonder if Cranston has been going there regularly?"

"Why not ask him?"

"I shall." Weston glanced at his watch. "It is after six o'clock. We may find Cranston at the Cobalt Club. Come along with me, Cardona."

ARRIVED at the Cobalt Club, Weston and Cardona found the person whom they sought. Neither saw the semblance of a smile that appeared upon the fixed lips of Lamont Cranston. The Shadow had expected this visit; and with good reason. It was he who had made both telephone calls to Weston's office.

"Cranston," questioned Weston, "have you been at the Casino Havanola recently?"

"Yes," replied The Shadow. "Only a few nights ago. In fact, I am going there this evening."

"Tell me something about the place. Could it be a blind for a gambling room?"

"A perfect one! Except for one detail."

"And just what is that?"

"There would be no place to put the roulette tables, except on the roof."

Weston looked piqued. Cardona grinned.

"Nevertheless," added The Shadow, "I have heard that Sparkler Meldin is a clever chap. Gambling appears to be part of his existence. It is difficult to picture Meldin without also visualizing the background of a gaming room."

"You saw his gambling place in Havana?" inquired Weston. "How long ago, Cranston?"

"A year ago. Perhaps longer. I understand that Meldin is in Havana at present."

"He is. He will be back in New York later. Meanwhile, we would like to learn the real inside of this rumor."

"Is there a rumor?"

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"Of course. That is why I asked you about the Casino Havanola."

"I see. Perhaps, Weston, the rumor is a trifle previous."

"Previous? You mean that gambling may not start until Meldin returns? Is that it?"

"Yes. Your trouble will begin then. You can anticipate it, commissioner. Do you know, I have felt quite guilty because I introduced Meldin to you. The man was merely an acquaintance of mine; not a friend. That is why I suggest that you end the nuisance before it begins."

"How can I do that?"

"By suspending the Casino Havanola's license."

"Absurd, Cranston! That would mean an injunction against the police department, to make us show cause why the club should be closed."

"Instigated by whom?"

"By Meldin, of course."

"From Havana?"

Weston beamed with sudden enthusiasm. "You have hit it, Cranston!" he exclaimed. "I shall do exactly as you have suggested! For a fortnight, the Casino Havanola had been under the sole management of Duke Hydon. I was given to understand that Hydon would be merely a subordinate."

"Since Meldin has not performed the duties of an actual proprietor, I am quite within my rights in giving this decision. It is for the public welfare. To protest, Meldin will have to come from Havana. When he does arrive, he will be at a disadvantage – thanks to his own negligence."

JOE CARDONA indulged in a grin.

"How soon are you going to shut down the place?" he asked. "Will you give them to the end of the week, commissioner?"

"Yes," replied Weston. "That allows three more nights, including this evening. I shall call Hydon from here. In a way, I feel sorry for the fellow; he has a pleasant personality. At the same time, he knows that I cannot grant him a night club license after our experience with the Club Torreo. Therefore, I shall tell him that I cannot tolerate the Casino Havanola, since he – rather than Meldin – appears to be the proprietor."

"Better not mention Mr. Cranston's name," put in Cardona. "He's going down there tonight. Better let him appear to be surprised, if Hydon weeps on his shoulder and begs him to put in a good word with you."

"An excellent suggestion," interposed The Shadow, "and I have another, commissioner. This was an interesting statement that you made today." In leisurely fashion, The Shadow picked up an afternoon newspaper. "People are probably pleased to learn that you have clamped down on the gambling racket. Why not announce that you are closing the Casino Havanola because of Duke Hydon's former connection with the Club Torreo?"

"I shall," agreed Weston. "That will make a story for the morning newspapers."

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ONE hour later, The Shadow arrived at the Casino Havanola. Scarcely had he taken a table before the head waiter arrived with a request. Addressing The Shadow as Mr. Cranston, he asked if the guest would be kind enough to come to Mr. Hydon's office.

The Shadow went to the office. He found Duke Hydon pacing the floor, muttering epithets into his beard. Seeing the arrival, Duke's manner changed. He became wheedling.

"A favor, Mr. Cranston," he pleaded. "One that only you can supply. I have received bad news – very bad news –"

"From Havana?"

"No, no! I have had no communication from Meldin. This word came from the police commissioner. He has ordered me to close this night club."

"On what ground?"

"He has not stated his true reason." Duke wagged a knowing finger. "I know what the commissioner believes. He thinks that I am running a hidden gambling establishment. That is why I should like you to speak with him, Mr. Cranston. You have been here often enough to know that the charge is false."

"My testimony would be rather negative," expressed The Shadow, in a dry tone. "The fact that I have seen no gambling room is not proof that such a place is absent."

Duke beckoned. They went from the office. As on the opening night, they ascended to the second floor. Like the space downstairs, the upper rooms were filled with diners.

"The cover charge is less up here," explained Duke. "Look, Mr. Cranston. Is there any place for gambling? See for yourself."

The Shadow nodded; then he eyed the fountain at the end of the hall. The water-spray was in operation, flooded by changing lights. The Shadow approached it.

"Quite a splendid sight," he observed. "I suppose that Meldin will enjoy seeing it?"

"Not if the place is closed when he gets back," grumbled Duke. "I don't know what is delaying Meldin. He should have been back in town this week. Well, Mr. Cranston, you have seen everything. I hope you will see fit to speak to the commissioner."

As they turned about, The Shadow noted the two cloak rooms; both were filled with garments. Two wiry Cubans were in charge, one behind each counter.

"Good workers, those Cubans," remarked Duke, as he and The Shadow walked away. "Sparkler Meldin brought them with him from Havana. He left them here. Competent, both of them, and courteous."

As they reached the top of the staircase, The Shadow paused to light a cigarette. Duke stopped several steps ahead. A young man was coming up the stairs. It was Harry Vincent. He strolled straight past The Shadow and continued along the hall.

"Coming downstairs, Mr. Cranston?" queried Duke, anxiously. "The floor show is just beginning. You should not miss it."

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The Shadow followed the bearded man. He saw Duke show an expression of relief. The Shadow knew the reason. It was because of Harry Vincent. A former patron of the Club Torreo, Harry had gained special privileges at the Casino Havanola.

Going along the upstairs hallway, Harry stopped at the cloak room on the right. He spoke to the white-jacketed Cuban, who nodded his approval. Harry waited while the fellow drew back the cloak room door. Then The Shadow's agent entered.

Going deep into the cloak room, he knocked upon the paneled end wall. A door swung inward at his signal.

Harry had gained admittance to the gambling room of the Casino Havanola. Harry had been there nearly every night since the opening of the place. He had forwarded regular reports to The Shadow. Those reports explained the telephoned tips that Weston had received. Yet The Shadow, though he knew the full secret of the Casino Havanola, had not revealed the complete facts to the law.

He had delivered enough to insure the closing of the night club. Beyond that, he had furnished nothing. Weston had failed to give complete cooperation; The Shadow's only course had been to use the commissioner as an unwitting aid in a new plan of action.

It was after nine o'clock when The Shadow strolled from the Casino Havanola. On the avenue, enterprising newsboys were already shouting out the death knell of the glittering night club. Patrons were eagerly buying newspapers.

"Commissioner orders night club to close –"

The Shadow bought a copy of the morning Classic. This was the bulldog edition, on the street before nine p.m. He smiled as he noticed Clyde Burke's name as having written the night club story. The Shadow's own agent had been the reporter who had gained an interview with Weston.

The police commissioner had taken advice from The Shadow. Tonight; then two nights more. Those alone remained for the Casino Havanola. A fact that was doubly to The Shadow's liking. First, because the law would investigate no further. No need to molest the Club Havanola on the flimsy strength of rumor; for the place would soon be ended.

The second reason was quite as important as the first. The Casino Havanola hid the only remaining gambling joint that catered to wealthy, carefully chosen customers. Sparkler Meldin had not raided it, for the place was his own. But since the Casino's career was doomed, Sparkler might form other plans.

Wealthy customers, with rolls of cash that would not cross the gambling tables; patrons loaded with jewels – bait for Sparkler Meldin. One more chance for the crook to play the role of the third Shadow. To give himself an alibi, when he did.

Tomorrow night. Then would come the best time for opportunity. Sparkler would be too wise to wait until the final evening. Thus did The Shadow reason, as he entered his limousine and ordered Stanley to drive eastward. The car was headed for the vicinity of the sanctum. The Shadow was donning cloak and hat.

Well had The Shadow begun to gauge his plans. Yet always, there was the chance of unexpected circumstance. Though The Shadow had not learned it, trouble had already begun to break.

CHAPTER XVIII. CROOKS SURPRISED

COMMISSIONER WESTON had been a bit too eager in his contact with the press. Therein lay the source of the trouble that was to show a marked effect upon The Shadow's plans. Had Weston been slower in making his statement, it would not have appeared in the early edition. Hence patrons of the Casino Havanola would not have learned the night club's fate until the next morning.

As it chanced, however, a buzz began to hover about the Casino Havanola, shortly after The Shadow had departed. The stir spread through the lower floor. It reached the dining rooms above. At last it filtered through to the hidden space beyond the end wall of the second floor.

There, the news spread again. Half a hundred wealthy customers suspended play. The Casino Havanola was through, according to report. Until the rumor was settled, no one cared about the spinning roulette wheels. They must have the answer, these patrons of the Club Havanola.

Duke Hydon appeared. The bearded manager came from a tiny office beyond the gaming tables. He waved his arms and called for silence. Commotion ceased. Duke waved to an attendant; the man brought a stack of newspapers.

"Ladies and gentlemen," announced Duke, "I regret to announce that the Casino Havanola will soon be closed. At the same time, I take pleasure in announcing that it will continue business for two nights more. Therefore, I suggest that all patrons take advantage of the remaining opportunity.

"I can assure you that the police will not interfere tonight; nor on the coming nights. The commissioner has said that we must close. We have agreed. The commissioner is satisfied, and pleased because of our good behavior."

A round of laughter came as Duke made pause. The bearded man chuckled.

"I have just talked to the commissioner on the telephone," he stated. "He said that he was pleased because I accepted his decision. Of course" – Duke paused to chortle dryly – "our friend, the commissioner, has not visited every part of the Casino Havanola."

More laughter. Duke finished his announcement. His final words were significant.

"As for other interference," he declared, "such as other establishments have experienced, you need fear nothing. We are quite prepared to handle all intruders. Your valuables are safe when you come here."

Duke ordered the attendant to distribute the newspapers among the customers. Players scanned the headlines, then threw the journals aside. Wheels resumed their spinning. Currency flooded the tables. Women who wore jewels laughed with their companions. A care-free atmosphere had been regained.

FEW persons noted the two men who strolled into Duke Hydon's tiny upstairs office. The customers took them for other players, since they were attired in well-fitting evening clothes. But the conference that developed proved these men to be of different ilk.

"Hello, Kidder; hello, Brad." Duke nodded to each man in turn. "Sit down. I want to talk to you. You know, there's something fishy about this racket going sour."

"Do you think The Shadow's in it?" growled the man called "Kidder."

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"He may be," replied Duke. "Perhaps he was afraid to crack this place. He may have passed word to the commissioner."

"Not likely," put in Brad. "You can't tell me that The Shadow would be showing any favors to the commish. Not with the way The Shadow's been acting lately."

"You never can tell about The Shadow," observed Duke. "It was on his account that I brought you fellows in from Chicago. Kidder Dagland and Brad Stuggart. You two always did work together. Keeping up a swell front. Kidder and Brad – the alibi dudes."

"A good racket, in the old days," remarked Kidder. "A guy needed an alibi out in Chi. It didn't count for much, either, unless two people backed him on it. That was our specialty, all right."

Duke raised his hand impatiently. He spread out some sheets of paper.

"Look at these," he said. "List of people here tonight. All about them – how they became acquainted with the place. That's one reason I brought you fellows in here – you and those other torpedoes who are working as attendants. I wanted you to keep an eye on the customers."

"We've been doing it," stated Kidder.

"All right," returned Duke. "Tell me who's phony. I think that some stoolie has muscled his way into the place."

"Not much chance of that," observed Brad. "I'd have spotted a phony the first time he showed up."

"No suggestions, then?" questioned Duke.

Both men shook their heads.

"Very well. Go out and watch –"

Duke stopped. Someone was at the door. It proved to be the gaming tables banker.

"One fellow going out, Duke," he informed. "The house owes him two hundred bucks. Says to keep it until he gets back. He's going to get dinner."

"Who is he?"

"His name is Vincent."

Duke turned to Kidder and Brad. "It's just a hunch," he admitted, "but maybe it's a good one. You two cut down the secret stairway to the lower office. Then come upstairs again by the outer stairway and spot this bird. Watch him."

Kidder and Brad nodded. The former pressed a side-wall light switch, with quick up and down clicks. A panel slid open, to show a spiral staircase. The pair descended, closing the panel behind them. Duke turned to the cashier.

"Stall him for a few minutes," he stated. "Maybe he wants an I O U, so he can have evidence against us. Tell him we don't give them. Put his name in the book and have him wait while you bring it to me for an O.K."

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IN the gaming room, Harry was awaiting the banker's return. Chips were used, within certain limits, at the Casino Havanola. Harry had turned in his supply; he had asked that they be credited to his name. He had done this with a purpose; namely, to find an excuse for visiting Duke Hydon in the office.

When the banker arrived to state the arrangements, Harry caught a glimpse of Duke. The manager was standing in the open doorway of the little office. Harry could see an empty room beyond. He decided to drop the matter as soon as possible.

"Very well," he said, when the banker had explained. "Put my name in the book. Your word will be all right." This time, it was the banker who played for time.

"Mr. Hydon will mark it with his O.K. –"

"That will not be necessary," interposed Harry. "I'll only be gone half an hour."

"But if you can wait for only a few minutes –"

Harry shook his head. He strolled toward the exit. A watcher opened the sliding door. Harry stepped through to the cloak room. The Cuban signaled him through. Harry reached the hallway. He continued along the passage and down the circular stairway. There he stepped into a telephone booth and dialed a number.

Two men spied Harry in the telephone booth. They were Kidder and Brad, coming through from the lower office. Kidder waved Brad back; then slipped into a vacant booth next to Harry's. He caught the finish of a conversation.

"Business resumed..." Harry was evidently describing to Burbank, The Shadow's contact man, the scene in the gaming room. "Yes, everything will be the same tomorrow... I'm going up again, to collect some money. Shall I fake an excuse to get into the office?..."

"Yes, I can call again in fifteen minutes... Wait." Harry glanced from the telephone booth. "There's a vacant table right here. If you call me, I can answer promptly... Yes, any time within the next half hour..."

Kidder slid from the booth. He joined Brad and motioned him toward the stairway. They watched Harry come out and take the table nearest to the telephone booth. Kidder whispered to Brad, who nodded and went up the stairs. Then Kidder went over to Harry's table.

"Mr. Vincent?" he inquired, in an undertone.

Harry nodded.

"Duke sent me down," confided Kidder. "He wants to see you about that credit. Could you come up with me before you begin dinner?"

"Certainly!"

HARRY had noted Kidder in the gaming room, but had supposed the man to be an ordinary patron. Apparently, Kidder had some connection with the house. Harry was interested in this finding. He followed the man to the second floor. They went through the cloak room at the right.

Always the one at the right, Harry had learned. There was a door from the left cloak room also; but Harry had never seen it used. Probably it had been provided only in case large groups of players crowded the gambling

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hall.

Harry followed Kidder through to the upstairs office. The man opened the door and stood aside to let Harry enter. The Shadow's agent found Duke at his desk. The manager arose and nodded affably. He spoke in a rather loud tone.

"There has been a slight error in calculation, Mr. Vincent. Only a matter of a few dollars; but I thought it best to inform you –"

Two men landed suddenly on Harry's shoulders. The Shadow's agent twisted; punching hard, but uselessly, he sprawled beneath the combined attack of Kidder and Brad. The second rogue had been waiting outside the office. He had followed Kidder and they had quietly closed the door. Swift and efficient in their attack, they were choking Harry into submission.

Duke bounded forward and plastered a piece of wide adhesive tape across Harry's mouth. Kidder was holding Harry's legs, while Brad was twisting a strap around the victim's wrists. Three against one, with a surprise at the beginning, they had The Shadow's agent helpless.

"I'll get the call downstairs," declared Kidder. "I'll tell you more when I come back."

He went out through the gaming room. Going down the stairs, Kidder heard the ringing of the bell in the telephone booth. He hurried his descent and answered the call. Though out of breath, Kidder managed to fake Harry's voice:

"Hello, hello! This is Vincent on the wire."

Kidder waited. A quiet voice responded: Burbank's.

"Off duty."

"What about the office?" queried Kidder. "I may get a chance to talk to Duke Hydon –"

"Off duty."

"Until when?"

A pause; then the quiet voice replied:

"Until tomorrow night."

Kidder made no response. He waited, hoping that a new statement would come over the wire. A dozen seconds passed; then Kidder heard the click of the receiver. The rogue hung up his own receiver. He had learned nothing of much consequence; but he had staged a bluff.

KIDDER took his time about returning through the front way to the gaming room. He supposed that Duke expected him back by that route; but he did not want to go in and out at too frequent intervals. It was ten minutes before he arrived at the tiny office – to find Harry Vincent propped in a chair, staring helplessly at Duke and Brad.

"Will he talk?" demanded Kidder.

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"We haven't tried him yet," replied Duke. "We wanted to hear from you, Kidder."

"I talked to the mug at the other end. Learned nothing, except that this guy is off duty until tomorrow night. When I talked, I said that I was Vincent."

"Off duty? What do you think that means?"

"It's easy enough to find out."

Kidder turned to Harry. He snarled as he faced the bound man. There was venom in Kidder's tone.

"You're telling us who you're working for!" he announced. "Who the guy was that you called! Everything else we want to know! Do you get me?"

Kidder expected a nod. Harry did not give one. Kidder spat a threat.

"I'll make you talk! I've handled tougher eggs than you. I'm putting you wise; you'll save yourself a lot of misery if you don't hold out."

Harry remained motionless. Kidder moved over to talk with Brad. They buzzed a low conversation, one that required a full five minutes. With nods and glowers, the two were building up some scheme of torture. A crafty preliminary, capable of jangling a strong man's nerve. Harry could feel the strain, for he knew himself to be the topic of conversation.

"All right," decided Kidder, finally. "Get ready, Brad. We'll hand him the heat treatment, for a starter."

"Not here!" protested Duke. "We've kept him here too long already! It's been twenty minutes since you went down to get that telephone call, Kidder. We'll have to take him to the lower office."

As he spoke, Duke arose and went to the wall. He gave the switch its rapid clicks. The panel opened. Duke motioned to Kidder and Brad. The pair hoisted Harry and lugged him down the spiral staircase.

It was a precipitous trip into lower darkness; and a rough one, for the stairs were narrow. Nor were Harry's captors gentle. Harry was aching from a dozen jolts when they reached the bottom.

There they waited for Duke. Evidently the manager had made a brief trip into the gaming room, for it took him a few minutes to arrive. Coming down in the darkness, Duke pressed by the two men and their burden. He opened the panel into the lower office. He stepped into deeper darkness.

"Bring him through," whispered Duke. "Say – why did you fellows turn out the light? Wasn't it on when you came down here before?"

"Sure," growled Kidder. "What's more, we didn't turn it off. It must have been one of the head waiters."

"I've ordered them to stay out of here," snarled Duke. "I'll find out who went against my order! I'll –"

Duke's speech ended. He had found the light switch and had pressed it. His words were frozen by the sound of a harsh, gibing laugh. Duke saw his companions staring toward the far wall of the room, with Harry Vincent slumped between them. Duke turned. He saw the object of their gaze.

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A shape in black. A fisted form with leveled automatics. A figure that Harry's captors recognized. A sight that brought quavered gasps from their lips.

"The Shadow!"

Harry Vincent's eyes had filled with hope. Though the laugh, when repeated, was echoless, Harry had no fear. Rogues were trapped. He was rescued. Such was Harry's swelling thought; then, in an instant, his bubble burst.

The folds of the cloak dropped as the head tossed backward. The sneering laugh changed to a raucous snort. Duke and his companions stared at a sharp-featured face. The long chin, the beady eyes – those were features that Duke Hydon recognized when he uttered an elated cry: "Sparkler Meldin!"

CHAPTER XIX. SPARKLER'S STORY

A GLEAMING smile flashed from the features of Sparkler Meldin. Gold teeth were glittering in the light. Then came the sparkle of large gems, as the arrival drew away his black gloves. Last, the huge flash of a diamond stick-pin when the cloak was tossed aside.

Kidder and Brad gaped. They had heard Duke describe Sparkler; this was the first time they had seen the man from Havana. Sparkler had few friends, even in New York; and he had none in Chicago. Yet any crook would have guessed his identity, once having heard of him.

"What – what's the racket, Sparkler?" queried Duke, his voice a stammer. "We thought you were The Shadow!"

"You're not the first who fell for it," snapped back the jewel flasher. "The only trouble is that the racket's through. Well – it was good while it lasted."

"You saw the early newspapers! You know about the commissioner closing the joint?"

"Sure! But that's not the racket that I mean. I'm talking about this Shadow business. That's what brought me here – after I saw a newspaper."

Duke looked puzzled. Sparkler's laugh was harsh. Narrowed eyes studied Kidder and Brad, also the prisoner between them.

"Who are these fellows?"

"Kidder Dagland and Brad Stuggart," explained Duke. "A couple of regulars from Chicago. They brought a bunch of torpedoes with them. I've got the trigger crew working as attendants in the joint. Your Cubans are on the front."

"All on account of The Shadow?"

"That's why. I wanted to be ready in case he tried to knock off the joint."

Sparkler's lips phrased a chuckle.

"Even you didn't get it, Duke," laughed the sharp-faced visitor. Gem-laden hands were placing automatics

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on the table. "I was The Shadow! I'm the bird who staged the knock-offs!"

"Don't kid me, Sparkler! You were in the Club Torreo the night The Shadow raided it."

"Sure! That was before I muscled in on the racket. The guy that raided the Club Torreo was a phony. I guessed it. I bumped him and went after the gravy for myself."

"Who was the guy?"

"The stiff they found in Greenwich Village. The one they identified as George Corbal. I croaked him in his hide-out. Took his swag; his cloak and hat, too."

"You've been wearing them?"

"No; I had an outfit of my own. Listen, Duke; I figured the fellow was a phony – that he was getting by on The Shadow's rep. I saw a swell opportunity. I started for Havana, but doubled back. Rigged up my own black outfit; then breezed in on Corbal to see how he'd like it. He thought I was The Shadow."

LIGHT was dawning on Duke. He started to ask a question. Sparkler's rasp intervened. Duke listened.

"I figured that the lid would be coming soon." Gold teeth gleamed in a wise grin. "That it wouldn't be long before the commissioner clamped down. This place being my joint, the thing to do was make business better for it. So I knocked off the others,"

"Like you were The Shadow!"

"That's it! I threw the gravy to you, Duke. Naturally, I laid off this joint."

"Smart business, Sparkler. I never guessed it."

"I've used my hide-outs; I've grabbed my swag and stowed it. But the racket was to work entirely on my own. You didn't even need to be wise, Duke."

"Why not, Sparkler?"

"Because I figured I might have to stage a knock-off here. That's why I blew in tonight: thinking that it might be a good stunt."

Duke was staring; his bearded face showed anger. It was Kidder who chuckled; his tone showed admiration.

"I get it," he volunteered. "The clamp has been put on, Duke. The Casino Havanola is through. The best bet was to pin another job on The Shadow."

"And an alibi for myself," came Sparkler's addition. "Nobody – not even you, Duke – would have doped it out that I was passing myself as The Shadow. I came in here through the side door. It's easy to pull a sneak, when you're tricked out in a black cloak. I intended to go up through the upstairs office. As luck had it, you fellows came down. So I figured the best bet was to let you in on the know."

"You fooled us, Sparkler," Duke said. "If you want to go up and stage the raid, I'll fix it. Kidder can pass the word to the torpedoes to act like dummies. Only –"

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"I know what you're going to say, Duke. That it might hurt you. Particularly since the police commissioner is closing the joint only on suspicion. I thought of that, Duke. It was the one reason I wanted to lay off."

"I'd have to take it on the lam because it would expose the gaming tables to the police –"

"I know. Two black-list markers would ruin you. But I knew where you would hop. To Havana. I intended to give you the whole lowdown when you got into the clear. Well, I can stage a raid if you want it. We'll talk that over. Meanwhile, who is this mug?"

A glittering hand flashed toward Harry Vincent.

"His name's Vincent," stated Duke. "We think he's working for The Shadow."

"What makes you think that?"

"Kidder spotted him putting in a phone call – making some kind of a report. There was a return call. Kidder answered it and pulled a bluff. They don't expect to hear from Vincent until tomorrow night."

"Yank that adhesive off his face. I want to look at him."

BRAD wrenched away the tape. Sparkler's face was glaring down at Harry's. A nod followed.

"I thought I recognized him. I saw this guy at the Club Torreo."

"Sure he was, Sparkler," agreed Duke. "That's why I let him come in here. I thought he was all right."

"He was the bimbo who made a grab for the phony Shadow."

"Say – that's right! What do you make of that, Sparkler?"

"It's simple enough. This fellow Vincent knew that it was Corbal. How about it, Vincent? The Shadow planted you at the Club Torreo to grab the phony. Is that it?"

No comment from Harry.

"I'll make him talk," growled Kidder. "That's what we brought him down here for. Come on, Brad –"

"Wait!" Gems flashed from a restraining hand. Sparkler's voice was hard. "If Vincent was there to grab Corbal, he was here to grab me. Don't worry about putting the heat on him. We won't need to."

"Why not?"

The query came from Duke. Sparkler's answering rasp was prompt.

"Because," came the comment, "if Vincent makes no report tomorrow night, The Shadow will come here himself. He is liable to come anyway. He's been trailing me all along the line. I was lucky to get away from him at Slook's Cafe."

"The Shadow knows about this joint of ours, Duke. If he didn't, this stooge of his wouldn't be here. The Shadow knows a lot; but there's one thing he doesn't know. He hasn't guessed that I'm the fellow who's trading on his rep. He knows there's a phony – that's all."

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"On that account, he'll figure that I'm due here. Since the joint is closing, there are only two chances left. Tomorrow and the night after. The Shadow will show up tomorrow, figuring that it's the best bet. He may come here ahead of me; that would be his best bet. Yes, The Shadow will be here and waiting.

"That's when we'll get him. He won't have a chance! We'll put the finger on The Shadow. We'll rub him out! Everything will be planted on him. We'll get a handshake from the police commissioner, as well as from every big-shot in New York. It's a perfect set-up! I'll be in the upstairs office, covering, while you fellows stick to the gaming room."

HARRY VINCENT repressed a groan, as he heard the rasped arrangement. He had failed The Shadow. On his account – if for nothing else – his chief would be sure to enter the trap. Harry's groan was audible; The Shadow's agent heard a harsh chuckle.

"We've found our ticket." The rasp was Sparkler's. "We'll hold this prisoner, and let him talk afterward – when we have bagged The Shadow. Maybe we won't need to hear him then. He's nothing but bait, anyway. Where can you stow him, Duke?"

"In here." The bearded man opened a farther panel, to show a small, windowless room that adjoined the spiral stairway. There was a cot in the closet-like compartment. "It's got a ventilator, so he won't suffocate."

"Cut him loose and stick him in there on the cot. We'll lock the panel from this side."

"But what if he starts to raise a row?"

"He won't. Because I'm parking here for the night. So are you fellows. We'll take turns sleeping on the couch. Tonight and all day tomorrow. There'll be three of us always on watch."

"Just on account of Vincent?"

"No. I tell you he means nothing. Our job is to be ready all the time, in case The Shadow shows up before we expect him. We take no chances where The Shadow is concerned."

Bonds were cut. Harry was shoved into the little room. Kidder sprawled the prisoner on the cot. The panel clicked shut. Harry heard it being locked. Again, The Shadow's agent groaned.

His case was hopeless, with three men on constant watch outside. The Shadow's plight would be hopeless also, when tomorrow night arrived. So thought Harry Vincent.

CHAPTER XX. DEATH IS DEALT

EARLY the next evening. Business as usual at the Casino Havanola. Except for one point: Duke Hydron was allowing no visitors in his downstairs office. Whenever a knock sounded on the door, Duke answered by stepping out and conducting conversation in the passage. In this manner, he blocked the only direct entrance to the downstairs office.

Duke had just held a five-minute conversation with one of the head waiters. The fellow went away; Duke stepped back into the office and locked the door behind him. He turned to the desk, to see Sparkler Meldin playing solitaire. Diamonds glittered as fingers turned up cards. Gold teeth gleamed as the sharp features grinned.

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"Kidder and Brad just went upstairs." Sparkler's thumb nudged toward the panel that hid the spiral stairway. "They lugged Vincent with them. Going to park him in a corner of the upper office. Bound and gagged."

"They could have left him down here –"

"It was Kidder's idea, and it sounded like a good one. He said we ought to have Vincent where we could watch him. What's more, we might need to use him."

Duke nodded.

"Let's go up, Sparkler," he suggested. "We'll use that upper office as headquarters."

They arrived in the upper office, to find Harry Vincent tied up in the corner. Duke motioned Sparkler to the chair at the desk. Nervously, the bearded manager kept pacing about.

"Worried, Duke?"

Duke nodded at Sparkler's question.

"Yes," he admitted. "My part is a rather tough one. The others are outside; you are stationed here. Which means that I have to keep moving in between. I wonder just where I'll be when The Shadow shows up."

"It won't matter, Duke. Everything is arranged –"

A knock at the door. Kidder's voice. Duke called the man into the room. The buzz of conversing players, the clatter of the gaming room – both were audible during the short interval when the door was open.

"A hot tip, Duke!" informed Kidder. "Joe Cardona just dropped in! He's having a dinner in one of the second-floor rooms."

"Joe Cardona? Is anyone with him?"

"A couple of guys that look like dicks. Brad was outside; he spotted them."

"Humph! Just snooping around, so they can rub it in. Well, they don't matter. We expect the police in anyway, after the fireworks are over. All I'm wondering is, who tipped them off to come here."

JOE CARDONA was wondering on that very point himself. Dining in one of the second-story rooms, the acting inspector was thinking over a telephone call that he had received at headquarters. The voice had been that of Swedley Jothan.

Cardona happened to know that the philanthropist was out of town. Yet Cardona had not forgotten the night when he had dashed off to save a man named Swedley, when he should have been looking out for Jothan. J. M. Swedley's first name had proven to be James, a fact which had irked Cardona somewhat.

Swedley Jothan, however, had been rescued by The Shadow; and he had delivered a message that he had received directly from the sleuth in black. Jothan's story had clicked with both Cardona and Weston. It had restored the commissioner's confidence for a while. Only Cardona and Weston had heard the true description of Shadow versus Shadow.

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So tonight, though Cardona was puzzled by the telephone call from Jothan, he had no question regarding the authority behind it. He was confident that he had received a message from The Shadow. His speculation concerned the actual speaker, only.

No word to Weston. Cardona had promised that to the man who talked like Swedley Jothan. Instructions to be followed to the letter. Cardona had accepted them. He could remember the terse statements:

"Casino Havanola – upstairs dining room – cloak rooms at the end of hallway – investigate as soon as both Cubans have left –"

Cardona had seen the Cubans when he had strolled down the hall to look at the shimmering fountain. From where he was at present seated, Joe could see almost to the end of the hall. He had noted several persons going to the cloak rooms. A few of them had not returned.

Joe signaled to a plain-clothes man at another table. The fellow nodded. He sauntered into the hallway and strolled toward the fountain. Soon he returned. A shake of his head was indication that neither Cuban had left his post.

Five minutes followed. A stooped man with gray beard passed along the hallway, leaning on a bamboo-walking stick. The man was wearing hat and overcoat, and he was carrying a satchel. Cardona wondered if he would return from the cloak room. Joe watched; then saw a white-jacketed Cuban come along the hall.

This was not astonishing. Obviously, two were on duty at the cloak rooms, so that one could go on errands whenever necessary. Nevertheless, Cardona was particularly interested in the activities of the Cubans. Seeing one of them depart, Joe wondered about the other.

FINISHING a plate of spaghetti, the acting inspector arose and strolled along the hall. He stopped at the fountain. He looked to the right. There was no Cuban behind the window of the cloak room. A quick glance to the left. The second Cuban was also gone.

Quickly, Cardona thrust his head through the open window on the right. No sign of a hiding Cuban. Going to the other window, Cardona craned his neck. He spied something white upon the floor. He yanked open the door and entered. Brushing overcoats aside, he reached the rear of the room.

He found the Cuban, bound and gagged in a corner. The man's eyes were closed. The white that Cardona had spotted was part of the fellow's jacket. Cardona saw a satchel in the corner. He yanked it open; within he saw the gray mass of a false beard; with it the bamboo cane, crushed in telescopic fashion to a mere six-inch length.

Beside Cardona was an end wall panel, cleared of coats and hats. Joe pressed his hand against the woodwork. The panel yielded; it slid sidewise into the wall. Fingers sliding to his pocket, Cardona gripped the butt of his revolver. He drew the weapon while he stared at the sight before him.

Cardona was looking into a lighted room, a gambling hall half-filled with well-dressed patrons. Standing at a central spot was a figure cloaked in black – a menacing intruder who slowly gestured with a brace of automatics. Silenced customers were backing to the walls; attendants likewise. Tables lay clear to view, displaying a harvest of cash for this unexpected reaper.

With sidelong glance, Cardona noted another door in this same wall. Its guard was standing with upraised arms. Apparently the cloak room on the right had served as the only regular entrance. That was why this

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intruder had chosen the cloak room on the left. He had been the stooping, bearded man. His satchel had contained the raiment of black.

One Cuban gone, the bold visitor must have overpowered the other, single-handed.

Cardona's gun stopped halfway to levelness. For an instant, Joe had been ready to cover the cloaked intruder; to shoot him down before he had a chance. He thought that he had trapped the third Shadow. Then realization froze Joe to inaction.

This was no impostor! This was The Shadow! It fitted with that telephone call that had come in Jothan's voice: "– cloak rooms at the end of hallway – investigate as soon as both Cubans have left –" Remembered words thrummed through Cardona's brain.

The Shadow had predicted what had happened; he had relied upon Cardona's keenness to spot the game, once the lead had been given. This must be The Shadow, revealing a hidden gambling den. Holding everyone at bay, waiting for the law to raid!

Cardona dared not leave. He foresaw hazards for The Shadow. It was better to wait for the squad to come here. Cardona knew that his men might arrive any moment, since he had not returned to the dining room.

Hence Cardona waited, drawing back into the cloak room, ready to warn his followers for silence, until they could spring a sudden entry. By that plan, he could shift others through the opposite cloak room.

ACROSS the gambling hall stood Duke Hydon. He was just outside the tiny office. Duke could not see Cardona, for the cloaked invader stood directly between him and the exit to the cloak room. Duke's hands were raised; his eyes were staring. His lips, however, were mumbling words.

"It's The Shadow – he's got the lead – too quick for Kidder and Brad – but they'll jump to it if they get the break – so will the torpedoes –"

"Edge over, Duke!" came a whispered rasp through the crack of the office door. The barrier was slightly ajar; Duke could catch Sparkler Meldin's harsh tone. "I've got him covered! That's it – stick right where you are. Your shoulder is clear of my gat. The old smoke-wagon is ready."

"Let him have it!" mouthed Duke. "Drop him, Sparkler! You've got the range. Drill him, quick –"

"Not yet. Wait until he moves forward. Closer to the tables. We're framing him, Duke. We want it to look like he's come to grab the cash. So all the people will swear he's crooked."

Sparkler's whisper ended. The cloaked invader was advancing toward the very center of the room, straight to a table where stacks of money lay. A gibe came from lips that were masked by upturned folds of cloth. The sneer caused frightened players to back closer toward the walls.

Duke noted, however, that some were reluctant to yield their ground. Kidder – Brad – torpedoes –

"Now!" whispered Duke. "Start it, Sparkler! He's almost at the gaming table –"

DUKE broke off. An attendant, close beside another, had edged over to hide his right arm behind his pal's left shoulder. The moving man was one of the torpedoes. His raised arm was dipping down. It snapped upward as the fellow sprang suddenly to the left. A revolver flashed. The torpedo fired.

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The cloaked invader wheeled. Furiously, he aimed and pressed the trigger of a .45. The torpedo's shot had sizzled wide. The first bullet from the automatic clipped the fellow's shoulder.

"The Shadow's dropped him!"

People along the walls were rolling to the safety of the floor when Duke gasped the words. Others, however, still retained their feet: men who were spread about in a semicircle. Kidder and Brad had posted their marksmen for just such a job as this. Half a dozen revolvers were flashing; muzzles jabbed simultaneous spurts toward that wheeling, black-clad fighter in the middle of the room.

A big gun roared from beside Duke Hydon's ear. Its aim was perfect. Duke had expected such a shot from Sparkler. Yet the blast was unnecessary. Already other sharpshooters had done their work. Springing from every side, they had riddled their lone foe. A cloaked form was sprawling forward. Killers had loosed the venom that they had reserved for The Shadow.

Automatics clattered from loosening fists. The black-clad fighter rolled grotesquely, then lay motionless, almost at Duke Hydon's feet. His slouch hat wavered, then fell from his head.

Duke, leaping, forward, spied the up-turned face. The cry that Duke emitted was one that came convulsively to his lips.

"Sparkler! Sparkler Meldin!"

ONCE again, Duke had recognized a face that had been hidden by a hat brim. The same face that he had seen last night: Sparkler Meldin's. Only a moment ago, Sparkler had been in the office, whispering harshly to Duke. Yet here was Sparkler, riddled with slugs, dead upon the floor of the gaming room! It was incredible! – impossible! – yet Duke could not stop to reason. Nor could Kidder and Brad. They, too, were staring at that upturned, blood-streaked countenance. They saw the widespread lips, the gleaming gold teeth that glittered with a frozen leer. The cloak had fallen away; a diamond stick-pin flashed from Sparkler's collar. Gloved fingers bulged with rings beneath the cloth.

Sparkler Meldin!

The name crowded three startled brains. Then came an answer to the riddle. A taunt that left no doubt concerning the identity of the dead man on the floor. The laugh that swept to startled ears was proof that Sparkler Meldin had been slain; for it was proof that The Shadow lived.

The office door had swung wide open. From the space within had stepped a cloaked and shrouded figure. A being in black, whose mirth rang out defiant challenge, whose vivid laughter swept to high crescendo; then staggered the room with shivering echoes.

The Shadow – not Sparkler Meldin – had come to the Casino Havanola last night. Made up to look like Sparkler, The Shadow himself had planned a successful trap. His mesh had snared a murderer. The Shadow had resumed his garb of black.

Ready with huge automatics, The Shadow was prepared to deal with foemen. Gun-bearing crooks were faced by the real avenger whom they had failed to conquer!

CHAPTER XXI. CRIME'S AFTERMATH

BOLDLY, The Shadow had stepped forth to deal with danger. He was faced by men who had a zest for blood. The same guns that had downed the interloper were still in ready fists. Kidder, Brad, and their squad were ready to battle The Shadow as they had fought with Sparkler Meldin.

The odds were better in their favor. They had started from scratch with the false Shadow; but their weapons were already drawn when they faced the real. Revolvers sprang to action; fingers were quick on hair-triggers. But bullets came too late.

The Shadow had swung forward, whirling as he came. He feinted to the left. His trigger squeezes answered the finger pulls of crooks. The Shadow's shots were swift and crippling.

Kidder Dagland, as he fired one faulty shot, received a bullet in the wrist. His gun slipped from his fingers. Brad Stuggart, leaping forward as he thrust his gun, was stopped by a second winging shot. Brad spun about and sprawled. The bullet had clipped him in the shoulder.

Crooks were backing as they fired. Though desperate, the torpedoes wanted to avoid The Shadow's aim. Their one chance to find the whirling target depended upon Duke Hydon. The bearded man was in The Shadow's course. Bare-handed, Duke was springing in to stop the cloaked fighter's elusive drive.

A black-gloved fist swung sidewise to gain aim at a distant foe. Well calculated, that maneuver. The hand stopped short as it encountered Duke's jaw. The bearded man went floundering backward.

The Shadow boomed an instantaneous shot toward a diving gunner. The bullet missed its mark by a scant fraction. But its effect was as good as a hit.

Henchmen had lost their nerve. They were ready to drop their guns and cry for mercy. Kidder and Brad were downed; the remaining crooks had no leadership. Guns were about to drop from yielding hands when The Shadow's swift work ceased. Staring crooks saw gloved hands thrust smoking automatics out of sight.

Then came the reason. Hurtling men were bounding in from the cloak room entrances. Savagely, they fell upon the thugs and bore them to the floor, wrenching their guns away. Struggling crooks tried to break free. They were bowled against roulette tables. Boards were overturned; wheels went clattering, rolling; cash and chips spread everywhere.

Cardona and his squad had broken in upon the scene. The Shadow had deliberately spared the defeated rowdies that the law might have its opportunity. Duke made a wild grab for a lost revolver, while Kidder and Brad staggered about, looking for an avenue that would offer a get-away. All acted hopelessly; detectives pounced upon them.

Startled players were rising from along the walls, freed from the menace of conflict. They had witnessed two swift frays; they were watching a third, its finish a foregone conclusion. Beaten crooks were in the hands of the law.

JOE CARDONA saw The Shadow above the body of Sparkler Meldin. The ace watched The Shadow rip away the bloodstained cloak that covered the impostor's form. The Shadow's hand plucked up the hat that lay upon the floor; then tugged away the gloves that covered Sparkler's hands.

A solemn laugh was audible, as The Shadow held these trophies high. It was his denouncement of the

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murderer who had played the imitation game. A final reminder that the third Shadow, like the second, had received just doom.

Two murderers had died in false attire. There would be no more. With a last laugh, The Shadow swung about and strode into the little office. His chilling mirth gained a sudden muffle, as the door swung shut behind him. The key clicked in the lock.

Harry Vincent was standing by the desk, holding an automatic. Harry had been released by The Shadow; the agent had backed his chief. All the while that The Shadow had battled, Harry had been just within the doorway, ready to join in the fray. His shots had not been needed.

Seconds only had marked The Shadow's fight. Kidder – Brad – Duke – all had staggered in swift procession. Harry, aiming for thugs, had stopped when The Shadow had ceased fire. Harry, too, had seen the invading representatives of the law.

The Shadow tossed a black bundle to Harry. It was Sparkler Meldin's cloak, slouch hat and gloves rolled tightly within it. Followed by his agent, The Shadow led the way down the spiral staircase. They reached the lower office. The Shadow unlocked the door.

Crowds were making for the front exit of the night club. Confusion had swept the Casino Havanola. The Shadow took a pathway to the left. Close behind him, Harry followed, through a doorway to the street.

Moe's cab was parked there, waiting. Harry boarded it in response to a hissed order. He looked about for The Shadow. His chief was gone.

Swallowed in the darkness of the thoroughfare, The Shadow had chosen his own course. The lingering echoes of a whispered laugh: those were the only reminders of the victor's presence. The cab rolled away, with Harry its lone passenger. Through Harry's brain was running the solution of strange events.

That call from Burbank; the one that Kidder had answered last night, posing as Harry. Well had The Shadow chosen Burbank, to serve as contact. Burbank had spotted the false notes in Kidder's voice. The contact man had called The Shadow, to state that Harry was in trouble.

The Shadow had come at once, prepared for a double part. Himself upon the surface, he was masked as another beneath. The Shadow knew that Sparkler Meldin was passing himself as The Shadow. To beat the crook at his own game, The Shadow had passed himself as Sparkler Meldin.

Other points were still bewildering; but Harry knew that he would learn the answers later. Vaguely, he grasped the clever features of The Shadow's stern campaign to end the menace begun by one imposter and carried on by another.

It was Joe Cardona who presented many of these details, one night later. Not to Harry Vincent, but to Commissioner Weston in the police official's private office. Cardona had learned facts; some through men who had talked, others through straight investigation. He had also followed another tip from The Shadow. One that concerned Miami.

"The Shadow guessed who Meldin was," assured Cardona. "That's why you got those telephone calls, commissioner. They weren't from the judge and the district attorney's office – I've been checking. The Shadow paved the way to the closing of the Casino Havanola.

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"So Sparkler would come there, as the third Shadow. With the clamps put on, his best chance was a clean-up. To get jewels, cash – best of all, an alibi that would pin things heavy on The Shadow. Nobody would ever have figured Sparkler raiding his own joint.

"Yet the whole thing was a set-up. Sparkler had his own man in the cloak rooms. He blew in wearing a phony beard. One Cuban helped him tie up the other; then the first one went away. This to make it look as though The Shadow had pulled the trick. What's more, Sparkler went through the entrance that nobody was using. There wasn't even a lookout to stop him.

Weston nodded; then inquired: "But what about The Shadow?"

"He must have figured Sparkler perfectly," returned Cardona. "He knew that Sparkler wasn't going to let Duke in on it. Sparkler was playing a lone game. What did he care if Duke got into a mess? Sparkler made a boner, though. He didn't know about Duke's strong-arm crew."

"Didn't the Cubans tell him?"

"They weren't in the know. They thought that Kidder and Brad were customers. They didn't guess that the attendants were yeggs from Chicago. The Cubans never went into the gaming room. They were part of the front."

"And The Shadow stole Sparkler's own game?"

"He did. He walked in on Duke one night early. All in black; but when he dropped his cloak, he was disguised as Sparkler. The Shadow wanted to be on the inside when Sparkler arrived. He picked the surest way. As Sparkler, he was welcome. What's more, he told Sparkler's own story, as near as I can figure it. Duke fell for it.

"So did the others. They were so sold that they were sure Sparkler was The Shadow, when he showed up. The Shadow let them get Sparkler. Handed over the lone wolf to the foxes. I saw it, commissioner. I fell, too. I was paralyzed when I saw Sparkler drop. I thought he was The Shadow; that I was too slow to save him."

Pausing, Cardona drew a sheaf of papers from his pocket. He added final data.

"ON account of the funny beard," stated Joe, "we've traced the places where Sparkler stayed. Always in good hotels, sticking pretty close to his room. We'd never have landed him in the dragnet. The Shadow had practically no chance to locate him.

"I've wired Miami." Cardona paused. He had sent the telegram at The Shadow's telephoned suggestion.

"Asked the police to look through Sparkler's night club there. They found that the manager had been getting registered packages by mail. They were in a safe. The police opened them. The packages were full of swag.

"The stuff that Corbal swiped; the money that Sparkler grabbed. And the jewels. Sparkler was probably afraid to ship them to Havana. Miami was a better bet. He would have collected the swag later."

"One point, Cardona," put in Weston, suddenly. "How did you happen to be at the Casino Havanola?"

"I meant to tell you that, commissioner," returned Cardona, cautiously. "It was a telephone call, from Swedley Jothan. That is, it sounded like Jothan, but since he was out of town, I thought it might be a hoax. I hopped up to the Casino anyway, with a squad. I was going to call you from there. But the trouble started before I had a chance."

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"Do you think the telephone call was from The Shadow?"

"I know it was. He had plenty of chances to make it, right from Duke's office. That's where he was staying, all along. Duke and the others were up and down, in and out. The Shadow must have called me when he was alone."

THE telephone bell jingled alongside Weston's desk. He picked up the instrument and spoke abruptly. Recognizing a voice, he smiled.

"Thanks Cranston," remarked the commissioner. "I am glad to receive your congratulations... The details? You would like to hear them?... Very well... I shall meet you for dinner at the club..."

Weston started to hang up; he paused suddenly. Cardona did not notice the commissioner's rigid gaze. Joe spoke, in a tone of recollection.

"I heard The Shadow's laugh," he remarked. "When the raid was on. It was uncanny! Different from the laugh Meldin gave. When The Shadow laughed, he –"

"What was that?" demanded Weston, suddenly.

"The Shadow's laugh," replied Cardona, puzzled. "I heard it –"

"Just now?"

"No. Last night."

"Odd." Weston was musing. He pointed to the telephone: "Just as I hung up, I heard a laugh. Strange, uncanny, distant. I am sure that it came after Cranston had clicked the receiver hook."

Pondering, Commissioner Weston sat solemn as he recalled that fading, chilly tone.

Cardona, eyeing the commissioner, knew that his chief had caught an echo from the past. The same sound that Joe had heard last night – the spectral mirth that he could never forget.

The triumph laugh of The Shadow!

THE END