

The Yellow Band

By Maxwell Grant

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The Yellow Band

By Maxwell Grant

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CHAPTER I.. MIAMI MURDER.

THE lull of a moonlit, tropical night lay over Miami. Balmy contentment prevailed in those suburban areas remote from the rush of traffic. Such was the scene upon the quiet street where stood the residence of Howard Dorsan.

Flanked by lines of sprouty palm trees, Dorsan's Spanish-type home had an excellent setting. The place spoke of wealth; and Dorsan had it. The man was a retired millionaire, a widower who spent his winters in Florida with his daughter, Ethel.

A taxi stopped in front of the Dorsan residence. From it stepped a tall passenger. As the cab rolled away, moonlight filtered through the palm branches to show the face of Dorsan's visitor. The glow intensified a hawklike countenance, its features as immobile as those of an Aztec god.

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There were many persons in Miami who might have recognized that visitor as Kent Allard, noted explorer, who had stopped off in Florida during a trip to Guatemala. None, however, could have guessed the other identity that he possessed.

Kent Allard was The Shadow.

Master-fighter who battled criminals, The Shadow had come to Miami because of recent crimes in this Southern city. Robbery and death had teamed together, to leave the law at a loss. Behind those crimes, The Shadow could picture an organization of de luxe outlaws, banded in a common cause of evil. He had foreseen that further crime was due. The Shadow was here to break it.

Howard Dorsan was a man whose recent transactions had placed him in the limelight. Though retired from business, the millionaire had figured in a series of real-estate deals that had made news in Miami. The Shadow had picked Dorsan as a likely victim of crime's next thrust.

There was a cement walk beside the drive that led to the side entrance of Dorsan's house. With long, silent stride, Allard followed that path until he reached the stone steps. There, he halted; with a side move, he became a rigid statue. His dark-gray attire blended with the darkness of an hibiscus bush close beside the steps.

Allard had become The Shadow.

TWO persons were coming from the house. The Shadow saw them by the porch light. One was an attractive girl, bare-shouldered in her evening gown. She was Dorsan's daughter, Ethel.

The girl's companion was a tall, sleek young man, whose photograph had appeared in recent pictures of society groups. His name was Craig Wylett; smooth-featured, handsome despite his lolling manner, he was much admired as a lady's man. Wylett was wearing a Palm Beach evening jacket; over his arm he was carrying Ethel's unneeded wrap.

Wylett ushered the girl into a coupé that stood by the steps, and Ethel took the wheel. As Wylett joined her, words of their conversation reached The Shadow.

"Perhaps," purred Wylett, "we should go back and tell your father—"

"About our engagement?" laughed Ethel. "There is not time, Craig. Why didn't you speak at dinner?"

"Rather an inconvenient place, Ethel. Afterward, your father went to the library, as he always does."

"And so your chance was lost." Again, Ethel laughed. "Don't worry, Craig. I shall arrange for you to interview father to-morrow. As for his consent, have no doubt. My dad believes that I should make my own decisions."

The starter grumbled; the coupé rolled along the drive. One minute later, Kent Allard appeared upon the house steps and rang the doorbell.

A portly servant admitted the visitor. When Allard quietly asked for Mr. Dorsan, the servant looked uncertain.

"Mr. Dorsan is at home, sir," he admitted, "but he gave the usual orders that he was not to be disturbed. That means that I am not supposed even to announce visitors."

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Allard's gaze was quizzical. The servant explained further.

"You see, sir," he said, "that is left either to Miss Dorsan, or to the secretary, Mr. Torry. Unfortunately, both are absent. Miss Dorsan went out only a few minutes ago. I am sorry—"

With long-fingered hands, Allard produced a letter which he showed to the dubious servant. It was signed by Howard Dorsan; it stated that the millionaire would welcome a visit from Kent Allard, at the latter's convenience. The servant smiled gratefully.

"That lets me out, sir," he declared.

He motioned toward a closed door at the far side of the hall. "You will find Mr. Dorsan in the library."

ALLARD stepped to the door indicated. He gave a slow, emphatic series of knocks, while the servant stood by waiting. There was no response; again, Allard delivered the knocks.

Slight anxiety was showing on the servant's broad face. Allard's keen eyes observed it, and read the fellow's thoughts. The servant was wondering why Dorsan did not respond. The same thought had come to Allard, although he did not register it.

With the intuition that characterized The Shadow, Allard could sense that something had happened to Howard Dorsan.

Allard's hand stretched to the doorknob. The motion was natural; so was the slight smile that came to Allard's lips. The servant took it that the visitor had heard Dorsan's voice, inviting him to enter.

As Allard opened the door inward and stepped through, the servant moved away. He was gone from the hall when the door again came shut.

Dorsan's library was a commodious room, with book-lined walls. Its lights were indirect; they threw a mellow, solemn glow that produced a tomblike atmosphere. There were reading lamps at various places in the room, but none of them were lighted.

The far wall had no bookshelves. It was taken up with windows, plus a pair of French windows that opened to a sun porch. As Allard's keen, clear eyes hovered about the room, they saw no sign of Dorsan. It seemed that the millionaire had probably gone out to the sun porch.

Approaching the French windows, Allard found them locked on the inside. As he moved along toward the room windows, he saw that their catches were tight. It was obvious that Dorsan, if he had been alone in the room, could not have left it except by the door to the hall.

But Allard gained an immediate impression that Dorsan had not left the library.

To the right lay a little alcove, past the end of a bookcase. Its position had rendered it unnoticeable when the room was viewed from the hallway door. Ordinarily, that section of the room was out of sight entirely, for a curtain should have hung above its entrance.

The curtain had fallen to the floor, giving the full view of the alcove. There was something ominous in the shape that the drape had taken. It was bulgy, spread like a shroud. Stepping to the alcove entrance, Allard stooped and drew the fallen curtain aside.

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Beneath lay the body of Howard Dorsan.

The millionaire was lying face upward. His withery face was distorted beneath its streaky lines of thin gray hair. Eyes bulged from their sockets; dead eyes that were riveted upon the blankness of the ceiling.

Arms were spread; the left hand was open in starfish fashion. But the right fist was clenched, as though it had sought to deliver a final, useless clutch against the purpose of a murderous attacker.

Straight up from Dorsan's white shirt front projected the handle of a knife. The killer had driven the blade to Dorsan's heart with one sure, hard thrust. The swiftness of the stroke had silenced the millionaire's lips before they could utter a solitary cry.

ALLARD'S eyes centered upon Dorsan's tightened fist. Their gaze was burning; for they were the eyes of The Shadow. Carefully, long fingers unloosened the dead man's hand. Holding the bent fingers open, The Shadow viewed an object that lay in Dorsan's palm.

The object was a rubber band, yellow in color.

The simplest of clues, that yellow band; thrust by a dead man's hand before The Shadow's eyes. Yet, to The Shadow, it symbolized much more; it stood for a group of banded murderers, whose killing of Howard Dorsan was the latest outrage in their campaign for ill-gained wealth.

Almost motionless, The Shadow's lips solemnly phrased the term by which he now defined the crew of killers that he sought to thwart:

"The Yellow Band!"

CHAPTER II. THE HALTED HORDE.

A SINISTER whisper, creeping through a room that had been stilled by death. Such was The Shadow's low-toned utterance. It marked the beginning of a quest; vengeance for the death of Howard Dorsan, which had come too early for The Shadow to avert.

It was The Shadow's challenge to the Yellow Band.

The starting point to that crowd of killers lay here, in Dorsan's library. Beginning with the yellow rubber band, The Shadow intended to find new evidence; to piece the past and thereby control the future.

But the nearest events of that future already lay beyond The Shadow's full control.

Though he wore his natural guise of Kent Allard, The Shadow was working with the keenness that had made him master over criminal foes. That was why he quickly learned that danger still gripped this room. A murderer had gone; but others were due.

Creeping sounds from the sun porch told that story. Noises that the average listener would not have heard. Sensing them, The Shadow gave no sign. He kept to the deliberate style of Allard, but he changed his plan of action.

Instead of remaining beside Dorsan's body, The Shadow arose. He let the dead man's fingers spring back into their clutch, retaining the rubber band in a remade fist. With long, easy stride, The Shadow crossed the library

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to the hall-way door. He laid his hand upon the knob.

A ripping crash sounded from the sun porch. French windows splintered on flimsy hinges as a powerful shoulder smashed them inward. As The Shadow swung about, faking a startled expression, he faced the thuggish leader of a motley crew that had been lurking close at hand.

The fellow leered as he brandished a big revolver. The crook's grin was contemptuous when he saw Allard's hands lift upward. The rowdy motioned to his companions; then strode forward.

"Found something, huh?" gruffed the thug. "Well, mug, you can leave it to some other guy to tell the coppers. You're going along with us!"

Backed against the wall beside the door, The Shadow retained the steady expression of Allard. The threatening crook was duped. He never guessed that he was walking into trouble for himself and his mob. From the instant that The Shadow had wheeled, he had been ready. He could have drawn a gun and beaten the intruder to the first shot; but he had refrained.

One glimpse of the crook's face, the fellow's confident juggle of his gun, had told The Shadow that threat would precede action. As Allard, The Shadow was drawing his foeman into a snare.

Still scoffing, the ugly-faced leader behaved true to form. He shoved the muzzle of the revolver close to Allard's face, forcing the supposed victim hard against the wall. With a growl, the crook reminded:

"One phony move, mug, and we'll croak you—"

THE move came, so well-concealed that no one could have foreseen it. The Shadow's shoulder blade had picked the right spot on the wall, just above the light switch. There was no change of expression on Allard's face; no move of the upraised arms. Totally hidden, that pressing shoulder blade hunched slightly, then nudged sharply downward.

Out went the lights; and with them went the pretended slowness of Kent Allard.

As blackness blanketed that room, The Shadow's hand grabbed straight for the gun that bulged between his eyes. His whipping fist took the weapon from its owner's hand before the crook could even think about the trigger. Lashing forward, The Shadow grappled with his disarmed foeman.

As choking fingers caught the mob-leader's throat, the fellow gave a frenzied cough for aid.

Thuggish followers could not fire. Their leader was in their path. They took the only alternative. They surged forward in the darkness, hoping to win out by mass attack.

A figure hurled to meet them headlong. With slugging guns, the hoodlums fell upon their prey. He flattened under their attack; a scrambling thug reached the light switch and pressed it. The rest looked to the floor to see how well they had damaged Kent Allard.

They saw the sprawled body of their leader, his skull cracked by the brutal sledges that they themselves had given him.

For the instant, thugs were too astounded to realize how they had been tricked. The Shadow had pitched their leader in among them, with a force that they had mistaken for a driving attack. In the interim, The Shadow had chosen a new position. He began to use it, before the baffled crooks could think about looking for him.

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The Shadow opened fire with the captured revolver. His first target was the gun hand of the hoodlum who had switched on the lights. The bullet landed; the thug doubled, howling. The others turned; they saw Allard aiming from the alcove above Dorsan's body.

Had they seen him cloaked as The Shadow, they might have lost their desire for fight. Spying only Allard, the thugs aimed. It made no difference to The Shadow.

The big revolver repeated before a single thug could fire. With each pump of the gun, a crook went sprawling. Others took for the shattered French windows, managing to fire as they ran. Their bullets merely spoiled the morocco leather bindings of books along the shelves. Flight was their desire; aim was only secondary.

Out to the center of the room, The Shadow paused for a moment as he saw two wounded gunmen rip open the hallway door and start a dash in that direction. The portly servant met them, backed by a white-hatted chef. The servant had a big cane belonging to Dorsan; the cook had brought along a skillet. They showed that they could handle the wounded thugs. The Shadow went after the others.

Out through the sun porch, The Shadow saw fleeing men diving between the palm trees. He fired the last two bullets that the revolver held; picked up a discarded gun and added more.

The shots spurred the remnants of the scattered horde into further flight, and served as additional alarm to bring the law.

THE whine of sirens told that police were on the job; that the first shots had been heard. Gunfire in the distance added news that crooks were finding more trouble.

The Shadow walked back into the house. In the library, he found the serving man and the chef. Both were staring horrified at Dorsan's body. It was the broad-faced servant who blurted:

"Did—did they kill him, Mr. Allard?"

"He was dead when I arrived," came Allard's calm reply. "The attack was made later."

"Then they must have come beforehand—"

The servant was looking puzzled as he spoke. Allard's eyes were watching him. There were facts, perhaps, that the servant could alone supply. Whatever they were, they were to be reserved until the law began its inquiry. For the man was interrupted by a heavy pounding at the front door. He went to answer it.

When the servant returned, he was accompanied by a chunky, heavy-jowled man from Miami police headquarters, whose chief mark of distinction was a derby hat. He seemed proud of that headgear, as well he might, for a derby was a rarity in Miami.

In fact, the headquarters man did not remove the derby from his head. He simply tilted it over one eye as he glared suspiciously about the room.

The servant's introduction of Kent Allard changed that attitude. The derby-hatted man looked surprised and pleased when he heard the name of the tall visitor. He promptly thrust out his hand.

"I've heard of you, Mr. Allard," he said. "Mighty glad to meet you. I'm Detective Kurman."

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"I've heard of you also," replied Allard. "Where is your friend Cleer?"

Kurman grinned his appreciation.

"You've heard of us, all right," he declared. "Kurman and Cleer. We've cracked some pretty tough cases, working together. We'll be teamed on this one, before we're through, unless I get to the bottom of it right away."

For a starter, Kurman studied the body of the leader who had been battered to death by his own thugs. He identified the fellow promptly; but his tone was glum.

"Gunner Modey. A bad guy! Whatever he came here for, none of his gang will be able to tell us. Gunner always kept mum on what his jobs were all about."

Crossing the room to Dorsan's body, Kurman made another comment:

"Not Gunner's work. He never handled a shiv. That knife is important. Let's hear what you know about it."

Kurman's request was addressed to Kent Allard. Coolly, the calm-faced visitor began his story. As Kurman listened, his face showed admiration; but it also registered dumfoundedness. The Shadow, as he talked in Allard's tone, made mental analysis of Detective Kurman and, with it, came to a definite conclusion.

Unless the absent detective, Cleer, possessed all the brains that Kurman lacked, the police would not travel far in solving the riddle of Howard Dorsan's mysterious death.

CHAPTER III. THE LOST LINK.

ALLARD'S story clicked with Kurman. The dick was impressed by the ruse whereby the visitor had handled Modey's mob. Allard's letter from Dorsan was one that had come in answer to some correspondence regarding possible investments in Guatemala.

The servant, whose name was Parrington, conflicted on only one point. Parrington thought that Dorsan had responded to Allard's knock. On further questioning, Parrington admitted that he had not heard Dorsan's voice.

"Parrington said to enter the library," was Allard's explanation, "so I did. That was all."

Kurman decided that the matter was settled. He came to a more important subject: When had Dorsan last been seen alive, and by whom, other than the murderer?

"I saw Mr. Dorsan go into the library," stated Parrington. "After that, Miss Ethel might have stepped in to talk with him. Or Mr. Wylett might have. He and Miss Ethel went out together, to a party at Mr. Thexter's, in Miami Beach."

"Lyman Thexter's!" exclaimed Kurman. "Say, that's where my side-kick, Cleer, is posted to-night! Thexter's a big oil operator. He's throwing a swell party; the kind where crooks might try to pull something. Wait until I talk to Cleer."

Over the telephone, Kurman reached his fellow dick and told of Dorsan's death. He arranged for Cleer to keep an eye on Craig Wylett; but to say nothing of Dorsan's murder, not even to the dead man's daughter.

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Kurman planned to break that news, when he arrived at Thexter's.

Coming back to Dorsan's body, Kurman remembered the rubber band that Allard had mentioned in his testimony. Prying open the dead man's fist, Kurman found the yellow elastic.

"It can't mean much," commented Kurman. "Dorsan wouldn't have snatched it off the murderer."

"Hardly," agreed Allard. "But the killer might have taken something from Dorsan."

"What, for instance?"

"A stack of papers, with the yellow band around them. If he yanked them from Dorsan's fist, the band could have remained."

Allard was looking at locked drawers below an alcove bookshelf. Finding keys loose in Dorsan's vest pocket, Kurman unlocked the drawers. He found one half filled with bundles of papers. They proved to be securities, title deeds and insurance papers.

Each packet was circled with a rubber band. But of those dozen elastic loops, not one was yellow. Other colors—blue, red, green—were represented in random arrangement.

The absence of yellow bands meant nothing to Kurman. It tallied, however, with a theory that The Shadow had already formed. But his lips did not express his thought.

Kurman found a typed list in the bottom of the drawer. He checked it with the papers and found that none was missing. That was exactly what The Shadow expected. He had a question; but there was no need to ask it. Kurman made the query instead.

Turning to Parrington, Kurman demanded:

"Who typed this list?"

"Probably Mr. Torry," replied the servant "He is Mr. Dorsan's secretary."

Parrington explained that it was Torry's night off; that the secretary had left before dinner. He remembered that Torry frequently went to a night spot called the Hilo Club, where Dorsan could reach him if needed. Kurman piled the papers back into the drawer, but put the list in his pocket. He told an officer to take charge, keeping Parrington and the chef in the house.

"Suppose you come along with me, Mr. Allard," suggested Kurman. "We can stop at the Hilo Club on the way to Thexter's. I'd like to talk to this fellow Torry."

As Kurman started from the room, Allard's fingers plucked the yellow rubber band from the table where the detective had tossed it. Kurman was through with that clue; but The Shadow still had use for it.

THEY found Torry at a corner table in the Hilo Club's grillroom. The secretary was a frail, fidgety fellow, who stared nervously through spectacles when he saw the arrivals approach his table. He seemed to recognize Kurman by the tilted derby hat, which the detective did not bother to remove.

Dorsan's secretary had finished dinner and was having a drink. It wasn't the first that he'd taken that evening, for his condition showed unsteadiness. When he heard the details of Dorsan's death, Torry sank farther

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behind his table, like a turtle hunching its head into its shell.

"This is horrible!" he quavered. "I—I can't believe it! Mr. Dorsan dead—murdered!"

Shakily, Torry reached for his glass, only to find it empty. He beckoned a waiter and ordered another rickey. While the waiter was getting the drink, Kurman produced the typewritten list. He showed it to Torry and the secretary nodded.

"I typed it," he said. "A list of Mr. Dorsan's securities and other important papers."

"All that he had at the house?" queried Kurman.

"Absolutely all," replied Torry. "I'm sure of that."

"Humph!" Kurman grunted. "We had a hunch that the murderer took something."

Torry's lips twitched; then managed to blurt: "What made you think that?"

"We found a rubber band in Dorsan's fist," explained Kurman. "One like those around the papers in the desk drawer."

Torry showed relief. The Shadow saw it, although Kurman did not. To Kurman, Torry's wincing were merely proof that the fellow was half drunk. The dick never realized that he had given Torry a break, by stating that the rubber band was like those in the desk drawer.

What Torry had feared was a statement that the rubber band was yellow.

"Mr. Dorsan sometimes carried a roll of money," declared Torry, his nerve restored. "When he did, he put a rubber band around it—like he did with those securities—"

Torry halted. He was sharp enough to see that the explanation had gone across with Kurman. The secretary had sense enough not to say more; and The Shadow knew why. It was Torry, himself, who had put the rubber bands around the securities in Dorsan's drawer.

The waiter had arrived with the rickey. He set the glass on the table and began to mix the drink. Kurman, rising, blocked The Shadow's view of the waiter. To Torry, Kurman said:

"I'm going to find out how long you've been here. I kind of suspected you, Torry, but if your alibi stands, you're in the clear."

KURMAN turned without leaving the table. Torry showed a grin. He knew that his alibi would stand; for he had dined here, at the Hilo Club. Then, almost irresistibly, Torry's eyes were drawn toward the face of Kent Allard. He met the gaze of eyes that were almost hypnotic.

Allard's gaze went downward; Torry's stare followed.

The secretary was looking at Allard's right hand, resting on the table top. Fingers had opened; lying in Allard's palm was the yellow rubber band.

A gulp came from Torry's throat. Kurman did not hear it, for he was looking about, trying to spot the club manager. Fear spread over Torry's face. The Shadow was not the only one to see it.

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The waiter was still standing beyond Kurman. The waiter could not see Allard's face or hand; but he did get a slanted view of Torry's expression.

From his tray, the waiter picked up a glass mixing stick and stirred Torry's drink. Then the fellow walked away; his back was turned when Kurman spotted the manager. A few moments later, Kurman was striding across the cafe. Torry was alone at the table with Allard.

"A yellow rubber band!" Allard's words came in cold, stern monotone. "One of several, around different bundles. The mark that told the securities that could be safely taken. Negotiable bonds: the cream of Dorsan's wealth."

Torry's lips were moving, in fishlike tremor. Mechanically, the secretary reached for his drink.

"You marked that wealth," accused Allard. "You typed a list that did not include the bundles that you expected a thief to take. Your part was to cover robbery. Dorsan's murder was necessary; for he could have declared his loss."

Allard's gaze had a boring burn. His eyes were those of The Shadow. Torry could not escape it. He brought his glass to his lips and gulped a shaky drink, that sent surplus liquid spilling down his chin. The drink did not help him. His hand dropped weakly, thumping its glass against the table.

"State the amount of Dorsan's loss!" Those words were a command from Allard's lips; the tone, the sibilant whisper of The Shadow. Torry's pretense was finished.

"Half a million," gulped the secretary. "I—I sold out to—"

Torry choked. Then his shoulders hunched; his hands went to his own throat. With a rattly gargle, the traitor pitched forward to the table. His arms spread wide; one hand knocked over the half-filled glass from which he had taken his last drink.

Kurman was coming with the manager. The detective saw Torry's fall and reached the table with a long bound. He shook the man's shoulders; tilted Torry's chin upward. Kurman's verdict was one word:

"Dead!"

Allard had risen. His finger was pointing toward the table. Kurman saw the spilled liquid beside Torry's overturned glass. The stream was dyeing the table varnish with a tinge of green. Kurman understood.

"Poisoned!" he exclaimed. "By that waiter who mixed his drink! I'll get that fellow!"

KURMAN was off, hauling the manager with him. From outside, The Shadow heard the roar of a departing motor. The murderous waiter had made his get-away. Kurman could not overtake him. Whether or not the poison-giver was found did not matter.

The Shadow knew that the waiter, like "Gunner" Modey, was merely another tool of hidden criminals. Masters of crime had bribed Torry to betray Howard Dorsan. They had given the treacherous secretary a chance to cover his own part in murder. But they had had a watcher ready in case the secretary weakened.

Torry's death was the latest evidence of the far-reaching power wielded by the Yellow Band.

CHAPTER IV. THREE OF A KIND.

KURMAN not only failed to overtake the missing waiter; he was unable to learn much about the fellow. The waiter was a new employee; and he had served at the wrong table when he brought drinks to Torry. After a half hour of wasted investigation, Kurman decided to move along to Thexter's.

While riding across the Venetian Causeway to Miami Beach, Kurman gave Allard his opinions regarding Torry.

"They got the fellow," growled Kurman, "because they figured Torry would help us. Poor guy! His alibi was O. K., which means he was on the level. They wouldn't have bumped him if he wasn't."

The Shadow saw no reason to dispute Kurman's theory regarding Torry's innocence. That link was lost; it was better that the law should concentrate upon matters that had occurred at Dorsan's. Torry had said enough, in his weak mention of possible money held by Dorsan, to make Kurman decide that robbery was the motive.

"From your testimony, Mr. Allard," declared Kurman, "the windows of the room were locked tight from the inside when you found Dorsan's body. That means that whoever killed Dorsan went out through the house. Gunner Modey raided to make it look different.

"Torry's out; and so is Dorsan's daughter. Maybe Parrington was the guy we want; but I don't think so. Anyway, we've got reason to hold him; and I'll quiz him proper. There's one other suspect, though. Craig Wylett."

To that, The Shadow gave silent agreement. Kurman continued further.

"There's been some smooth jobs pulled in this town," said the dick, "and Wylett's the class of guy that could have been in on them. This time, we've got a chance to pin it on him. Something was grabbed from Dorsan's; and if Wylett has it, maybe he didn't unload the swag."

Again, Kurman's theory fitted. There was one point, however, that The Shadow alone considered. If Craig Wylett happened to be a member of the Yellow Band, he had probably managed to dispose of the goods by this time.

In The Shadow's opinion, Wylett was the murderer. The fellow had known Torry; therefore, had opportunity to buy out the secretary. In both murder and robbery, Wylett would have had to act swiftly. That would explain the knife; also Torry's use of yellow rubber bands to mark the half million that Wylett could safely take.

Time would have been lacking for Wylett to go through Dorsan's securities in detail. Moreover, Wylett had a way by which he could have carried out bundles of securities when he left the house. The Shadow had not forgotten Ethel's evening wrap, spread across her escort's arm.

There was an added feature. That was Wylett's suggestion that he return to the house and talk to Ethel's father. As The Shadow analyzed it, Wylett's remark had been a build-up for a coming alibi.

STRAINS of music were floating from the open windows of Thexter's home when Allard and Kurman arrived there. The Miami Beach mansion was a huge one, with grounds that made Dorsan's seem insignificant. A dance was in progress, and fully a hundred guests were present.

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Kurman announced himself to a servant; with Allard, the detective was ushered into a remote room on the ground floor.

The place was Lyman Thexter's office; but it had large lounging chairs that gave it a comfortable aspect. Behind a big desk sat a gray-haired man of distinguished appearance. He was Lyman Thexter, and he greeted Kurman with a handshake.

When the dick introduced Kent Allard, Thexter's greeting was even more pronounced. Thexter had heard of the hawk-faced exploder.

"What has occurred?" inquired Thexter, anxiously. "I knew that you were coming here, Kurman, because Cleer told me. But he said nothing about Mr. Allard. In fact, he mentioned no details at all."

Kurman told of Dorsan's murder and Torry's subsequent death. He stated that Craig Wylett was a suspect; that he had tipped off Cleer to watch the fellow. Thexter nodded solemnly.

"I saw Cleer keeping close to young Wylett," declared the oil magnate. "At last, I begin to understand why. I shall order one of my secretaries to bring them both here."

There was a large vault behind Thexter's desk; beside its glistening door, a row of push buttons set in the wall. Thexter pressed a button; a secretary arrived and the gray-haired man gave the order. A few minutes later, Cleer and Wylett arrived.

Detective Cleer was a contrast to his running mate, Kurman. Cleer was tall, long-faced and stoop-shouldered. He looked passable in evening clothes, and if he preferred a derby hat, he at least refrained from wearing it indoors.

Craig Wylett was as suave and as sleek as when The Shadow had last seen him. He did show a trace of puzzlement; whether real or false, it faded when he was introduced to Kent Allard. Wylett seemed to take it for granted that Allard's arrival explained the presence of the detectives.

"Mighty glad to meet you, Mr. Allard," greeted Wylett. "I don't know what you want to see me about; but I am at your service—"

"I'm the fellow that wants to see you, broke in Kurman. "About the murder of Howard Dorsan."

"The murder—of Howard Dorsan?" Wylett stared, as he gasped the words. "It—it can't be! I saw him—alive—only an hour ago!"

Wylett settled into a chair, shaking his head. Kurman glowered.

"Kind of breaks you up, don't it?" sneered the detective. "Putting on a good act, aren't you?"

"I'm thinking about Ethel," returned Wylett, ignoring Kurman's gibe. "This will hurt her. Terribly!"

Kurman provided details of Dorsan's death, watching the young man all the while. Gradually, Wylett took interest. When Kurman came to the finish, the sleek young man hopped to his feet.

"You accuse me?" he challenged, hotly. "Why, you—"

The Yellow Band

Wylett finished the epithet with a punch for Kurman's jaw. The chunky dick blocked it and twisted Wylett's arms behind him. To Cleer, Kurman snapped:

"Frisk him!"

Cleer did. He found nothing of greater value than Wylett's wallet, which contained thirty odd dollars. Kurman released his grip and shoved Wylett into a chair, where the young man sat glaring. Kurman ordered:

"Send for Miss Dorsan.

WHEN Ethel arrived, Kurman questioned her without preliminaries. He asked about the trip from her home to Thexter's, laying emphasis on Wylett.

Seeing Wylett's expression, Ethel did not think that her father was concerned in the matter.

"I drove straight here," declared the girl, "and Craig was with me all the while. We didn't stop anywhere."

"What was Wylett carrying with him?"

"Nothing except my evening wrap. Craig had it when I locked the car."

"Where's the wrap now?"

It was Wylett who answered Kurman's question.

"I carried the wrap in here," declared the suspect. "I wanted to say hello to Mr. Thexter. There were others here—Rupert Gancy and a chap named Zunick."

"James Zunick," inserted Thexter. "They were both with Wylett when I came in here:

"Did you see the wrap, Mr. Thexter?" asked Kurman.

"I did not," replied Thexter. He looked about the room. "Nor do I see it yet."

"Because I came in here for it," broke in Ethel. "I remembered that Craig had it, and I wanted the compact and lipstick that were in the pockets. The others were here with Craig when I entered. But why in the world has my evening wrap become so important?"

Kurman did not explain. He merely made sure that the wrap had contained only the articles mentioned. Ethel was sure of that. Cleer asked for her car key; she produced it and the dick went out to search the coupé.

Meanwhile, Kurman sent for Rupert Gancy and James Zunick. They arrived.

Gancy was a youngish man, with a shock of dark-brown hair. He was large of build, and had a wide, large-jawed face. Zunick was definitely middle-aged; his long, sallow face gave him a foreign air, as did his accent. He was polished of manner and dangled a monocle from his fingers when he spoke.

Both showed surprise at the presence of detectives; but were prompt to answer questions. Yes, both had been in the room when Craig Wylett arrived. Zunick had stepped out for a minute to look for Thexter; and not finding their host, had returned just before Ethel arrived.

The Yellow Band

Both remembered that the girl had taken the evening wrap. Thexter came in right after Ethel's departure. A few minutes later, all had left the office.

Kurman had just finished listing the testimony when Cleer returned after unsuccessfully searching the coupé. Kurman asked his teammate when he had begun to cover Wylett; and Cleer said he had been on hand when the group came from the office.

Allard's keen eyes were watching Wylett. They saw the suave young man suppress a smile.

The law's case against Craig Wylett had struck a solid snag.

AFTER the silence that followed, Lyman Thexter decided that it would be wise to break the news to Ethel. He did it with a gentleness that was impressive, and the girl took it bravely.

"I knew—knew that something must have happened," Ethel choked. "And I thank you, Mr. Thexter, for telling me. I don't think that I could have stood such news if it came from those men."

She pointed scornfully toward Kurman and Cleer. Her indignation overcame her. As Ethel began to sway, Wylett rushed to her. Ethel sprang gladly for the young man's arms, and began to sob.

"You wanted to go back, Craig," she recalled. "To talk to father—and I wouldn't let you. If I had—perhaps it wouldn't have happened. And now, Craig, they're blaming you!"

"Hear that?" demanded Wylett, hoarsely. His defiance was for Kurman and Cleer. "Get going, the pair of you! I'm taking this girl to her home."

Wylett walked Ethel from the office, and neither dick made a move to stop him. Gancy and Zunick excused themselves and made their departure back to the ballroom. Turning to Cleer, Kurman growled:

"That fellow Wylett may be on the level; but there's still a chance that he's a Class A faker. I've got his address. Let's go down and take a look through his apartment."

"Sure," agreed Cleer, in a drawling tone. "And even if we don't find anything, Wylett won't be through with us. One or the other of us, we'll be watching him close for a while to come."

The detectives left. Kurman's parting remark was that he would call Allard later. That left Allard alone with Thexter. The dignified millionaire asked his chance guest to remain. For a long while, the two chatted on subjects other than crime. When Allard was about to leave, Thexter, after inviting him to come again, made his only reference to the scene that had preceded.

"What louts, those detectives!" was Thexter's verdict. "They are making a great mistake, planning to keep on the trail of that young fellow, Wylett."

The Shadow agreed with Thexter's opinion. The proof of it came when he was riding from the oil magnate's home in a taxi. Deep in the rear seat, the figure of Allard could not be seen when the cab approached the causeway. Shrouding darkness had given Allard the semblance of The Shadow.

Whispering lips intoned a solemn laugh that faded beneath the mild breeze that came from Biscayne Bay. It was The Shadow's accord with Lyman Thexter. The law was taking a useless course in watching Craig Wylett.

To-night, The Shadow had met two other men whom he deemed it more important to keep under observation.

Their names were Rupert Gancy and James Zunick.

CHAPTER V. THREE NIGHTS LATER.

THREE days had passed since the murder of Howard Dorsan, and in that period, the police had made no progress. It was still supposition, only, that there had been robbery at Dorsan's; and that made it even tougher for the law.

Detectives Kurman and Cleer had talked it over with the district attorney, and Kent Allard had been informed of the prosecutor's decision.

If Craig Wylett had gained a chance to rifle Dorsan's alcove drawer, the young man had certainly had no opportunity to dispose of what he took. Assuming that there had been robbery, that left only Parrington. The servant had stood up so well under quiz that he was as good as clear.

The other assumption was that Wylett had murdered Dorsan, but found nothing that he dared to take. That, on the face of it, was absurd. Wylett had much to gain by becoming Dorsan's son-in-law. If a crook, he would certainly not have staged a blind robbery.

That left only one answer. Howard Dorsan had been murdered by some party unknown, a killer who had slipped into the house unnoticed by any one there. Probably the murderer had gained some swag. Just what and how much, was a matter of pure speculation.

Dorsan could have told—and Dorsan was dead. Although Torry had disclaimed any knowledge of wealth other than the listed securities, the secretary might have provided some later information. That was why the crooks had eliminated Torry.

It was plain enough that Gunner Modey's raid had been a sham to cover up the probable robbery. But that produced no solution. It was still a mystery, that ghostlike entry of some murderer unknown. Until the police had more facts, the D. A. wasn't interested.

Kurman and Cleer didn't believe in ghosts. That was why they maintained their suspicion of Wylett.

While Kurman and Cleer suspected Wylett blindly, The Shadow had real reasons for classing Wylett as the murderer. There were facts that The Shadow—as Allard—had not given to the law. Nor did he intend to do so while Kurman and Cleer continued their blundering tactics.

Unquestionably, Wylett had been possessed of opportunity to slay Dorsan; and the crime, as planned, would have left Wylett in the safest position of any man in Miami. If Kent Allard had not been a chance arrival at Dorsan's, Gunner Modey would have raided with enough commotion to startle the servants in the house.

Finding Dorsan dead after Gunner's invasion, the police would have been positive that murder had struck later than the time when Wylett left the house with Ethel. That would have given Wylett a perfect alibi.

Gunner, too, although a pawn in the game, would have been covered. The police had him labeled as a crook who always preferred gunfire. They would not have figured him as the lawless invader who smashed in and out of Dorsan's.

The Yellow Band

Clinching these facts for The Shadow was Torry's confession that he had sold out to some one; and the one man who could most easily have reached Torry was Wylett.

IT was the history of Ethel's evening wrap that caused The Shadow to consider others as the right persons to watch. That clue had faded into nothingness, so far as Kurman and Cleer were concerned, just as their ideas of a large haul had dwindled.

The Shadow, working on the theory that Wylett had gained a large amount of loot, was positive that the crook had carried it as far as the office in Thexter's Miami Beach mansion.

There, Wylett had met two men; both could have been waiting for him. Those two were Rupert Gancy and James Zunick. Neither had been under observation while Cleer was watching Wylett. Gancy and Zunick—either or both—could have received the spoils from Wylett.

The set-up certainly fitted with The Shadow's picture of a criminal group who formed the Yellow Band. There had been previous crimes in Miami and other Florida resorts, all the sort that crooks de luxe would handle. Facts indicated that smooth workers had been taking turns.

One man had finished his allotment of misdeeds. That one was Wylett; he could not afford further risk. Perhaps Gancy and Zunick would also be smart if they quit; but they were apt to be as brazen as they were clever. In that case, each would be due to stage another climax, equal to Wylett's.

Which would be the first to move?

The Shadow's choice was Gancy. The fellow was always on the move, whereas Zunick seldom stirred from his hotel. That made it necessary for The Shadow to watch Gancy, since he was difficult to trail.

The Shadow had left Zunick to Harry Vincent, the most capable of all The Shadow's agents. Harry was living at Zunick's hotel and had formed an acquaintance with him, over the bridge table.

Meanwhile, no move of Gancy's escaped The Shadow.

AS Kent Allard, The Shadow occupied an elaborate suite in a large hotel overlooking Biscayne Bay. Reputedly, Allard was an explorer who had spent long years in Guatemala, ruling a remote tribe of Xinca Indians. (See "The Shadow Unmasks," Vol. XXII. No. 5.) Actually, he had been elsewhere all the while, battling men of crime. The Guatemala story kept enemies from guessing that Allard might be The Shadow.

Two servants lived with Allard; both were Xincas whom he had brought to civilization. They were stolid, stony-faced chaps; and to them, Allard's words were law. The Xincas had adapted themselves to civilization in more ways than one.

They were stalkers without equal; and to them, city streets offered similar concealment to the jungle. It was not necessary for Allard to keep personal check on Gancy's whereabouts. He could, under many circumstances, depute one of his servitors to the job. He had used that policy.

On this night, a Xinca had taken over the duty. The proof was evident in Allard's hotel suite, where the hawk-faced explorer was writing letters at a table, with a single servant in attendance.

The evening was early; Allard's plans were unmade when the telephone bell began a jangle.

The Yellow Band

Lyman Thexter was on the wire. The oil man was inviting a few friends to his home. He would be pleased if Kent Allard could come at nine. Allard accepted.

It was nearly eight o'clock. Time for a check-up on Gancy. As Allard arose, he spoke to the Xınca. The servant stepped to a passage that served both as an entry to the suite and a connection between the living room and a bedroom. From beneath garments that were hanging on a rack, the Xınca produced a black cloak and raised it over Allard's shoulders. A slouch hat was next; donning it, Allard stepped out into the corridor.

The transformation was complete. Kent Allard had become The Shadow. With gliding stride, The Shadow reached the far end of the corridor. His figure was blotted by the blackness of a fire tower.

Ten minutes later, the other Xınca received a surprise that almost produced astonishment on his stone-like face. The watcher was standing opposite a small hotel, completely sheltered beneath the spread of the palm trees. Motionless, the Indian was in a place where he believed no eyes could spy him.

Yet he felt the grip of a gloved hand on his arm, the low, sibilant tone of a whisper that announced The Shadow.

The Xınca spoke in response. He pointed toward a window on the fourth floor of the hotel. That was Gancy's room, and it was lighted.

Faint blurs that moved beyond the drawn shade were proof that Gancy was still in his room. The Shadow kept on watch, with the Xınca beside him. After five minutes, Gancy's light was extinguished. It was not long before the big-built man arrived on the street, to take a waiting cab.

That taxi had scarcely started before the driver of a second cab gained two passengers who seemed to arrive from nowhere. The cabby heard the calm tone of Allard, speaking through the window:

"Our friends are in the cab ahead. They want us to follow them."

THE cab driver, drowsy from the balmy air, had not seen how many persons entered the other taxi. He followed, never guessing that he was figuring in a chase.

The trail led toward more brilliant streets, past The Shadow's own hotel; then swung westward on a cross street. An electric sign, shining above the sidewalk, announced the Casino El Dorado. That was where Gancy's cab halted.

"Stop here." Allard's order came just as they passed the corner. "This is near enough."

His cloak went back; with it, the slouch hat. Into the latter, The Shadow dropped his gloves, leaving the entire outfit in the possession of the Xınca who accompanied him. When The Shadow stepped to the curb, he was Kent Allard.

While he paid the driver, the far door of the cab opened. Just after a car went past, the Xınca stepped out and disappeared across the street.

One minute later, Kent Allard entered the pretentious portals of the Casino El Dorado, where a doorman stood bowing to each new guest. Straight ahead was the ground floor of the casino—a restaurant, bar and dance floor, with slot machines and other gambling devices all along the walls.

To the right was a stairway. That was the direction in which Allard's eyes turned. At the top he saw Rupert Gancy, tapping at a door. That was the entrance to the real gambling hall, reserved for special guests. There, chuck-a-luck, faro and roulette were ready for players who gambled big stakes.

The upstairs gaming room was the place where Rupert Gancy would soon experience his second meeting with Kent Allard.

CHAPTER VI. THE SECOND CIGAR.

THE hour was too early for a crowd in the upstairs gambling room. There were only half a dozen players at the roulette table when Rupert Gancy approached it; and scarcely more than that number were indulging in faro and chuck-a-luck. Most of these were hard-faced gentry, only a few of whom wore evening clothes.

Even Felix Brullander was absent. Brullander was the proprietor of the Casino El Dorado; and he was usually in sight after the play commenced. Brullander had an office, reached by a passage that went between two card-rooms at the side of the gaming hall. There was a curtained entrance to the passage, beside the cashier's desk.

As a matter of policy, Brullander always kept the door locked when he was in his office; but there was no way of telling whether he was in or out, unless one inquired of the cashier.

Gancy did not ask. He gave a sidelong look toward the curtained entry; but that seemed the limit of his interest in Brullander's whereabouts.

Gancy had been staking chips for about five minutes when a new player happened to arrive and take a place beside him. The newcomer did not apparently notice Gancy. It was Gancy who observed him and clapped a big hand on the arrival's shoulder.

"Well, well!" greeted Gancy. "Glad to see you again, Mr. Allard!"

For the moment, Allard's eyes did not show recognition. Gancy chuckled.

"Don't you remember me?" he asked. "Rupert Gancy? You met me out at Thexter's

"Of course!" Allard nodded as he spoke. "I should have remembered you; but our meeting was under such forced circumstances."

Gancy spoke his agreement. As he placed chips on the roulette layout, he asked if Allard had heard of any new developments in the Dorsan case. Allard's reply was in the negative.

The two chatted occasionally while the play continued; and it developed that Gancy-like Allard-was invited to Thexter's this evening. As he palmed a small handful of chips, Gancy compared them with Allard's pile and remarked:

"I'll probably be leaving before you're ready. My luck is not so good tonight."

A wall clock showed half past eight at the time Gancy made that comment. For the next five minutes, the play continued quietly; then came the first interruption that Allard had observed. It was of a minor sort; but it had significance.

The Yellow Band

A dapper man in tuxedo came up to take over the operation of the roulette wheel. Allard heard the original operator growl:

"It's time you showed up! What's been keeping you? Going in for night bathing over at the beach?"

"Sorry, Luke," apologized the new operator. "I'll make up for it to-morrow.

"You'd better, Tony! Or I'll raise a squawk to Brullander when I see him."

TONY looked nervous as he took over the wheel. The light seemed to bother him; he brought out a pair of rimmed spectacles and put them on. The strong light showed that the glasses had a bluish tinge.

As the play continued, the new operator showed more anxiety. He was watching the faces of the players, as though looking for some one that he could not identify. With a side glance, Allard noted that Gancy had observed the new croupier's anxiety.

Casually, Gancy reached to his breast pocket and started to draw out a cigar. The very unimportance of the move told The Shadow that it had a purpose, for Gancy was too deliberate. In Allard's fashion, The Shadow spoke to Gancy. The remark was trivial, merely regarding some loose chips; but it served as The Shadow wanted.

Reminded of Allard's presence by the slight favor, Gancy's natural action would be to offer his companion a cigar. For a moment, Gancy's fingers hesitated; then dipped back into the pocket and brought out two cigars. Holding them so that they formed a V, Gancy turned toward Allard, with the question:

"Will you have a cigar?"

Gancy turned his hand over as he spoke; and the simple move had purpose. He was fixing it so that the cigar toward Allard was the second one; not the first cigar that Gancy had started to take from his pocket, for himself.

"Thank you, yes."

As Allard spoke, his eyes were upon the cigars. Even the sharp gaze of The Shadow could detect no difference between them. Both were long, thin panatelas of the same brand. Each had a dark-blue band, ornamented only by a gold-printed crest. Nevertheless, there might be a reason why Gancy had a preference for the first cigar.

The croupier was pushing chips toward Allard's corner of the board. Reaching for them first, Allard drew them in; then turned from stooped position to take a cigar. His shift, though natural, brought a result that almost caught Gancy unawares. The fellow's bluff face showed alarm as he saw Allard's hand reach for the cigar that Gancy wanted as his own.

Gancy got out of the difficulty; but his move was a give-away. He blunderingly upset a stack of chips and took it as an excuse to shift his hand. He fairly shoved the second cigar into Allard's grasp, and quickly drew his own panatela between both his hands.

Sharp suspicion flared from Gancy's eyes. It died when he saw Allard calmly pulling the wrapper from the cigar that had been forced upon him.

The Yellow Band

Never, at that moment, would Rupert Gancy had believed that Kent Allard was The Shadow. But, to The Shadow, it was plain that Gancy was a man playing some hidden game.

THE SHADOW removed the band from his cigar before he lighted it. Unnoticed by Gancy, he let the band drop into his vest pocket. Gancy kept the blue band on his own cigar; and within two minutes, there was an effect upon the new croupier.

Tony's nervousness ended. He was smiling as he handled the wheel; for he had observed Gancy's cigar.

Results were prompt. Tony slipped his hand into his pocket and brought out something that he kept hidden in his palm. Gancy won some chips; Tony forgot the rake as he shoved them across the board, using his hand instead.

It took a long reach, but it was worth it; for Tony dropped the object that he held. It was an extra chip.

Gancy held that disk as he arranged his stack. He laid his cigar aside; thinking that Allard was not watching him, the big man opened his fist and studied the chip. With a keen side glance, The Shadow saw that Gancy was reading a message.

Gancy gave the chip a rub with his thumb, to obliterate the pencil marks. He looked toward the clock. It showed quarter of nine.

Adding the cleaned chip to his small stack, Gancy risked the entire pile on a single number. The expression on his face was an eager one; but Gancy did not want to win. He hoped to lose, and the chances were thirty-six to one that he would.

The wheel whizzed and stopped. Gancy lost. He turned to The Shadow.

"That finishes me, Allard," said Gancy. "I'll be out at Thexter's when you arrive there."

With a nod, The Shadow resumed his play. As Allard, he seemed more interested in the roulette board than in Gancy's plans. He shifted his position, however, once Gancy had left. His arm covered the ash tray that held Gancy's forgotten cigar.

With one hand lowered, The Shadow's fingers plucked off the cigar band and dropped it into another pocket.

One timely glance was all that The Shadow needed to see Gancy on his way to the stairs. The lookout opened the door; Gancy gave a parting nod and went through in a hurry.

The Shadow's brain was working swiftly. There was something odd about Gancy's haste; the fellow had not been able to curb it. Tony, too, had darted a quick look to the door; the dapper croupier showed real satisfaction when the barrier closed behind Gancy.

The Shadow's prompt conclusion was that Gancy's immediate purpose had been to get away from the Casino El Dorado. The Shadow had an inkling to at least a portion of the penciled message that had been on the poker chip. A crisis was due here; not elsewhere. To follow Gancy might be useless; by staying here, The Shadow might catch the reverse twist of the game.

ALLARD'S chips settled back upon the table. For three minutes, the tall, impassive player concentrated on roulette. Then came an answer to the riddle. The lookout admitted a bulky, bushy-browed man whose profile showed a flattish trend.

The Yellow Band

The arrival was Felix Brullander, proprietor of the Casino El Dorado.

Players nodded to Brullander; but Tony kept busy with the wheel. As if for an excuse not to look in Brullander's direction, Tony took off his glasses, began to polish them; then placed them in his pocket.

Like other players, Allard was still gazing toward Brullander. He saw the bulky man raise the curtain and take the passage to his private office.

A few minutes later, Kent Allard stopped at the cashier's desk to turn in his chips. He counted a few bills, watching until the lookout turned to peer through a wicket in the outer door. A glance at the cashier; with that, Allard turned as if to approach the outer door, where a new customer was about to enter.

Both the cashier and the lookout were busy. Neither saw the deft side step, with which Allard went past the curtain, into the passage that led to Brullander's office. The drape scarcely rustled as it settled into place.

The Shadow had again become a being of stealth, although he still posed as Kent Allard. In the darkness of the passage, his cloak was unnecessary. The Shadow had a clear route to Brullander's office; and he had a good reason to pay a surprise visit there.

Crime was due; and, somehow, Brullander was involved. The Shadow intended to take a hand in shaping forthcoming events. When it came to surprises, The Shadow had a way of springing them. To-night, however, the game was to reverse.

The surprise that was due for Felix Brullander was to prove one for The Shadow also.

CHAPTER VII. CRIME'S FATAL THRUST.

THE passage to Brullander's office was unlighted. Only a slight glow trickled past the outer curtain; a streak of light showed beneath the office door. Silently, The Shadow moved forward.

He expected to find the door locked, and it was. The Shadow produced a tiny flashlight, focused its glow upon the lock. His position hid the light entirely, except for his own eyes. He saw a lock that was strong, but of an easily handled pattern.

Bringing a tiny pick from his pocket, The Shadow probed.

Two minutes of silent effort; the lock yielded noiselessly. The door opened inward; as he eased it, The Shadow took a special precaution. He knew that he might have reason to move quickly back through the passage, so he wanted the door to remain unlatched.

His light extinguished, The Shadow deftly wadded a chunk of paper into the latch socket of the door frame.

Peering through a narrow crack, The Shadow saw Brullander seated at a big desk. The bulky man had opened a fat envelope that had come from his pocket. He was extracting crisp bank notes of high denominations. The Shadow could see the thousand-dollar markings.

Wherever he had acquired the cash, Brullander held a fortune. The bills that he held amounted to close to a quarter million dollars. They did not mark the limit of Brullander's resources. Turning to a small safe, the big man opened it and took out more stacks of currency.

The Yellow Band

Though smaller in denomination, the other bills must have totaled more than a hundred thousand dollars. Brullander produced a small suitcase and began to stow away the cash. He apparently expected no interruption; but one came.

The Shadow heard it as soon as Brullander: a click from a far wall, at a spot that The Shadow could not see.

Brullander spun about in alarm; sped his hand for a desk drawer, too late to obtain a gun. An instant later, a man stepped into sight, to cover Brullander with a revolver. The Shadow had widened the door a quarter inch farther. His eyes fixed upon the intruder, who cast an avaricious gaze at Brullander's cash.

The intruder was Rupert Gancy.

BEHIND Gancy, now visible to The Shadow, was a gap in the wall where the invader had slid back a panel. As Brullander sat with upraised arms, Gancy chuckled.

"Thought nobody knew about your back way out, didn't you?" queried Gancy. "Well, somebody wised to it. The same fellow who heard you talking about leaving Miami. You've cleaned up yours; and there's been talk about the law cracking down on joints like this. How much dough have you got there, Brullander?"

Brullander glowered; then answered:

"Three hundred and eighty grand."

"Not as much as I'd counted on," asserted Gancy. "It's enough, though. I see you brought in the biggest piece of it to-night. Dug it up somewhere, like we've been figuring you would. Chuck it all in the bag!"

Brullander hesitated; Gancy gestured with the gun. Sourly, Brullander complied.

"Somebody's tipped you to a lot," snarled Brullander. "Whoever your spy is, he picked up a lot of dope nobody was supposed to know! I'll get that double-crossing rat!"

A tightening of Gancy's gun hand interrupted. As Brullander subsided, Gancy spoke.

"Maybe I'll tell you who he is," remarked the invading crook. "Then again, maybe not. Brullander, there's some things I want done, without a lot of stalling. Let's see what papers you've got around here. Maybe there's some I'll want to take along."

The Shadow had drawn an automatic; his free hand was moving the door farther inward. He was ready to shove a gun muzzle in Gancy's direction; but the crook's changed policy made that unnecessary for the present.

Brullander was digging in the safe, bringing out papers for Gancy's inspection. The crook had fished the gambler's revolver from the desk drawer; he was not even covering Brullander with his own gun.

Though it was obvious to The Shadow that Gancy planned to take Brullander's life, there was a chance that the crook would talk further, being confident of his own security. Slowly, The Shadow withdrew his automatic; suddenly, he made a quicker move.

A stir had come from the darkness behind him. Without a jar, The Shadow closed the door completely. Its fixed latch did not close. Gancy, within the office, heard nothing. But for the moment, The Shadow was concerned with others than Gancy.

The Yellow Band

Before he could make a move, a cold gun muzzle pressed his neck; A voice growled:

"Come out of it, snooper!"

THERE were a pair of men behind The Shadow. They had come from the card-rooms at the sides of the passage. They were Brullander's own guards, stationed there in case any one tried to crash his office.

The Shadow had passed them unnoticed; but when he had pressed the office door too far inward, an overlarge streak of light had reached the passage floor.

That had brought the strong-arm men. They knew nothing of Brullander's predicament. They wanted to handle this trouble-maker who had been prying into the gambler's office.

The spot was a tight one, particularly for Brullander. If Gancy heard commotion in the passage, he would riddle Brullander with bullets and dash away with the swag. On the contrary, if The Shadow took capture too easily and one of the guards tried to hold him while the other went in to see Brullander, Gancy would also start to shoot.

Explanations were possible, thanks to The Shadow's guise as Allard. But they wouldn't do, here in the passage so close to the office door. That was why The Shadow risked a midway course that worked. He backed away from the door; then shifted, despite that cold gun muzzle.

The move was just sufficient. It made the second man shove up a gun in the dark. "Watch yourself, guy!"

The Shadow eased his own gun into his pocket. His hands came up; the guards encountered them in the gloom. Yet The Shadow was still shifting away from Brullander's door. He had drawn his captors almost to the cardroom. One made the suggestion that The Shadow wanted.

"Let's look this guy over. In the poker room."

The two shoved their prisoner ahead of them. One minute more, they would have been hearing news from Kent Allard that would have made them listen. That minute, however, was never granted.

From beyond Brullander's door came the muffled report of a revolver—a sound that carried just enough for The Shadow's captors to hear. For the instant, they were startled. That was the moment in which The Shadow acted.

With a quick twist, The Shadow sent one captor sprawling in the passage. He shifted away from the other; as the fellow tried to poke him with his gun, The Shadow swung a hard punch in the darkness. The guard took it and flattened. The Shadow, whipping out his automatic, sprang for the office door.

The fellow on the passage floor made a wild grab and caught The Shadow's ankle. Jolting clear, The Shadow took a long sprawl that lanced him against Brullander's door. His shoulder sent the unlatched barrier inward. Rolling, The Shadow came up on hands and knees to look for Gancy.

The unlucky fall ruined The Shadow's chance to halt the thief. Gancy was through the open panel, a smoking revolver in one hand, the bag of money in the other. He slammed the panel as he went, never looking back. The wall opening shut just as The Shadow aimed.

On the floor lay Brullander, shot through the heart. Beside him was a .32 revolver; the weapon gave mute testimony of the mistake that had hastened the doomed man's death. Brullander had found the gun in the safe;

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had brought it out to challenge Gancy. The crook had been too quick for him.

THE SHADOW had no further time to think of either Brullander or Gancy. He was in a bad spot; Brullander's guards thought that he had played a part in their employer's death. Swinging about, The Shadow charged low from the office door.

He met the first man coming up, before the fellow could see his face against the office light. The man tried to fire as The Shadow attacked. His arm was thrust upward, when his finger tugged the trigger. Two shots drilled the ceiling.

With a titanic lunge, The Shadow pitched the guard clear through the curtain, out into the gaming room. Spinning, he met the second man, slung that fellow with a quick jujitsu toss over his shoulder toward Brullander's office.

It was then that commotion started in a new quarter. There were shouts from the big gambling hall. Past the half-pulled curtain, The Shadow saw the lights go out. Revolvers began to bark while people ducked for cover. The Shadow understood.

Some of the tough-looking players were hired gunmen, posted here with orders to cut loose if any noise came from Brullander's office. More hirelings of the Yellow Band. They thought that some one was coming through from the office; they intended to clear the way for the emergency flight.

Some one did come through. The Shadow whipped from the curtain squarely into a clustered throng that he found by the stabs of their revolvers. The mobbies had converged near the cashier's desk and were firing across the gaming room. Their mistaken efforts ended when The Shadow reached them.

He sledged hard with his big .45; a few seconds later, the snarling thugs had stopped their fire and were battling with the very person whom they thought they were supposed to cover.

They had no chance against The Shadow's onslaught. They broke; other men came piling into the fray. Lights came on, to show Kent Allard as one of a milling crowd that was sweeping across toward the roulette table. No one could have identified him as the person who had started the rout of the thugs.

Those trouble-makers were suppressed. Their wild shots had done but little damage, so far as innocent bystanders were concerned. They had managed to slug a few grapplers; but the only one who was completely cold was the lookout from the outer door.

Leaning against the roulette table, The Shadow looked about in the calm manner that suited the personality of Allard.

Clutching fingers reached upward, to tug at Allard's coat. A face with blood-flecked lips looked pitifully to the solemn visage above. The effort was too great; the fellow sagged back to the spot from where he had come, beneath the roulette table. The man was Tony, the croupier. He had a bullet in his chest.

AN instant later, Allard was stooped beside the dying man. Something crunched beneath Tony's elbow. Mechanically, Allard's hand reached down and plucked up the fellow's glasses, with one lens broken. Tony's dying stare met Allard's eyes. The traitor must have sensed the burn of The Shadow's gaze.

"I sold out," coughed Tony. "Sold out—Brullander! To guys that—that promised me big dough. Instead—they got me! Because—because they didn't need me. I'll squawk—I'll tell who they are—"

Lips contorted. The death rattle sounded in the traitor's throat. He tried to speak; words did not come. His lips, though, formed three silent motions that were followed with a long, harsh sigh that marked the end of Tony's life.

The Shadow had read the words on Tony's forcing lips as plainly as if the man had uttered them. The croupier had framed the name by which he knew that evil group to whom he had betrayed Felix Brullander.

Like the power of the insidious crew itself, Tony's unvoiced words seemed to linger amid the scene of ended battle:

"The Yellow Band!"

CHAPTER VIII. ANOTHER ALIBI.

POLICE were on the scene soon after the fight had ended; with them came Detective Kurman. The derby-hatted dick was pleased to find Kent Allard present, because he remembered Allard's testimony at Dorsan's and hoped for another clarifying story.

Allard did not have much to tell. He had cashed his chips and was starting for a party at Thexter's, when the interruption came. After the lights were off, he helped subdue the thugs who made trouble near the outer door. Plenty of other patrons had similar testimony, so Kurman was disappointed in Allard's.

Most important was the finding of Felix Brullander, dead beside the opened safe in his office. The two who had a lot to say about that were the guards who had met The Shadow in the passage.

They weren't sure just who had killed Brullander. They had spotted some one spying into the office; had started a struggle with the fellow. They remembered a shot; after that, their prisoner scrambled free. Some one had come heaving at them from the office; probably another attacker. Then the lights had gone out.

Standing in the middle of Brullander's office, Detective Kurman tilted his derby and chewed the frayed end of a half-smoked cigar. His reconstruction of the murder was brief.

"Some guy followed Brullander in here," declared Kurman. "Probably one of his pals sneaked in to watch the door. You grabbed one; the other rubbed out Brullander. Both made a break for it. The mob covered."

The summary was plausible, since no one knew anything about Brullander's private exit though the rear panel. Tony, the croupier, had alone learned of that route and had passed the information to the Yellow Band. Tony was dead; he would never tell the law.

One person, alone of all the witnesses, could have supplied facts to prove Rupert Gancy as the murderer. That person was The Shadow. His position, however, was a difficult one. As Kent Allard, he could not speak. To do so, he would have to admit that he had been the prying observer looking through Brullander's office door.

WHEN Detective Kurman went out to the gaming room, he learned that the slugged lookout had been taken to the hospital. The fellow was still unconscious. That news brought a wise nod from Kurman.

"They had to sock him," asserted the dick, "so the killer could make a getaway. We're getting somewhere!"

Kurman talked to the cashier; he was pleased to learn that there was a list of all persons who had been present. Like the lookout, the cashier kept tabs on all patrons. Kurman began to study the list; while he did,

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Allard watched him.

The Shadow knew that Kurman would jump to the obvious when he reached a certain name. There was no need for Allard to declare that Gancy was the murderer. It was the very idea that would strike Kurman's one-track mind.

Halfway down the list, Kurman delivered his outburst.

"Hey! Look at this!" Turning, Kurman saw Allard beside him, and pointed to the name on the list. "Rupert Gancy was here! Did you see him, Mr. Allard?"

"Yes," replied Allard. "He was at the roulette table, right beside me.

"How long did he stay there?"

"He left a short while before I did." Kurman spun to the cashier, with the question: "When did Gancy cash in his chips?"

The cashier shook his head. He didn't remember Gancy cashing in his chips at all. With a wise nod, Kurman pocketed the list. He went to the telephone. When he finished a call, he returned; turning to Allard, he said:

"One and one make two. I've just talked to Cleer. He's been watching Craig Wylett. Gancy didn't show up at Wylett's apartment; but that doesn't matter. The two are linked. Do you get it, Mr. Allard?"

"Do you mean," inquired Allard, "that Wylett passed stolen goods to Gancy, a few nights ago, at Thexter's?"

"That's right! So Gancy's got Dorsan's dough and Brullander's besides. I'd like to know where we can find Gancy."

"Probably at Thexter's. Gancy remarked that he was going there."

"Good! Let's go there."

Kurman took out time to call headquarters and order men to make a search of Gancy's hotel room. A few minutes later, Allard and the detective were again speeding across the causeway to Thexter's Miami Beach home.

On the way, Allard mentioned that Thexter expected him. That gave Kurman an idea.

WHEN they arrived, Allard entered alone. He was greeted by Thexter, who introduced him to other guests; among them, Gancy. When they were shaking hands, Gancy remarked:

"Your luck must have stayed good, Mr. Allard. You remained a long while at the casino."

"I was delayed there," returned Allard. "The place was raided."

Gancy expressed surprise. Before he could make comment, Detective Kurman was announced. When he entered, Kurman said to Thexter:

"I'd like to talk to these gentlemen." The two that Kurman indicated were Gancy and Allard. Thexter seemed mildly surprised; but he understood when Kurman explained that there had been trouble at the Casino El

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Dorado. He showed the way to his office; once there, Kurman asked him to remain.

The dick lost no time coming to his point.

"You're the man I want to question," growled Kurman, to Gancy. "Felix Brullander was murdered at the Casino El Dorado. We think he was robbed of a lot of cash. What do you know about it?"

Gancy showed indignation, which faded into a chuckle. He asked:

"When did the trouble start at the casino?"

"Just before nine," replied Kurman. "While you were still there."

Gancy shook his head. He remarked, emphatically:

"I left at quarter of nine. Mr. Allard can tell you that!"

Kurman started to produce the cashier's list. While the dick was busy, Gancy drew two panatelas from his pocket and offered one to Allard, who politely accepted it. This time, Gancy showed no tricky shift as he proffered the cigar.

"Look at this," snapped Kurman. "The cashier's list of players who turned in their chips. Your name isn't on it."

Only The Shadow's keen eyes could have noted the grimace that started to form on Gancy's face. It escaped Kurman's observation. Gancy had missed an important item in his alibi, by making that hasty exit from the Casino El Dorado. He was quick, though, in his recovery.

"I didn't cash in any chips," laughed Gancy. "I lost all I had on the final play. Mr. Allard will remember it."

"Do you, Mr. Allard?"

Kurman snapped the question. He saw Allard pause in lighting his cigar to deliver a nod.

"Of course," added Gancy, smoothly, "Mr. Allard wouldn't have seen me leave. He was busy at the roulette table. The chap who would remember my departure was the lookout."

"That's what I thought you'd say," growled Kurman. "Maybe you figured the lookout wouldn't be able to talk. Maybe it was you that slugged him. Anyway, he's in the hospital, unconscious."

THAT was a real jolt for Gancy. The Shadow knew why Gancy chewed his lips. He hadn't expected that thugs would slug the lookout. A lot of things had happened differently from the way Gancy had anticipated. The murderer had been depending upon the lookout—one of Brullander's own men—for testimony that would prove his alibi.

There was an ace in the hole, and Gancy used it.

"Don't forget the downstairs doorman," he reminded Kurman. "I spoke to him when I went out. He'll tell you that I left before Brullander came in."

"How do you know when Brullander came in?" quizzed Kurman.

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"He was getting out of a cab," replied Gancy, "just when I was getting into one."

Gancy's confidence was back. He lighted his long cigar and leaned back in his chair, leaving the next move to Kurman. The dick thought for a few minutes; then demanded:

"What time did you get here?"

"At about nine," returned Gancy. He turned to Thexter. "Wasn't that when I arrived?"

"No," replied Thexter. "You came later, Gancy. I should say that it was very nearly half past when you reached here."

That news made Kurman show alertness. He eyed Gancy quickly, expecting the fellow to be worried. The Shadow, too, was watching Gancy. The moment was a crucial one; for if Gancy argued the point with Thexter, he would be making a bad mistake. Gancy was smart enough to avoid the slip.

"You're right, Thexter," he said. "I had forgotten that I went back to my hotel. That accounts for the delay. I'd lost more money than I expected, at roulette. I stopped at the hotel to get some more."

"Sure you didn't stop to leave some?" demanded Kurman. "A big wad, maybe, that belonged to Brullander?"

"I told you that I stopped to get money!" Gancy's eyes had narrowed. "I see where you're driving, Kurman. You're trying to link me with Craig Wylett. I suppose you'd like to search me the way you did him. Go ahead!"

Kurman went ahead. All he found on Gancy was a small roll of bills and some loose change, all of which totaled about forty dollars. As Gancy put his belongings back into his pockets, he remarked dryly:

"Maybe you think I've seen Wylett since I left the Casino El Dorado."

"You haven't seen Wylett," retorted Kurman. "Cleer's been watching him. I'm going to find out, though, if you left a pile of swag at your hotel."

Picking up the telephone, he called the hotel. He talked to the headquarters men, to learn that they had scoured Gancy's room without making a single find. When Kurman hung up, Gancy phrased a single word:

"Satisfied?"

"Maybe. Maybe not." Kurman stopped, with his hand upon the doorknob. "I'm not through with you yet, Gancy. The first guy I'm going to talk to is the doorman at the Casino El Dorado."

THERE was silence after Kurman had gone. Lyman Thexter ended it by suggesting that Gancy and Allard go with him and join the other guests. Though Thexter had seemed doubtful, earlier, regarding Gancy, his qualms were no longer present. The oil magnate regarded Gancy as a welcome guest.

The party continued quietly; and as it progressed, Rupert Gancy became more and more confident of expression, particularly when he chatted with Kent Allard. Gancy was sure of one thing: that he had thoroughly convinced Allard of his innocence.

With Allard and Thexter both behind him, the murderer felt sure that he would have no further trouble from the law. Privately, Gancy believed that he had profited from Kurman's visit.

Rupert Gancy would have thought otherwise, had he guessed that Kent Allard was The Shadow.

CHAPTER IX. THE SHADOW'S LINKS.

IT was midnight when Rupert Gancy left Thexter's home. The murderer went in a taxicab. Other guests were still chatting at the front door; among them, Kent Allard. He was the only one who looked toward the street as Gancy's cab pulled away.

Immediately afterward, an old coupé wheezed from across the street, with a craning driver behind the wheel. Observation was difficult, but The Shadow's eyes were keen enough to recognize the man in the trailing car, particularly because of the derby hat.

He was Detective Kurman.

A slight smile on Allard's lips showed that The Shadow had anticipated the dick's move. Kurman was behaving true to form. Whatever he had learned from the doorman at the Casino El Dorado did not matter.

Cleer was covering Wylett. Kurman wanted to keep tabs on another suspect. Again, the law was bothering about a crook whose dirty work was finished.

As the other guests started for their cars, Thexter gripped Allard's arm, inviting his new friend to remain a few minutes. They went back to Thexter's office, where a secretary was busy at the desk. The secretary had spread a big ledger and was copying typewritten figures into the huge book.

"You have worked late enough, Carling," informed Thexter. "Put away the ledger until to-morrow."

Carling opened a closet door and stood on tiptoe to shove the big book on the topmost shelf. As soon as the secretary had left, Thexter began to confide in Allard.

"I am worried, Allard," declared the dignified oil magnate. "Miami has been badly stirred by robberies. I thought that the worst had come with Dorsan's death. But the murder of Brullander has topped it. I am wondering who will be next."

Thexter's strained tone showed that he felt that the term "who" referred to himself.

"I couldn't picture young Wylett as a murderer," continued Thexter. "Tonight, my suspicions of Gancy faded entirely after I heard the chap state his case. Yet I am afraid to trust my own judgment, and there are few persons in whom I can confide."

Understanding showed in Allard's eyes. Allard was a person of prominence; he had seen crime at first hand, in the cases of Dorsan and Brullander. Thexter wanted Allard's advice.

While Allard gave impassive consideration to the subject, Thexter mentioned another important angle.

"The local police have not impressed me," declared the millionaire. "Until recently, I felt that I could depend upon them should a threat come in my direction. I have changed that opinion."

"How well protected are you?" queried The Shadow, in the calm tone of Allard. "How many servants do you have? How much can you trust them?"

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THEXTER smiled. He produced a list of his servants, with their length of service. He showed that all were well paid and reliable, particularly his two secretaries.

"Carling and Nesbitt are accurate," assured Thexter. "I am exacting in my methods. You saw Carling making entries in my ledger; that record is kept up to date. My books account for every dollar that I own.

"I am safer than Dorsan, who had no books; his secretary, too, was inefficient. I am better off than Brullander, whose gambling business prevented him from trusting any one. Nevertheless, I do my business here. My vault contains great sums of wealth. Those facts are known.

"I am a target for crime. I need some expert to study my situation. Private detectives, in my opinion, are worthless. As for the local police, you have met their best samples. Kurman and Cleer are simply proof that two heads are worse than none.

A pause; then Allard queried: "What about some member of the foreign legion?"

The suggestion struck home. It brought a keen look from Thexter. He knew of the "foreign legion," that unofficial organization that winters in Miami every year. Composed of visiting police officers, on vacation from all parts of the United States, the "foreign legion" had frequently provided the Miami police with needed facts regarding suspected criminals.

"I never thought of that!" exclaimed Thexter. "But who would be the man to choose? Where does one find these members of the so-called foreign legion?"

"I noticed in a New York newspaper," recalled Allard, "that Inspector Joe Cardona, of the New York police, was leaving for a Florida vacation. You would certainly be able to locate him when he arrives."

"Are you acquainted with Cardona?"

"I have met him. You can use my name, in case you meet him."

WHEN The Shadow arrived back at his hotel, he had temporarily shelved Thexter's problems. He entered his suite as Allard; dismissed the Xincas for the night.

He called a telephone number. A voice replied; The Shadow spoke in the mysterious whisper that identified him:

"Report!"

The Shadow was talking to Harry Vincent. The agent reported that James Zunick had left their hotel at about eight o'clock. Zunick had slipped Harry's trail; but had returned some time after nine.

Finishing the call, The Shadow turned on a blue light. It showed only his hands above the table top—long-fingered hands that moved like detached creatures. Upon a finger of the left glowed an amazing fire opal; that gem was a girasol, The Shadow's gift from the tribe of Xınca Indians.

Upon a sheet of paper, The Shadow inscribed three names:.

Craig Wylett

Rupert Gancy

The Yellow Band

James Zunick

The pen paused above Wylett's name. The Shadow was reviewing Wylett's part. First member of the Yellow Band, Wylett had murdered Howard Dorsan; and had disposed of stolen swag when he met Gancy and Zunick at Thexter's. Wylett's one-man job was done.

The pen pointed to the name of Gancy. The second man had committed brazen crime to-night. His murder of Felix Brullander had jeopardized his own position along with Wylett's. Gancy, however, had planned a perfect crime. As at Dorsan's, it was The Shadow's entry that had caused the trouble.

If all had gone as Gancy expected, Brullander's body would have been found without commotion. On checking, the police would have learned through three persons—cashier, lookout and doorman—that Gancy had been gone before Brullander entered the casino.

Gancy's haste, plus the fight that followed, had made the fellow's alibi look bad. The Shadow had put Gancy in as tight a spot as Wylett. Like Wylett, though, Gancy had pulled out of it. One thing was certain, however; the second member of the Yellow Band was also in a position that made it impossible for him to attempt further crime on his own.

The Shadow came to the third name on the list.

Would James Zunick copy the example of the other two? The logical answer was yes.

It looked as though Wylett, finished with the Dorsan job, had passed his swag along to Gancy. After murdering Brullander, Gancy had gained an opportunity to contact Zunick. He could easily have relayed the Dorsan loot and added the cash that he had taken from Brullander.

Clear of suspicion, Zunick was in a position to stage a third robbery, gaining another huge amount of swag. As with Wylett and Gancy, that would be Zunick's farewell to crime.

How much the trio had garnered in the past was a question; but the total unquestionably ran past the million-dollar mark. It was a certainty that the Yellow Band was responsible for most of the recent robberies in Miami. The crimes carried their trade-mark.

THERE was a detail that The Shadow had not forgotten. From his vest pockets, he brought the two cigar bands and laid them on the table. Gancy's was to the left. In the blue light, its secret was ended. The glow blurred out the blue printing; because of some special ink, the band showed entirely yellow.

That was not the case with the band from the cigar that Gancy had tendered The Shadow. Its ink was ordinary; the blue merely looked darker. Extinguishing the blue light, The Shadow turned on an ordinary frosted bulb. Both cigar bands looked the same.

Producing Tony's, the croupier's, broken spectacles, The Shadow peered through the one good glass. Gancy's cigar band instantly showed yellow. The blue tint of the spectacles was responsible.

Tony had been told to wear the blue glasses and to look for the yellow band on some roulette player's cigar. That was why the croupier had shoved the chip message to Gancy.

The Yellow Band had planned from the start to do away with Tony as they had finished Torry, Dorsan's secretary. That was why thugs were posted. They had been set to follow the croupier after he left the casino. The Shadow's fight had forced the mobbies to hurry their attack.

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All links to a chain; but the key-link was James Zunick. The Shadow preferred to let the third plotter move into action. Trapped in crime, Zunick's capture could throw suspicion back along the chain, to Gancy and Wylett.

As yet, the Yellow Band had no inkling that The Shadow was in the game. That was the chief reason for The Shadow's policy. Unless new developments pointed to grave hazards for innocent persons, The Shadow's best plan was to work from cover.

That settled the matter of James Zunick. As Allard, The Shadow strolled from his suite and went down to the hotel lobby. He walked to a telegraph office and wrote a telegram, to which he signed another name.

The telegram was to Joe Cardona. The Shadow had told Lyman Thexter that the New York police inspector was on his way to Florida; therefore, it was wise that Cardona should be making such a trip. Besides, Thexter wanted protection; and The Shadow, faced by other business, believed Joe Cardona to be the best man possible for that assignment.

There was another reason for The Shadow's telegram. Soon—very soon—The Shadow hoped to have the Yellow Band rounded up and ready for the law.

Some one more capable than Detectives Kurman and Cleer would be needed when that climax came.

Joe Cardona would be very useful in Miami.

CHAPTER X. CRIME TO COME.

IT was not often that Inspector Joe Cardona found opportunity to break away from New York. Cardona was a hard worker, addicted to an everlasting routine. In fact, Joe himself would not have believed that anything could have yanked him from New York headquarters and start him on a trip to Florida; but The Shadow's telegram did it.

That message was brief; it carried the word "urgent"; and the signature was Lamont Cranston. That one name—Cranston—had a powerful sway with the New York police department.

Lamont Cranston was a millionaire friend of Ralph Weston, New York's police commissioner. Cranston was a globe-trotter; and of late, he had been absent from New York. Neither Weston nor Cardona knew where Cranston was; and there was something else that they did not know.

The identity of Lamont Cranston was one that was used by The Shadow when its actual owner, the real Lamont Cranston, was a long distance away.

Whenever The Shadow chose, he could drop his part of Kent Allard and become Lamont Cranston. Adept at disguise, a few minutes of skillful make-up were all that The Shadow required to mold the face of Cranston over his own. That done, no person living could guess that Allard and Cranston were the same.

It was not The Shadow's intention to be Cranston when Cardona reached Miami. There would be a message waiting for Joe; and that would introduce him to Lyman Thexter.

Such, at least, was The Shadow's plan; and The Shadow did not intend to change it. Sometimes, though, circumstances produced necessities that even The Shadow could not foresee.

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The facts that concerned The Shadow were unknown to Joe Cardona. All that Cardona had was a telegram from Lamont Cranston, sent from Miami. When Joe showed it to the commissioner, it was enough. The commissioner told Cardona to clear up his headquarters work and take a train for Miami.

It was past noon the next day when Cardona was ready to leave. He was too late to catch the Florida Special, the crack train that would reach Miami before five o'clock the following afternoon. There was a limited that left an hour after the Special, so Cardona wired that he was taking that train. He sent the telegram to Cranston's club in Miami.

When The Shadow called the club, announcing himself as Cranston, the message was relayed to him by telephone. He knew the hour when Cardona would arrive the next evening.

MATTERS remained unchanged in Miami. The police were investigating Brullander's murder and getting nowhere. Kurman and Cleer were very much on the jump, because one was trying to keep tabs on Gancy while the other watched Wylett. That made their regular work rather disjointed.

Meanwhile, The Shadow was handling his own vigil with the utmost ease. He had Harry Vincent watching Zunick, with the Xincas posted outside the hotel where both Harry and Zunick were guests.

This time, there would be no chance for Zunick to slip away. Word from his agent or a message from either Xincia would bring The Shadow on an immediate trail.

It was The Shadow's belief that a break was due; one that would make it unnecessary to watch where Zunick went, because the crook's destination would be known beforehand.

That break came.

It was late in the afternoon of the day when Cardona was due in Miami. Harry was playing bridge with Zunick and two others. They had finished their game of contract, when a telephone call came for Zunick. The man answered it; coming back, Zunick found Harry alone.

"How would you like to attend a banquet to-night?" Zunick's sallow face wore a sly look. "A real shebang, over at the Hotel Tropicana?"

Harry expressed his willingness. Zunick went into details. The banquet, he said, was a very exclusive affair. It was being given by Louis Marbler, a big man in the cane-sugar industry. Some of the guests were wealthy Cubans, who supplied Marbler's company with raw material.

While Zunick talked, Harry gained two impressions; and he knew that one or the other was correct. Zunick wanted Harry either as an alibi-maker, or as a dupe upon whom he could shift blame for something that might happen at the banquet.

Harry mentioned both impressions when he telephoned The Shadow, a short while afterward.

As Allard, The Shadow left his own hotel and took a ride in a cab. He passed Harry's hotel and gave a signal that called in the Xincas. They were waiting in Allard's suite when their master returned.

For Kent Allard had stopped at several places outside the hotel. He had also made some telephone calls; both as Allard and as Cranston.

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Through that process, The Shadow learned some definite facts regarding the banquet at the Hotel Tropicana. No one person had supplied them. The details that The Shadow pieced together produced a pattern that was not generally known.

LOUIS MARBLER was a canny business man. He used his entertainments to swing big deals. The banquet was probably a mere preliminary to some important transaction.

The Shadow had done more than gain information. As Cranston, he had made a suggestion to a fellow club member, who had gladly relayed it to a friend. It was passed along the line until it reached Louis Marbler. Not long after Kent Allard was back in his hotel suite, there was a telephone call from the sugar king.

Marbler had just heard that Allard was in Miami. To-night, Marbler was giving a banquet at the Hotel Tropicana. He would be greatly pleased if Kent Allard, the noted explorer, could be present as a guest of honor. No speeches would be necessary; Allard's presence was sufficient.

After short consideration, Allard assured Marbler that he would be able to attend the function. Marbler informed that the banquet was scheduled for half past seven.

The Shadow relayed the news to Harry Vincent. He told his agent to keep close check on all of Zunick's actions, and to cooperate with Allard when the latter arrived. The final point was necessary, for even The Shadow's agents did not know that Allard was The Shadow.

Harry, of course, recognized that there was a connection between The Shadow and Kent Allard; but he supposed that Allard was either another agent, or that The Shadow sometimes took Allard's place.

It was almost six o'clock when Marbler's belated invitation arrived. The Shadow had time for a few more details. The first was to call the railroad station and inquire about Cardona's train.

Southward travel was heavy, with trains running in many sections. The Shadow learned that Cardona's section was late, but should arrive by eight-thirty.

The next detail was to learn if, by any chance, Lyman Thexter had been invited to Marbler's banquet. Calling Thexter, The Shadow spoke in Allard's tones, and learned that the oil magnate intended to dine in town.

Thexter invited Allard to have dinner at the Cafe Occidental. Allard declined because of another engagement. The invitation proved that Thexter would not be at the banquet, and, therefore, would be out of harm's way if Zunick started trouble.

Over the telephone, Thexter mentioned that he had been unable to learn if Joe Cardona had actually come to Miami. Allard expressed surprise at that news, but assured Thexter that Cardona was somewhere in Florida. He advised Thexter to keep on trying to locate the New York police inspector.

After that call, The Shadow told the Xincas to arrange his evening clothes. There was no reason for Kent Allard to hurry. By leaving at quarter past seven, he could reach the Tropicana by half past.

But The Shadow did not intend to leave quite that early. Guests of honor were sometimes more appreciated when they arrived a trifle late. On this occasion, there was another reason why a delayed arrival was advisable. That reason concerned James Zunick.

PERHAPS the members of the Yellow Band were superstitious about Kent Allard. Wylett had run into trouble because of Allard's unannounced visit to Dorsan's. Things had gone wrong for Gancy, after he had

chanced to meet Allard at the Casino El Dorado. Perhaps Zunick would not be overpleased when he saw Allard at the banquet tonight.

It would be better for Zunick to be settled and under Harry's surveillance when Allard appeared. Once his start was made, Zunick would go through with whatever he intended. A head start, though, would encourage him.

The Shadow set his time for departure for seven twenty-five; ten minutes later than he had originally planned. As he considered those ten future minutes, The Shadow decided that they could not possibly produce trouble at Marbler's banquet room.

In that surmise, The Shadow was right. But he overlooked one place where the ten-minute interval could show disastrous consequences.

That place was here, in the hotel suite where The Shadow resided as Kent Allard!

CHAPTER XI. CROOKS GIVE ARGUMENT.

THE vital point in The Shadow's campaign against Zunick was the fact that Wylett and Gancy stood nullified. Watched by Miami detectives, those other members of the Yellow Band could not participate in crime. Nor were they in a position to receive any swag that Zunick might gain.

Wylett and Gancy seemed definitely out of to-night's picture. Of the two, Rupert Gancy was in the worse spot. He was still suspect number one in the murder of Felix Brullander.

It would have been better for The Shadow's plans if Gancy had not been so closely hemmed. Gancy's predicament had made the fellow worry. With a crook of Gancy's caliber, worry could inspire ideas.

On this evening, Gancy was in his hotel room, staring from the front window, toward the palm trees across the way. There was a rattly coupé parked on the other side of the street, and Gancy knew that the car belonged to Detective Kurman.

That meant that the dick was in the hallway outside of Gancy's door. Gancy had spotted Kurman dodging out of sight, on a couple of occasions.

Gancy's large-featured face showed a glower. He glanced toward the door; his thick lips muttered an oath. He felt like having a show-down with that smart dick, Kurman. Here it was almost seven o'clock; time for dinner at any one of the half dozen restaurants that Gancy liked.

But, wherever he might go, Gancy had the prospect of Kurman. That would make Gancy conspicuous. Whenever Detective Kurman took up a trail, every one in Miami knew it.

Growling to himself, Gancy became more and more convinced that a show-down was what he wanted. He stopped his pacing suddenly, to snap his big, thick fingers.

Right out of the air, he had captured the very idea he wanted.

Wearing a broad smile, Gancy stepped over to the door and began to indulge in loud mutters. After half a minute, he figured that the bait was set. He sneaked his hand to the doorknob; gave a quick twist and wrenched the door inward.

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Gancy stepped back with that move, to clear the way for a chunky man who came hurtling inward like a rubber ball. As the fellow sprawled, a derby hat bounced from his head and rolled across the floor.

Gancy slammed the door and turned to chuckle, as he saw Detective Kurman crawling to his feet.

THE dick glowered; then raised his hand to his head. His fingers encountered a shiny, bald pate. Angrily, Kurman looked about; saw the derby. He snatched up the hat and clamped it on his head.

"So that's why you wear the kelly," laughed Gancy. "Afraid of sunburn, eh? Why don't you get a wig, or one of those tropical helmets? Either would look better than a derby!"

"Smart guy, huh?" retorted Kurman. "How'd you guess that I was trailing you?"

"The hallway didn't smell right," rejoined Gancy. Then, with a laugh: "Don't get peeved, Kurman. Take a look out of the window. That buggy across the street gave you away."

Kurman looked sourly from the window; when he turned around, Gancy was holding out a box of cigars, with an invitation for Kurman to take a pocketful, which Kurman did. In friendly fashion, Gancy remarked:

"Why the funny stuff, Kurman? Haven't you talked to the doorman down at the Casino El Dorado?"

"Yeah," admitted Kurman, "I talked to him. He said you'd gone before Brullander got there. Only one guy's say—so isn't enough."

"So that's it! Well, what about the lookout? Haven't you seen him yet?"

"He's still in the hospital."

Kurman spoke as though that settled the matter. Gancy indulged in a hearty laugh, as he thwacked the detective's shoulder.

"If you hadn't been so busy snooping here," said Gancy, "maybe you'd have figured that the fellow ought to be out of his trance, by this time. I'll bet that he's either conscious or dead. There's a telephone. Why don't you call up the hospital and find out?"

Kurman stared blankly; then went to the telephone. He called the hospital and received a report regarding the slugged patient. Holding the telephone, Kurman reported to Gancy:

"The guy's better. They're going to let me talk to him."

"Good!" expressed Gancy. "I think we're going to be good friends, Kurman."

Seating himself, the crook lighted a cigar while Kurman was talking to the hospital patient. Gancy's smile became fully confident as he watched the change that came over Kurman's face. The dick hung up the telephone and spoke in apologetic tone.

"I had you wrong, Mr. Gancy," admitted Kurman. "The inside man remembers letting you out. What's more, he saw you come from the roulette table; and he says you didn't stop at the cashier's desk. He tells me that Brullander came in afterward."

With that, Kurman started for the door. He stopped long enough to add:

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"I won't be trailing you any longer, Mr. Gancy. It's quits. I was wrong. I thought maybe you'd fixed the doorman; but nobody could have paid that lookout to take the slug he got."

"Wait a minute, Kurman," suggested Gancy, his tone more friendly than ever. "I have a call to make, too."

Gancy picked up the telephone and gave a number that Kurman did not catch. He spoke to some one; but did not address him by name. Gancy merely invited his friend to come to the hotel.

"Who were you calling?" quizzed Kurman.

"You'll see," replied Gancy. "He'll be here in ten minutes. Sit down and have a smoke while we wait."

WITHIN a dozen minutes, some one knocked on the door. Gancy admitted the visitor and closed the door promptly. Kurman gawked when he recognized the arrival. Gancy's friend was Craig Wylett.

In turn, Wylett was puzzled to see Kurman. Before either could speak, Gancy motioned for silence. Grinning at Kurman, Gancy said in an undertone:

"Keep your eyes open, Kurman. You'll see how funny you looked when you came in here."

Stepping to the door, Gancy mumbled a few sentences that could be heard outside. He gave the door a quick yank. A stooping figure unlimbered from the hallway and flattened inside the room.

Detective Cleer came to his feet, snatching up a panama hat that he had dropped. Sight of Kurman stopped the irate words that Cleer was about to hurl at Gancy.

"My bet was a bum one," Kurman told Cleer. "I've got two witnesses who say that Gancy was out of the Casino El Dorado before Brullander got there. Gancy's all right."

"Maybe he is," returned Cleer. He thumbed toward Wylett. "But how does that help this guy?"

It was Wylett who answered. He was thinking faster than the detectives.

"You'd have dropped me long ago," declared Wylett, suavely, "if you hadn't thought that I was teamed with Gancy. He cleared me out at Thexter's. You were making fools of yourselves, trying to pin Dorsan's death on me.

"Until this Brullander mess came along. Then you thought you had something. If Gancy was crooked, maybe I was. Since you've found out that Gancy is on the level, that makes me the same."

The logic landed home. Kurman and Cleer exchanged nods. They missed the quick look that Wylett shot to Gancy. It was Gancy who had started this showdown; but Wylett had clinched it. So, at least, Wylett thought. He hadn't guessed what was coming next.

Rupert Gancy was holding a bigger trump card than any that either he and Wylett had yet played.

"Have some cigars," said Gancy to Cleer. He turned to Kurman: "You know, now that we've straightened things, we'd like to help you fellows. Why don't you give us a chance?"

"We're willing," replied Kurman. "What have you got to tell us?"

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"Only this," returned Gancy, in a speculative tone. "You had a good idea, trying to link up Brullander's death with Dorsan's. I'd say the same fellow murdered both."

"There was a knife used on Dorsan," reminded Kurman. "Brullander was killed with a gun."

"The killer couldn't afford noise at Dorsan's," argued Gancy. "It didn't matter in Brullander's office. Look at the way he worked; a cover-up crew at both places."

GANCY paused. He had said enough; and knew it. He saw the shrewd glimmer that arrived in Wylett's eyes. Both members of the Yellow Band could foresee the ideas that were coming to Detectives Kurman and Cleer.

"Say!" exclaimed Cleer. "There was a guy who showed up at both places!"

"Kent Allard!" broke in Kurman. "He found Dorsan's body. That means he could have killed Dorsan!"

"And he was in the middle of that fight at the casino," added Cleer. "Maybe he was the bird who bumped Brullander!"

"Only he shot it out with Gunner's mob at Dorsan's," reminded Kurman. "Still, that could make sense. Gunner might have been muscling in on Allard's racket."

Both dicks were nodding their agreement. It was Kurman who stopped to deliver a headshake.

"Allard's a pretty important guy," he said, turning to Gancy and Wylett. "Too big a reputation to be crooked. Look at the name he got for himself, ruling that bunch of Indians down in Central America."

It was time for the schemers to add their say. They did it, artfully.

"A crook would need a big front," remarked Gancy, "to go after people like Dorsan and Brullander. The bigger his reputation, the better. I think you've hit something, Kurman, when you've picked this fellow Allard."

"I know you've hit something," declared Wylett. "Look how Allard smeared that crowd at Dorsan's. Then figure what happened at the Casino El Dorado. The same sort of a fight, wasn't it? Allard's a battler. He ought to be, after the way he managed a whole Indian tribe. It's in his blood."

Kurman was nodding as he stroked his chin. The chunky dick looked up toward Cleer. After a few moments consultation, they decided to go to Allard's hotel, taking a squad along in case the Xincas caused any trouble.

The dicks started for the door. Gancy followed, beckoning to Wylett.

"Mind if we come along?" questioned Gancy, smoothly. "You might want us on hand when you talk to Allard. Wylett was at Dorsan's, remember; and I saw Allard at the El Dorado."

The detectives agreed that Gancy and Wylett would be welcome additions; although the pair would have to wait outside, while the police arrested Allard.

The two members of the Yellow Band had neatly shifted suspicion from themselves. Moreover, they had fixed it to stay openly with Kurman and Cleer, while James Zunick was managing a third crime in the interest of the Yellow Band.

Whatever happened to—night, Gancy and Wylett would have the best of alibis. At the same time, they were accomplishing more than they themselves realized.

By making Kent Allard their scapegoat, the two plotters were smoothing the path for the crime that James Zunick intended to commit to—night.

CHAPTER XII. UNDER ARREST.

AT exactly twenty minutes after seven, Kent Allard was adjusting the bow—tie of his evening attire. Gazing in a mirror, he noted the smoothness of the coat that he was wearing. No one could suspect that a brace of automatics was fitted beneath that jacket.

A single gun would be sufficient to intimidate James Zunick when the crook attempted crime; but there was the possibility that a cover—up crew might be on hand at Marbler's banquet. If so, that outfit would find Allard primed for wholesale action.

Starting for the door, Allard heard a rap there. He motioned one of the Xincas to answer it. When the servant opened the door, two men shouldered through, both with drawn revolvers. The Shadow recognized their faces as soon as he saw the guns. Identifying Kurman and Cleer, he retained the calm pose of Allard.

"What is the trouble?" Allard's eyes gazed beyond the dicks, to see others in the corridor. "Has there been a threat against me? Is this an escort, to take me to the Hotel Tropicana?"

"You're not going to the Tropicana," growled Kurman. "We're taking you to headquarters!"

"And I'll tell you what that means, Allard," added Cleer. "It means you're under arrest!"

Allard's eyes sparkled; but his lips showed an amused smile. Plain—clothes men had shoved in from the hall, to cover the two Xincas. Spreading his hands in front of him, Allard warded Kurman and Cleer away.

"I shall come quietly," he told the detectives. "I don't understand your purpose; so I suppose that headquarters would be the best place to discuss the matter."

Allard's gesture accomplished its intended results. The motion of his hands was peaceable. Kurman and Cleer decided it unnecessary to search their prisoner for weapons. The close fit of Allard's dinner jacket would have revealed a gun bulge, in their opinion.

HANDS half raised, Allard strolled toward the door, where the stolid Xincas faced the men who held them covered. Though motionless, the Indians were ready to spring upon Allard's captors, if their master gave the word. Instead, he spoke different words, in the Xinka tongue.

Allard had reached the little foyer of his suite. It was lighted by a single bulb above his head.

Three plain—clothes men blocked the outer door. They were the fellows whose guns held the Xinka servants covered. Across the foyer was the door to the darkened bedroom.

Much though The Shadow disliked his present plight, he knew that a dash into the bedroom would make it worse. Kurman and Cleer could fire before he was out of sight; even if they missed, they would have him in a trap. The bedroom's only outlets were windows, with a three—story wall below. It would take two or three minutes to make an outside descent.

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Moreover, The Shadow could not use guns against the police.

The simplest policy would be to go along to headquarters with Kurman and Cleer; and there show the misguided detectives how and why they were wrong. That, however, was impossible; and guns were the reason.

Beneath each shoulder, Allard's dinner jacket concealed a .45 automatic. Those would be something difficult to explain when he reached headquarters.

Added to those problems was The Shadow's need to be at large, on this evening that promised new crime from a member of the Yellow Band.

These thoughts flashed through The Shadow's mind as he stepped into the entry; and with them came a solution to the present riddle. Turning, The Shadow smiled in Allard's fashion and spoke dryly to Kurman:

"It is raining out. Have you any objection if I wear my light overcoat?"

"Put it on," rejoined the detective. "But don't stall about it."

Again, Allard spoke to the Xincas in their language. One went to the rack at the side of the entry to take the overcoat from its hook. Beneath the overcoat was blackness; for the coat, itself, hid The Shadow's cloak.

The servant calmly lowered the overcoat a trifle; when he raised it, he brought the cloak along inside it.

The other Xinka was picking out a wide-brimmed gray felt hat, suitable for Allard to wear in the rain. Hands raised, the Xinka pressed the hat down on its hook; his fingers engaged the black brim of a slouch hat that lay beneath.

Allard turned about, facing the bedroom doorway. He held out his arms for the overcoat. The first servant held it. Kurman, Cleer and the other dicks saw only the back of the overcoat. They noticed the odd motions of Allard's arms beneath; he seemed to be having trouble finding the coat sleeves. Actually, he was sliding into the black cloak.

The second Xinka came past the first; reached over the back of the overcoat to clamp the gray hat on Allard's head. It was the slouch hat that actually fitted there. In his cloak, The Shadow eased downward; his hands caught the black brim of the slouch hat, to keep it on his head. The second Xinka retained the gray headpiece.

STOOPED, The Shadow made a forward motion. His huddled figure glided across the three-foot space to the bedroom. He was through the opened doorway, a shape of solid blackness; but to watching eyes his passage was barely noticeable. Detective Kurman did catch a momentary glimpse of what he took for a streak of blackness; but he thought that it was a shadow cast by one of the Xinka servants.

Cleer did not even notice the motion of darkness. Nor did the men at the outer door. The Xincas were covering with the light overcoat and the gray hat. They had shifted so that their bodies cut off any angle views. They were holding Allard's garments like the clothes of a scarecrow, still pretending to be helping some one put them on.

Half a minute of it made Kurman begin to wonder. He nudged Cleer and questioned:

"Say—what's the guy doing?"

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"Search me," returned Cleer. "Maybe it's a stall. He couldn't have a gun, though, on that tight jacket of his—"

"He might have one in the overcoat."

Kurman stepped forward and gave a quick poke with his gun muzzle, against the back of the overcoat.

"I got a gun in your ribs, Allard," growled Kurman. "You better lay off the funny stuff."

There was no response. Kurman glowered at the Xincas. He spoke to the Indians.

"Get back, you," ordered Kurman. "Watch them, Cleer. I'll handle Allard."

With that, Kurman grabbed the collar of Allard's overcoat. With his elbow, he nudged away the Xinka who still held the gray hat. Kurman gave a yank; the coat whipped loose in his hand, while the released hat went tumbling to the floor.

Kurman's tug carried him clear across the entry. Back against the wall, the dick stared at vacancy. The Xincas had obediently stepped away. Where Allard had stood, there was no one.

Cleer was as wide-mouthed as Kurman. The men at the outer door craned inward, unable to believe what they saw. Any one of the squad would have sworn that he had seen Kent Allard only five seconds before. None realized that the prisoner had been gone for a full minute. Detective Kurman stared at the floor, half believing that Allard had dropped through some hidden trapdoor. Seeing that the floor was solid, Kurman looked toward the bedroom. He still found it hard to believe that Allard could have covered a three-foot open space, totally unseen.

Kurman was not allowing for The Shadow's black attire. He knew nothing of the cloak and the slouch hat.

Kurman accepted the facts only because they provided the one possible answer. With a bellow, the chunky dick flung Allard's coat aside. To Cleer, he shouted:

"Into the bedroom! That's the only way he could have gone! We'll bag him there!"

WITH his side-kick at his heels, Kurman led the way. Cleer found the bedroom lights and switched them on. The squad piled in from the entry; dicks looked under beds and in closets. They found an adjoining bedroom and started to search in there.

Looking around the first room, Kurman saw something and pointed it out to Cleer.

"Look! That one window. It's unlatched. That's where he went!"

Cleer started for the window. Kurman grabbed his arm. He started Cleer out to the hotel corridor.

"Allard's reached the ground by this time," informed Kurman, starting a run for the fire tower. "There's plenty of windows and cornices on that outside wall. We'll head him off at the bottom!"

They reached the ground. Rounding the corner from the fire tower, the pair reached a sedan in which they had left Wylett and Gancy.

"Where's Allard?" panted Kurman. "Did you see him?"

"No;" returned Gancy. "Didn't you arrest him?"

"We arrested him," voiced Cleer, "but the guy sprang a Houdini on us! We figured he slid out through a window!"

All stared toward the hotel wall. They saw no sign of Allard; nor did they see the black shape that was weaving a course past a cluster of palmetto bushes. The Shadow was reaching the very corner past which Kurman and Cleer had dashed.

"Maybe he didn't come down at all," suggested Wylett. "That wall doesn't look so easy to me."

Kurman's eyes went up; he saw one of his men peering from a window of Allard's suite. Kurman shouted to learn if they had found the missing prisoner. A headshake was the only response.

From beyond the corner of the hotel came the throb of a starting taxi. The building cut off the noise. None of those beside the sedan heard it. It was sheer luck that enabled them to learn the last stage of Allard's get-away.

There was a shout from Allard's suite. One of the squad members, looking from a side window, had seen the taxi's start. The man above Kurman called down the news.

Cleer was at the wheel of the sedan. Kurman hopped in beside him. They wheeled around the corner, to spy a speeding cab, two blocks ahead. Cleer gave the car full speed. Like Kurman, the tall dick was fired by one sole ambition: to overtake Allard and again place the prisoner under arrest.

Ill luck had marred the final moment of The Shadow's superb ruse. He had vanished from the very hands of Kurman and Cleer, only to have them take up his trail.

Gancy and Wylett were highly pleased by the shift that events had taken. No longer hounded, they had become party to a pursuit staged by the law. The burden was on Allard, as they wanted.

The two crooks would have been still further pleased, had they guessed how much this chase was to help Zunick's contribution to the crime chest of the Yellow Band.

CHAPTER XIII. THE LOST HOUR.

THE SHADOW knew that luck had tricked him, before he had traveled a quarter mile. He had given the taxi driver an address and told the fellow to hurry; so he was keeping ahead of the sedan. What The Shadow needed was a greater gap before the pursuers drew closer.

A break in traffic helped; The cab sped across a busy street just as the light went red. Cleer would have followed through the stop signal; but other cars intervened. That little halt, however, gave Cleer a chance to talk to a traffic cop.

As the cab swung down another street, a siren shrieked behind it. A motor-cycle officer whizzed into sight and overtook the cab. Glaring at the driver, the cop shouted:

"Pull over!"

The cabby started to obey, just as they reached a cross street. At that instant, the cold steel of a gun muzzle

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pressed the cab driver's neck. A voice toned the command:

"Turn right!"

The cabby jerked the wheel. The taxi spun right on two wheels. The motor-cycle policeman overran the crossing; and came about with another shout. Before he could pull a gun or turn his cycle, the cab had run a short block and made a left turn.

That chill down the cabby's spine was all that the fellow needed to make him perform miracles at the wheel. He saw traffic ahead and was ready to rip through it, when the voice behind him told him to stop the cab. The gun muzzle withdrew from the quaking man's neck, but he thought he could still feel it.

He was sitting there, teeth chattering, when the motor-cycle cop pulled up to demand why he had disobeyed orders. The cabby managed to move his lips, barely uttering:

"The guy in back—take him off me!"

The cop yanked open the rear door. The cab was empty. The officer came back to the driver.

"Maybe you'd better come along with me, he told the cabby. "We'll let you take the booze test. Looks like you've got the rams-driving around, thinking people have got a bead on you."

Cleer arrived with the sedan while the cop was talking. He listened to the cabby's story and so did Kurman. They had a different opinion.

"There was a guy in that cab," asserted Cleer. "He must have ducked out. Where'd he get to?"

From the back seat, Gancy pointed across the street to the side door of a garage. Cleer caught the idea.

"He's in there! voiced the dick. "Probably grabbing a bus of his own. Get around to the front, quick!"

THE motor-cycle cop was off. He reached the corner just in time to see a long roadster wheel from the garage and turn in the other direction. Jumping off his motor-cycle, the policeman, beckoned to Cleer and pointed out the car. The cop had spotted the license number. He shouted it.

Angrily, Cleer waved him to go ahead. The sedan didn't have a chance to overtake that big machine of Allard's, but the motor-cycle did. The cycle cop resumed the chase; but he was badly outdistanced.

Stopping the sedan, Cleer hopped from the wheel and motioned to the passengers.

"I'm calling headquarters," he announced. "We'll get every radio car in town after Allard. You fellows see if you can scare up any more mounties and start them off. Give them that license number."

Kurman hopped from the sedan, and Gancy followed with Wylett. The two crooks exchanged quick comment. While Gancy joined Kurman in a hunt for motor-cycle officers, Wylett slid into a drug store and made a telephone call. When he came out, he met Gancy.

"The word's gone to Muck Creshan," informed Wylett. "Five grand to the guy that knocks off Allard. That's going to turn out the trigger-men. Like lifting a stone and letting everything crawl out that wants to come."

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"Those boys have short-wave sets, too," commented Gancy. "While they're driving, they'll be listening in on police calls. They'll be getting the dope on where Allard's been seen last."

"Which means they'll get Allard. The cops won't be bothering them. They'll overhaul him first, the boys will."

"And with Allard dead, the story we sold to Kurman won't ever be disputed."

At the sedan, the confident pair was joined by the two detectives. Cleer decided to drive around, picking up reports here and there. That suited the crooks. It meant they would still be with Kurman and Cleer when Allard's finish came.

MEANWHILE, The Shadow was forging into the preliminary difficulties that the law had so promptly provided.

Through weaving methods, he managed to shake off the motor-cycle policeman; but he crossed the path of a radio car that took up immediate chase. The Shadow knew exactly what that meant. His license number had been spotted, and a description of his car had gone with it.

There was only one course: to outdistance pursuit. He could do it with this big roadster. He had kept the car in Miami for just such an emergency.

The Shadow doubled his course; shook clear of one police car and ran into a pair of new pursuers. He went northward to dodge them. Reaching to the dashboard, The Shadow tuned in his radio.

He heard the calls that came from headquarters. Police cars were to block him off, forcing him toward the Hialeah Race Track, which lay northwest. Police were at the municipal airport, which lay north of Hialeah.

The chase was coming from the southeast. The northwest direction was a trap. Unquestionably, there would be police in abundance along Biscayne Boulevard, which veered northeast, along Biscayne Bay. That route was the No. 1 Highway, leading northward along the Florida coast.

There was just one opening in the mesh. That would be a bold risk; but one that pursuers would not expect. That was why The Shadow resolved to take it.

He reached Seventy-ninth Street, otherwise Everglades Avenue. Straight west was the way to Hialeah. The Shadow headed east. He was going straight for Biscayne Boulevard. There wasn't a police car along that stretch.

Green lights at the boulevard. The Shadow kept straight across. He avoided the north, where the road would be watched; also the south, leading to the heart of Miami. Heading straight east, The Shadow drove for the Everglades Avenue Causeway, most northerly of the three crossings that went eastward to Miami Beach.

Two miles across the causeway. The Shadow was unchallenged. He had picked the route that the police had not yet closed. Soon, The Shadow was on the shore route, speeding northward. He was running parallel to Highway No. 1. After ten miles, he could cut over to that main highway.

As he neared his objective, The Shadow spotted lights from behind him. Other cars were keeping doggedly to his trail, despite his high speed. There was a whispered laugh in the roadster's darkness. The Shadow knew who the pursuers were.

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The Yellow Band had set a price on the head of Kent Allard. Thugs had picked up the trail that the police had lost.

ONCE on the main highway, The Shadow watched the speedometer closely. He was doing seventy-five miles an hour. He also checked the distance on the dashboard. He watched the clock until it showed exactly eight. The trip had timed as The Shadow wanted it, almost to the precise minute.

The Shadow had reached the outskirts of Hollywood, a resort twenty miles north of Miami. He had a reason for choosing that town as a place to end the chase. At the town limits, he slowed the big car down to thirty miles an hour.

A rakish car veered from behind. It whipped in front of the big roadster. The Shadow could tell by its spurt just what the car intended. Brakes jammed. The touring car twisted crosswise in the highway, and stopped with a jolt.

The move was to force one of two bad choices on Kent Allard. The slowing roadster would have to stop, to avoid collision; or swing to pass one end of the touring car.

Three other machines were closing in from behind. If The Shadow stopped, he would be between two fires. If he tried to pass the touring car, its driver could shove forward or backward, to force the big roadster off the road. Killers would riddle the ditched car, if The Shadow took the second choice.

The Shadow rejected both.

As the touring car skewed to its halt, The Shadow pressed his accelerator to the floor board. The roadster gave a mammoth surge forward. A Juggernaut of doom, it bore down upon the thug-manned touring car.

Hoodlums dived. Two were out when the crash came; another pair were trapped in their car. The roadster, heavy-built and low-slung, demolished the touring car like papier-mâché. Plowing through, it left debris across the highway. Thugs in the remaining cars saw the roadster careen to take the first road to the right.

Unmindful of the disaster that had overtaken the touring car, the other automobiles renewed the chase. The first machine to swing the corner took the turn too speedily to avoid the fate that awaited it. The Shadow had abandoned the roadster; lights out, it blocked the side road completely.

The impact was terrific. A whole load of mobsters were buried in new wreckage when their car smashed into the big roadster. Two more cars were coming; the first, a coupé, stopped short. The second, a sedan, was saved from a crash when its driver twisted it into a small palmetto jungle.

Away from the shine of the coupé's headlights, a long figure swooped in from the side of the road. A swinging arm stroked through the open window. An automatic sledged the thug who sat on that side of the car.

The driver spun as the door went open; he saw his companion topple out to the roadway. Then came a surge of living blackness. The Shadow's fingers gripped the driver's throat.

The door on the left swung open. The driver was pitched clear. Hoodlums in the sedan saw what had happened; as they aimed for the coupé, The Shadow's two guns broke loose.

There was no answer to that withering fire. As thugs sank wounded, their comrades dived for the protection of the scrubby palmetto beside their ditched car.

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The coupé shot backward, in reverse. It straightened as it hit the highway. The Shadow was off again, manning a captured car, leaving a strew of mastered foemen in his wake.

There was no departing laugh, to reveal the identity of the superfighter. Pursuers had gone after Kent Allard. They could believe that it was Allard who had thwarted them. They would attribute their defeat to Allard's luck, plus the desperation to which he had been driven.

The Yellow Band would accept that story. They would still be ignorant of the fact that The Shadow was out to ruin their game of crime.

THE trip in the coupé was a short one. It soon became apparent why The Shadow had picked the outskirts of Hollywood for his battleground. Near the center of the town, he left the captured coupé at a parking lot; and stepped out into darkness.

As he left the car, The Shadow took along a flat box that he had brought from his wrecked roadster.

A section of a limited train from the North was pulling into the Hollywood station. The train discharged a dozen passengers. It took on one person—something unusual for that night train. None of the limited's crew saw that passenger who stepped aboard for Miami. His garb was as black as the painted side of the Pullman car that he entered.

The Shadow saw an empty drawing-room, its door open. He went in and closed the door behind him. As the train pulled from the station, The Shadow removed his cloak and hat. He studied the reflection of Kent Allard in the narrow mirror.

A transformation began. From the flat box, The Shadow removed articles of make-up. He did not merely disguise his face; he built it into a new one.

The Shadow's new countenance was more fixed than Allard's. It had a masklike touch; the only point of resemblance was a hawkish one. Even that differed to a degree where no one would ever say that this new visage looked like Allard's. Strolling from the drawing-room, this new personage walked through a line of Pullmans until he came to the lounge car. There, his keen eyes picked out a swarthy, stocky man who was reading a magazine.

Stepping up, The Shadow spoke a greeting, in a tone more leisurely than Allard's. The stocky man came to his feet.

"Mr. Cranston!" he exclaimed. "Where did you come aboard?"

"At West Palm Beach," was Cranston's quiet reply. "I looked for you while I was in the diner."

"I guess I'd finished dinner."

"Probably. Where do you intend to stop in Miami?"

Cardona didn't know; so he was glad to receive Cranston's invitation to stay at the Hotel Tropicana. Cranston remarked that they would go there by cab as soon as they reached Miami. He added that he would explain the reasons for Cardona's trip, when they could discuss the matter in private.

Cranston's lips showed a slight smile when they uttered that statement. It occurred to The Shadow that the arrival at the Hotel Tropicana might produce some actual results in which Cardona would figure. The banquet

there was finished by this time. James Zunick would soon be attempting deeds of crime.

The Shadow was depending upon Harry Vincent to block those moves, for the present. Yet whether Harry could entirely stave them was a doubtful matter. Even The Shadow had not forestalled the last two crimes perpetrated by members of the Yellow Band.

The Shadow's lost hour was one that could not be regained even though he was again free to meet the menace of the Yellow Band.

CHAPTER XIV. AT THE BANQUET.

WHILE The Shadow and Joe Cardona were covering the last quarter hour of their train ride into Miami, Harry Vincent was sitting at a banquet table in the Hotel Tropicana. Dinner was ended; Louis Marbler, stout and genial, was calling upon guests for speeches.

Near Marbler was an empty chair—one that Harry knew had been reserved for Kent Allard. Harry was puzzled because the guest of honor had not arrived. The Shadow had assured Harry that Allard would be present.

All during the dinner, Harry had been noticing James Zunick, who was seated beside him. Zunick had always affected a somewhat foreign air; to-night, he was putting it on to an absurd degree. For one thing, Zunick was wearing a monocle; and whenever he directed his attention anywhere, he carefully screwed the glass beneath his right eyebrow.

Harry had noticed some of the guests smiling at Zunick's foppish manner; but behind the sham, Harry saw a purpose.

Zunick's monocle had a tinge of blue. The glass was serving him as the spectacles had helped Tony, the croupier. Harry had heard the details of what had happened at the Casino El Dorado. The full details, from The Shadow.

Zunick's position was the opposite of Tony's. The croupier had been a mere accomplice, looking for some member of the Yellow Band in order to pass a message. Zunick, one of the Yellow Band, was probably trying to identify a person who had sold out to the crooked organization.

That, as Harry analyzed it, was the only possible reason for the blue-tinged monocle.

Had Zunick spotted the man he wanted?

There was an unanswered question. Zunick had stared at so many persons that Harry had found no one to eliminate.

The guests, two dozen in number, formed a distinguished group. There was not one man in the entire group that Harry could have picked as a criminal.

The waiters were just the opposite.

Harry had counted eight of them, the head waiter included, and the whole lot looked like thugs. There, again, it was impossible to single out one in particular.

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Harry's final conclusion was that the man Zunick wanted must be one of the guests. The waiters, in Harry's opinion, were a cover-up crew, especially hired for this occasion.

Among the guests at Marbler's table were four Cubans—dark-eyed, serious men, who courteously apologized in Spanish when Marbler asked them to make speeches. One was introduced as Señor Jose Laflores; he said a few words in English, but that was all.

Marbler called upon other guests. An elderly American began a long discussion on cane sugar as contrasted to the beet product.

A few of the guests found occasion to stroll out while the elderly man was talking. The Cubans noticed it and buzzed among themselves. Their headshakes showed that they had decided to sit through the speech; but one man changed his mind a short while later.

THAT man was Señor Laflores. When two Americans walked from the banquet room, Laflores arose and followed.

Zunick was speaking to Harry in an undertone, saying that the room was stuffy. He suggested that they go out and get some fresh air; and Harry nodded his willingness. Then Zunick said:

"Wait until this old windbag gets through his talk. We can go out while Marbler is leading the applause."

The old windbag continued his oration. Señor Laflores came back and smiled at the other Cubans when he resumed his chair. Zunick was looking longingly at the open door of the banquet room; Harry was staring straight ahead. He saw something that suddenly interested him.

Two waiters were bringing in trays of cordials, to serve to the guests when the speech ended. What captured Harry's eye was the color of the tiny cordial glasses. They were blue.

Harry slid a side glance at Zunick; saw him still looking toward the door. Harry decided that he would wait in the banquet room after Zunick went out.

The speech ended. The cordials were served. Harry took one of the glasses and turned to speak to Zunick. The fellow had risen without waiting for Harry. He was on his way to the door.

That suited The Shadow's agent. Instead of sipping the cordial, Harry downed it with one swallow. Holding the little glass, he studied it in the light.

Harry's action was natural, even to the slight shift of his hand. He was helped by the fact that people were rising from the tables. Harry arose with them, still holding the cordial glass. Through it, he was noticing the nearest guests.

Harry happened to view Señor Laflores. The Cuban was attired in full evening clothes; across his white shirt front he had a dark-red ribbon. It was evidently a sign of some official distinction; the other three Cubans wore bands of the same deep maroon.

But there was a difference in the one that Laflores wore, when Harry saw it through the blue glass.

The band worn by Señor Laflores turned yellow under such observation. The other bands merely became purplish when the blue glass intervened.

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Harry Vincent had found the man he wanted. He didn't care whether or not Zunick returned. Whatever crime Zunick planned, Laflores would be involved in it. When Allard arrived, he could look for Zunick, while Harry kept tabs on Laflores. A few words with Allard, and Harry could explain the situation.

The Cubans were moving toward the door, accompanied by Marbler. Harry followed. They stopped outside the banquet room. Other guests were getting hats and coats from a small cloakroom. There had been an attendant on duty there; but he was gone.

Harry saw Laflores step aside and take a quick look into the cloakroom. He rejoined his companions, smiling as he did so. It was odd, that peek by Laflores. None of the Cubans had hats and coats in the cloakroom. They were stopping here at the Tropicana, where Louis Marbler was also a guest.

Marbler invited the Cubans to his suite. Harry heard them give their acceptance in Spanish. The group started away; but one man stepped aside to light a cigar. The man was Jose Laflores.

Harry moved out of sight, close to the door of the banquet room. He didn't want to go back in there, because he could hear the head waiter talking over a telephone. It was better to chance it, waiting in an obscure corner opposite the cloakroom.

HARRY had not long to wait. Laflores came strolling back. The Cuban had kept an eye on the cloakroom ever since he had let his companions go ahead. Laflores gave a side glance as he came; but he failed to observe Harry. Once he reached the cloakroom, Laflores did a quick duck beyond the counter. Harry saw him stoop out of sight. That was Harry's cue to follow.

Across the counter, he saw Laflores again. The Cuban was reaching deep into a corner. He came up gripping a small satchel with both hands. Harry could hear the man draw a deep, satisfied breath.

Slipping his right hand into his coat pocket, Harry gripped the handle of an automatic. He didn't intend to draw the weapon unless Laflores started to pull one of his own.

Laflores was still looking at the bag when he reached the open space beside the counter. He actually jostled Harry's shoulder before he realized that some one was watching him. Laflores looked up quickly; his dark eyes glared.

Keeping his right hand in his pocket, Harry clamped his left upon the bag.

"Maybe you'd better open that bag," remarked Harry. "I should like to know what it contains, Señor Laflores."

The Cuban understood English. His lips tightened; his voice was harsh as he demanded:

"You threaten me?"

"No," replied Harry. "I'm just curious, that's all. You can take my suggestion as a request; unless—"

Laflores caught the significance of the pause.

"Unless I refuse," he completed. "I understand. Suppose I do refuse?"

"We might leave it to the police."

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Laflores let his lips show a contemptuous smile. He gripped the bag more tightly and tried to shove past the counter. Harry blocked him.

Laflores darted a quick look past Harry's shoulder; gave a sudden wrench to the satchel. Instead of shoving forward, he retreated in mad haste. Bag and all, he made a scrambling dive beneath the shelter of the cloakroom counter.

The Cuban's quick look was directed toward the door of the banquet room. Harry turned; he saw that the door had opened. Coming from that room was a squad of huskies—the thuggish waiters who had served at the banquet.

Harry's guess was right. The bunch was a cover-up crew, working for the Yellow Band.

The set-up looked obvious to Harry. Zunick had planted the satchel in the cloakroom. Laflores, wearing a yellow band, was the man supposed to get the bag-load of loot. Maybe the satchel contained Dorsan's wealth and Brullander's money, along with new swag. Probably Laflores was a full-fledged member of the Yellow Band.

The mob was here to get Harry, so that Laflores could get away. The Cuban had dived for cover so that Harry would be the only target for the guns of the attacking crew. Those thoughts came as an instantaneous flash; and with them, Harry saw an opportunity.

If he could get behind that counter and grapple with Laflores, it would be difficult shooting for the gunners. Given luck, Harry might delay them long enough to stave off death.

PLANKING his left hand on the counter, Harry vaulted it. His leap landed him squarely on Laflores, who went sprawling, still clutching the satchel. Harry came full about as he landed. His right hand was coming from its pocket just as his head disappeared below the counter.

Revolvers barked in unison. Bullets singed Harry's hair. Four quick shots were all that Harry fired in return. With them, revolver blasts halted from the opposition. Harry thought that he had scored some lucky hits.

He gave a sudden look over the counter. His foemen had spread; their lulled fire was a trick. Three came surging, to grab Harry before he could duck away. Swinging his arm, Harry warded off the murderous flay of slugging gun hands.

Hauled from his feet, Harry was rolled across the counter, an open target for other thugs. He saw revolvers swing to aim; thought that his cause was finished. Then, with staring eyes, he saw the aiming men turn.

In from the flank came a counterattack, produced by two unarmed arrivals who headed a squad of loyal hotel employees. Fists were the only weapons that the new fighters used; but they drove boldly into the murderous crew.

In one glimpse, Harry recognized his rescuers. They were Lamont Cranston and Joe Cardona.

CHAPTER XV. THEFT DISCOVERED.

As Cranston, The Shadow still had the two automatics that he had carried as Allard; but he did not draw the weapons. He and Cardona had heard the gun blasts as they entered the lobby of the Tropicana, and were the first to dash to the scene. Reaching for a .45 as he swung around the corner, The Shadow saw that he did not

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need it.

He and Cardona were squarely upon a cluster of thugs, so close that grappling tactics were the best that could be used. A punch to the jaw could spoil an enemy's aim better than a gunshot wound. Cranston and Cardona proved that by the work that they performed.

Punches sent two hoodlums sprawling. Cardona gripped a third thug and forced the fellow's gun hand upward. Cranston did even better. He hooked his left arm under a thug's chin from in back. The wrench not only paralyzed the fellow; it made his arms fling wide. Cranston's left hand plucked the thug's revolver from an unyielding fist.

One man had sprung clear. He was the leader of the crew; the crook who had posed as head waiter at the banquet. He was at the door of the banquet room, aiming his revolver. He had a line on Joe Cardona; beyond, an aim for Harry Vincent.

The gunman heard a challenged hiss, almost beside him. He swung to see Cranston, brandishing the captured revolver. The crook thought that he could beat Cranston to the shot. Gun muzzles swung toward each other, in a split-second race. Cranston's gained the edge.

Frantically, the thug fired just as Cranston's revolver blazed. A bullet sped wide of Cranston's shoulder. It was the only slug that the crooked head waiter dispatched. The rogue was slumping forward, his gun going from his grasp. The Shadow's bullet had found his heart.

Struggling with three mobsters who had held him as a target, Harry Vincent managed to wrest free, thanks to the aid of some bell boys who leaped in to grab the thugs. Losing Harry, the crooks tried to wrench from their new opponents, hoping to down them with bullets. The thugs never had a chance to aim.

Again, the combined strokes of Cranston and Cardona prevented slaughter. Leaping in together, the pair downed the last three hoodlums. Cranston took care of two with long-armed sledges, using the captured revolver as a bludgeon. Cardona eliminated the third with a series of well-directed punches that reeled the crook to the floor.

Half a minute later, three groggy, disarmed crooks were in the clutches of captors. Four more were lying senseless, watched by alert bell hops. A house dick was ordering two porters to carry the dead head waiter into the banquet room.

HARRY VINCENT was too breathless to explain matters to Cranston and Cardona. When it did come to explanations, Harry wanted to give them to Cranston alone. He knew that the guise of Cranston was one that The Shadow frequently used. For the present, Harry decided that silence was best.

Jose Laflores was still out of sight behind the counter. Huddled there, the Cuban was probably hoping that Harry had been slain. If so, Laflores could count on a sneak-out later.

Moreover, some policemen had arrived. They were hearing Cardona's version of the fray; and it was all to Harry's advantage. Joe was showing credentials; they impressed the Miami officers.

"We've heard of you, inspector," said one policeman "You and your friend here sure handled those mobbies in first-class style! We'll take 'em down to headquarters. See you later, inspector."

Before the officers could turn away, a figure popped up from behind the counter of the cloakroom. It was Jose Laflores; the Cuban was clutching the satchel. In English, Laflores shouted:

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"Wait! Wait one minute, officers!" Wild-eyed, Laflores studied the faces around him. He saw Harry. He pointed excitedly.

"Arrest that man!" ordered Laflores. "He tried to rob me!"

The cops looked incredulous when they heard the charge. Laflores became more excited.

"Arrest him!" he insisted. "Take us to Señor Marbler, where my friends are. Look!" He tapped the satchel. "In this bag, I have much money. Three hundred thousand dollars! That man made attempt to steal it."

"Let's look in the bag," growled a policeman. "This sounds fishy to me. We find a fellow on the spot, and you say he's a crook. Let's have the bag."

"No, no!" Laflores clutched the satchel more desperately. "Not here. Take me to Senior Marbler. I insist!"

Before the police could decide one way or the other, new arrivals came. Detectives Kurman and Cleer were on the job. They had heard of trouble at the Hotel Tropicana. With the detectives were their companions of the evening, Wylett and Gancy.

Kurman and Cleer took charge. Laflores kept silent while others gave details. Kurman and Cleer were pleased when they learned who Cardona was; they were also impressed when Joe introduced them to Cranston. Finally, they came to Harry. It was Kurman who growled:

"What's your version of it?"

"I saw this man come into the cloakroom." Harry indicated Laflores. "He started to sneak out with that satchel, so I asked him what he was doing. The next thing, the waiters showed up with guns. This fellow ducked behind the counter and left me on the spot."

Laflores showed a scornful smile.

"The señor has lied," he told Kurman. "He is one crook himself! As I have said before, take me to see Señor Marbler. There, I can tell much more that you wish to know."

Kurman conferred with Cleer. The two decided that the Cuban's request was fair. Harry found a chance to whisper to Cranston:

"The band on the shirt front. It's yellow."

Cranston gave a slight nod. He knew what Harry meant. His eyes were studying that maroon-hued ribbon. Knowing the secret of its hidden color, The Shadow was speculating upon its exact purpose. The conclusions that The Shadow was forming differed from those that Harry had made.

THE group went up to Marbler's suite, to find the sugar magnate in conference with the other three Cubans. All sprang to their feet when they saw Jose Laflores. Marbler asked Laflores:

"The money—is it safe?"

Laflores nodded as he exhibited the satchel. He explained what had happened. As Marbler listened, his eyes became coldly fixed on Harry. In a tone of denunciation, Marbler declared:

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"Laflores is right. Vincent is a crook!"

Harry stood dumfounded. He heard Marbler give reasons.

"These men"—Marbler indicated the Cubans—"came from Havana to buy an interest in one of my large sugar refineries. They are a syndicate; and Laflores was the man entrusted with their funds. He can tell you the rest."

"I am very willing," spoke Laflores. "You see, señores, it was not wise that we should keep three hundred thousand dollars with us, unguarded. So it was sent secretly to Miami. I arranged that a messenger should bring it from the bank, to this hotel.

"The messenger came, guarded. During the banquet, I felt very sure that all was well. So I went outside and received the bag of money. The cloakroom was empty; so we stepped in there to make one quick count of the money.

"The others went away. I was alone. To myself, I asked: Why should I take this bag into a place where there are many people? So I put the bag in a corner, hidden by some newspapers. I went back to join the others.

"Soon, we all came from the banquet room. While my friends were gone ahead with Señor Marbler, I went to get the bag."

Marbler and the Cubans gave their complete support of the story. Like Laflores, they considered Harry a crook. It was Marbler who told Detective Kurman:

"Arrest Vincent! I prefer the charges. Hold him for attempted robbery."

Cardona turned to Cranston.

"I don't like this," undertoned Joe. "Vincent is a friend of yours, Mr. Cranston. You don't think he's a crook, do you?"

"Not for a moment," was Cranston's calm reply. "Why don't you help him out, Cardona?"

"How? They've got a charge against him. I can't butt into it."

Cranston's lips whispered something that Cardona barely heard. Joe started to shake his head; he stopped abruptly. His eyes narrowed as he replied:

"You might be right. It's worth a chance. Let me handle it, Mr. Cranston."

KURMAN and Cleer had reached the door, with Harry a prisoner between them. Cardona called to them to wait a moment. He had something he wanted to ask. The detectives brought Harry back. Cardona turned to Marbler.

"When I got here," said Joe, "I found Vincent in what looked like a real jam. Maybe it was phony; but I don't think so. There's one point I'd like to clear up, with your permission."

Marbler nodded agreement. Joe turned to Harry.

"Vincent, when did you first see that bag?"

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"After Señor Laflores went to get it," replied Harry, promptly. "He had picked it up when I first saw it."

"Did you take the bag from Señor Laflores?"

"No. He kept tight hold of it."

Cardona nodded wisely. Though he didn't know it, Joe was speaking for The Shadow. Perhaps that was why he began to have more confidence as he continued. Cardona turned to Laflores, questioned:

"Do you accept Vincent's statements, Señor?"

"Of course," returned Laflores, with a dry smile. "In fact, I am confident that Señor Vincent could not have seen the bag before that time."

"Why not?"

"I happened to see Señor Vincent when I returned to the banquet room. He did some things that were curious. He emptied a cordial glass very quickly. Then he kept holding the little glass between his fingers, like this."

Laflores turned to the other Cubans and repeated his statement in Spanish. They nodded as they spoke in reply. They had noticed Harry, also.

"From the time that I went from the banquet room," assured Laflores, "I had the one eye on the cloakroom. Señor Vincent did not enter there. But why all this?" Laflores shrugged. "Señor Vincent wanted to take the bag, even though he did not capture it."

Cardona's expression was poker-faced. He was ready for the climax that Cranston had suggested. Turning to Marbler, Cardona made a cool statement:

"Let them arrest Vincent. But make sure that your charge is a clear one. You are accusing Vincent of attempting to steal a large sum of money. Approximately three hundred thousand dollars. Am I correct?"

"Correct," snapped Marbler. "I charge Vincent with attempted theft of funds inside that satchel!"

"Suppose"—Cardona eyed the satchel—"that I could prove that Vincent merely tried to take the bag; but not the money. Would you drop all charges against him?"

"Of course," snapped Marbler. "But this argument is foolish—"

"Not at all," interrupted Cardona, with a look at Cranston. "I am merely insisting that since Vincent is accused of trying to steal three hundred thousand dollars, we should see the funds before he is actually arrested."

Marbler turned to Laflores, with the order: "Open the bag."

Laflores set the satchel on a chair. He unfastened the end catches and pressed the center latch. The satchel sprang open. Laflores looked into it; his face went white. With an inarticulate gargle, the Cuban pulled out a bulky wad of folded newspapers, which he promptly dropped to the floor."

Except for that bundle of worthless stuffing, the Cuban's satchel was empty. Some one had placed the folded newspapers as substitute for three hundred thousand dollars. Again, successful robbery had been perpetrated

in Miami.

JOE CARDONA looked toward Lamont Cranston. Joe admired the keenness with which Cranston had guessed at hidden facts. It had been a lucky guess, thought Cardona; just a pinch-hit to help Harry Vincent out of a jam. But the guess had been a right one. That was what counted.

From his angle, Cardona could not detect the burn that showed momentarily in Cranston's eyes. Had he noticed that brief sparkle, Cardona might have realized that the brain of The Shadow lay behind those eyes. Joe would have known then, that there had been no guesswork. He would have understood that Cranston's suggestion was the result of sheer deduction.

Again, The Shadow had ferreted into the methods of the Yellow Band.

CHAPTER XVI. SHIFTED BLAME.

THE loss of the three hundred thousand dollars was a bombshell to every one present except Lamont Cranston and possibly Joe Cardona. For a few minutes, it left Harry Vincent as dumfounded as the rest. Then the real facts dawned on Harry.

That band across the shirt front of Jose Laflores was not the token of an accomplice. It was a sign that marked the man as the one who had charge of the syndicate's funds. Some spy had tipped off the Yellow Band to a lot of information; but the crooks had needed to know which Cuban would have the money.

The band with the secret tinge of yellow had been planted on Laflores without his knowledge. It had been substituted for the shirt decoration that Laflores usually wore.

James Zunick had seen Laflores go out of the banquet room. Since Laflores had been gone only a few minutes, Zunick had guessed that if the Cuban had received the money, he would have had to leave it close at hand. That was why Zunick had strolled out so promptly. The first place where the crook looked was the cloakroom; and he found the swag waiting for him.

Shrewdly, Zunick had left the satchel, stuffing it with paper instead of the stolen money. Harry at last had the right answer; but The Shadow had pieced the details previously, as perfectly as if he had witnessed the crime itself.

Laflores was becoming coherent. He was answering questions put by Kurman and Cleer. Who could have known that Laflores had the money? Laflores replied that there was one man; a Cuban named Ramoras.

Who was Ramoras? He was a valet, who had come to Miami with the group; but had been sent back to Havana, after receiving a cable that a relative was ill.

"That's the guy that gave the tip-off," decided Kurman. "We've got to find him."

Laflores shook his head. Ramoras would be a hard man to find. There were plenty of places in Cuba where hunted criminals could hide. It would be better to seek the answer in Miami.

On his shirt front, Laflores wore a clue to the answer. Harry saw immediately that the suspected valet must have planted the telltale ribbons with the evening clothes that belonged to Laflores.

Kurman called headquarters, to find out if any of the captured waiters had talked. They had; but what they

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had told was very little. Brace Mothgart, the crooked head waiter who was killed, had received a telephone call soon after the banquet ended. He had called the crew together, to attack the cloakroom.

WHILE Kurman was repeating these facts, Cranston spoke to Cardona. It was Joe who provided the statement that every one heard.

"That clears that much," asserted Cardona. "Brace was supposed to finish Laflores and clear out with the satchel. That would have made it look as though the mob had snatched the swag. Vincent happened to get in the road."

"Perhaps," put in Cranston, quietly, "Vincent was further involved than he supposed. His death may also have been designed."

Cardona snatched up Cranston's added suggestion. Joe asked Harry:

"How did you happen to be at the banquet, Vincent?"

"I came with a friend," replied Harry.

"A chap named Zunick, who lives at my hotel, the Southern Plaza."

Kurman's eyes squinted from beneath the derby hat when the dick heard Zunick's name. He swung to Wylett and Gancy, asking them if Zunick wasn't the fellow who had been out at Thexter's.

Both Wylett and Gancy were ready for the question. Both said yes; but added that Zunick was merely an acquaintance.

Kurman looked at Cleer. Both found their old suspicions returning. They had linked Wylett and Gancy; maybe the chain went farther, to Zunick. Cleer put some questions to Harry:

"When did you last see Zunick?"

"Just after Señor Laflores returned to the banquet room."

"You mean Zunick went out right then?"

"Yes. Right afterward."

That settled the next move. Hot on the trail, Kurman and Cleer started out to find Zunick; and the rest went with them, except for the prostrated Cubans.

They found Zunick at the Southern Plaza, playing bridge. The crook feigned amazement when he heard why the law sought him; and he played his innocent part to perfection.

"The banquet was ended," asserted Zunick. "That is why I left. Certainly, I stopped at the cloakroom; but it was to pick out my hat, which happened to be on one of the nearest hooks."

"That story don't go," retorted Detective Kurman. "Here's what you did, Zunick. You grabbed the dough and slid out by the side door. You headed here; and after you stowed the swag, you called Brace Mothgart—"

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"Hold it right there," inserted Zunick. "You say I called the Tropicana from here? When was it that the call was made there? How long after I had left?"

"Fifteen minutes," calculated Kurman. "We've figured that right down to the dot. It was more than ten minutes before the banquet room had cleared. Vincent heard Brace answer a call a couple of minutes after that. Besides—"

ZUNICK tilted his head to deliver a pleased laugh. He was continuing his mirth when Detective Cleer arrived to report that a search of Zunick's room had revealed nothing. Zunick sobered, to explain the reason for his laughter.

"When I came from the Tropicana," he stated, "I stopped in at the Cafe Occidental, only a half a block away. I met some friends there. We took a cab here."

"Who were the friends?"

"These gentlemen." Zunick indicated his fellow bridge players. "I was with them within five minutes after I left the banquet. They will testify as to the time. We took a cab, to come here. We have been together ever since."

Kurman quizzed the three men. They gave their names willingly; and stated the exact time at which Zunick had entered the Cafe Occidental. It fitted with Zunick's statement. Zunick gave a shrug.

"You see?" he asked. "How could I have called this fellow Mothgart? It would have been impossible. Furthermore, these gentlemen will tell you that I had no bundle with me. I am sorry"—he gave a suave smile toward Cleer—"that you went to the trouble of searching my room. I haven't even been there."

Kurman and Cleer looked dejected. Their whole theory had collapsed. Zunick couldn't have called Brace Mothgart. His triple alibi was too strong. Like Wylett and Gancy, the crook had covered himself.

True, he might have disposed of the swag within five minutes after leaving the Hotel Tropicana. But the two men to whom he would logically have passed it were Wylett and Gancy. They had both been with the Miami detectives during the entire evening.

The case was more perplexing to Harry Vincent than it was to Kurman and Cleer. The dicks had hoped to find plenty on Zunick, to back up their old suppositions. Instead, they had found nothing; so they were willing to look for another trail.

To Harry, however, the situation lacked explanation. Harry knew—from The Shadow—that Wylett and Gancy were crooks. His own observation had told him that Zunick was the third member of the Yellow Band.

From that first night when the three had met at Thexter's, The Shadow had known them to be the lone wolves who brought in the wealth that filled the coffers of the Yellow Band. When Gancy had luckily put across a crime to follow Wylett's, The Shadow had waited for Zunick to stage the last.

He had planned a pay-off that the law would reap: The finish of the Yellow Band.

Instead, crooks were stronger than ever. They had proven their innocence to the satisfaction of the law. Their hoard of wealth had vanished, with no clue to the spot where they had buried it. Again, the Yellow Band stood triumphant.

The Yellow Band

HARRY heard Gancy talking to Kurman and Cleer. The very killer who had murdered Brullander almost in the presence of The Shadow! As secret spokesman for the Yellow Band, Gancy was playing a follow-up to the game of crime. He was offering a theory calculated to divert the law completely.

"I heard that Allard was supposed to be at the banquet," remarked Gancy. "You want him for two other crimes. He's the man that may know about this one."

"Allard, eh?" blurted Kurman. "Say—do you think he could have doubled back to the Tropicana?"

"Not unlikely," replied Gancy. "Your man hunt hadn't produced him, the last we heard."

"Allard would have had nerve enough to do it!" put in Cleer, warming to Gancy's suggestion. "He mooched into other places. He's the guy we want, all right!"

The detectives took time out to tell Cranston and Cardona of Allard's flight.

His car had been found wrecked near Hollywood; but there was no proof that Allard had been in it at the time.

The three crooks listened joyfully as they heard the blame pile on Allard. Listening, Harry Vincent looked toward Lamont Cranston. Harry knew that Cranston was The Shadow. He expected his chief to insert comments that would shatter the law's misplaced theory.

Instead, Cranston stayed silent. He was nodding as though he accepted the common belief that Allard was a crook. Cardona, impressed by Cranston's judgment, seemed equally convinced. That fact did not escape the notice of the actual crooks.

The three members of the Yellow Band knew that Detectives Kurman and Cleer were apprentices at the art of investigating crime. But Inspector Joe Cardona, ace of the New York force, was a harder man to fool. They were confident that they had done it.

There was a sequel, however, that the three men of crime would not have relished, had they witnessed it. It came when Cranston and Cardona had returned to the Hotel Tropicana. Seated in Cranston's room, Cardona inquired:

"Tell me, Mr. Cranston, why did you send for me? Did it have anything to do with what happened to-night? I have a hunch it did."

"You are probably right," replied Cranston, calmly. "I sent for you, Cardona, because I have learned that The Shadow is in Miami."

"I thought so," nodded Joe. "I always figured that you heard from The Shadow now and then. Wait, though; what about this fellow Allard? He's an explorer; you've traveled a lot. Didn't you ever meet him?"

"I know Allard quite well."

"And do you figure he could be a crook?"

"Quite the contrary," replied Cranston. "It strikes me, Cardona, that Allard has been purposely thrust into difficulty. That, in turn, makes me believe that you will soon hear from The Shadow."

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WHEN Cardona left, Cranston sat by the window, studying the lights of Miami as they glittered against the dark background of Biscayne Bay.

The Shadow was content that Allard should remain a fugitive; that Cranston should seemingly play an unimportant part. He had let Miami become a safe place for the members of the Yellow Band, for the present. Soon, that situation would be changed.

To a man, the crooks thought that tonight's crime had been their greatest success. They were wrong. It had revealed the only fact that had thus far eluded The Shadow. The master-sleuth could see the way by which disaster could be brought to the Yellow Band.

The sinister tone that whispered from the motionless lips of Lamont Cranston was the laugh of The Shadow.

CHAPTER XVII. CARDONA CONFERS.

THE next day's newspapers brought Joe Cardona into the limelight. If anything, his part in the battle at the Tropicana was exaggerated. Cardona smiled as he read it. In any other city, the local police would have taken full credit for everything.

Not so in Miami. What Kurman and Cleer lacked in ability at solving crime, they made up in policy. Cardona was a member of the "foreign legion," and that made him a celebrity. Visiting police had done a lot in the past to help Kurman and Cleer; and they wanted the same cooperation in the future. Boosts to chaps like Joe Cardona were always helpful.

Regardless of it, Cardona felt a real desire to give the local dicks a lift. He didn't envy the jobs that Kurman and Cleer held. Miami presented real problems for the law. Every winter brought a new influx of criminals; and most of them put on a swell front. It was a tough assignment, picking out the phonies from a lot of strangers who all put on a million-dollar pose.

The "foreign legion" was simply the antidote to the poison. Since police from other cities visited here, why shouldn't they help the cause? Every time they picked out a crook that they knew, they were merely getting rid of a rat that would be back in the home town later.

It was the next afternoon when Cardona reaped the full value of his publicity. He received a telephone call from Lyman Thexter. The wealthy oil man introduced himself over the wire and invited Cardona out to dinner.

Joe accepted, and when Thexter asked that the visit be kept confidential, Cardona agreed to that also.

There was only one person to whom Cardona might have mentioned Thexter's call; that was to Lamont Cranston. But Cranston had taken a trip up to Palm Beach, so Cardona didn't have the chance.

It was nearly midnight when Cardona returned from Thexter's palatial home in Miami Beach. Entering his hotel room, Joe snapped the light switch. The lights didn't turn on, so Joe hunted for the nearest floor lamp and pulled the cord.

A second later, Joe Cardona was staring, rigid, his hand still on the lamp cord.

Just within the range of the lamp glow sat a figure shrouded in black. Cardona could not see the face above the upturned cloak collar. All that he spied below the slouch hat brim were burning eyes. That was enough.

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Joe knew his visitor.

The Shadow!

THOUGH he had met The Shadow before, Cardona could not shake the chill that crept over him. There was something weird, incredible about The Shadow. Ever on the side of justice, The Shadow was an unfailing friend—as Joe Cardona could testify from his own experience.

But it was uncanny to find The Shadow, waiting inside a locked room. No wonder plenty of crooks had lost out with The Shadow, even when they had him covered with a gun.

Those eyes, when they caught you right, fixed you so you couldn't budge an inch. Joe Cardona could feel the numbness slide down his arms, right to the tips of his fingers.

The Shadow moved his hand toward an empty chair. The spell was broken. Cardona gave a nod of greeting as he sat down. He noted, though, that his new position gave him no better view than before. The Shadow had evidently placed the light just the way he wanted it.

"I thought maybe you'd be here," spoke Cardona. His voice felt almost apart from him. "I didn't expect it would be so soon, though. I was told you were in Miami."

The Shadow's eyes remained fixed. His voice came in a strange whisper:

"Tell about your visit with Thexter." Cardona stared. He hadn't figured that The Shadow would know about that trip. He found his voice again.

"Thexter is worried," Cardona declared. "He says there have been some big crimes lately, and that he may be next. Whoever has staged those jobs is still at large. So Thexter wants some real protection.

"He said he'd hire me if he could. Since that was out, he wants me to recommend the right company of private detectives. He says he's going to discourage the criminals from taking a crack at him."

The word "criminals" caught The Shadow's attention.

"Thexter's statement," declared The Shadow, "indicates that he does not regard Allard as the criminal in question."

"He doesn't," admitted Cardona, "although he's not sure. He's got two reasons, so he says. One is that Allard is the fellow who recommended that he talk to me. The other is that Thexter doesn't figure these local fellows—Kurman and Cleer—could be right on anything."

"So you agreed with him."

"Not quite. Only I felt like it. The more I think of it, the less I can figure Allard as a crook. But who else could be? I don't know. Only—"

"Thexter asked you to study the situation, and tell him if you formed any opinions."

Cardona smiled. Again, The Shadow had called the trick. Joe was beginning to understand why The Shadow so often burrowed into the deepest secrets of crime. It seemed that The Shadow could fathom anything.

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"HERE'S the way I left it," explained Cardona. "Thexter is willing to do anything I suggest—not only for his own protection, but to help bring criminals to justice. He has a strong influence with the Miami authorities; they're anxious to help him if he wants it.

"So if I get a lead, it won't just fade out. Thexter will see it right through. He'd rather see crime cracked than have to fill his house with a crowd of private detectives. That's why he wants me to dig into these crimes. He says I've got the best rep of any police official visiting Miami.

"Maybe he's right. I didn't argue it. I told him I'd see what I could do; but, frankly, I don't know where to begin. My only hunch is there may be an organized bunch instead of just one crook. Crime has popped pretty fast in this town."

Cardona settled back in his chair. He had told The Shadow everything, and he was ready for suggestions. But Joe Cardona was not prepared for the series of revelations that were to come.

The Shadow drew a small table into the light. He peeled the glove from his right hand. From his cloak, he produced a long envelope. As he opened the envelope, The Shadow stated:

"There is an organization behind the crimes. It is known as the Yellow Band. That is a name, however, that it would not be wise to mention."

Out of the envelope came a yellow rubber band. The Shadow's long fingers placed it on the table.

"When James Dorsan was robbed," declared The Shadow, "the murderer took packets of securities that a bribed secretary had marked. The clue to each of those packets was a yellow rubber band that encircled it. This one was found in Dorsan's hand. The police thought it a valueless clue."

"A yellow band!" exclaimed Cardona. "I heard about the case. Who was it killed Dorsan?"

The words were out before Cardona realized that the question might be one that The Shadow could not answer. Instead, The Shadow immediately replied:

"Craig Wylett."

Cardona remembered Wylett well enough. The fellow stood in pretty well with Kurman and Cleer, last night. Just the way a clever crook would. Cardona saw The Shadow take a new object from the envelope.

It was a blue cigar band.

"Felix Brullander was betrayed," expressed The Shadow, in solemn tone, "by a croupier who was later hushed by death. The traitor knew of a secret route to Brullander's office; also when the victim would arrive there with a large amount of money. The croupier wore these glasses."

Reaching forward, The Shadow picked up the spectacles, with a motion for Cardona to put them on. Cardona did; he shut one eye so that he could peer through the only remaining glass.

"The croupier was looking for some one who displayed a yellow band," stated The Shadow. "He saw this cigar band, and gave his message to the man who had it. The man who received the message murdered Brullander, and robbed him."

Momentarily, The Shadow paused; then, without awaiting Cardona's question, he added:

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"The killer was Rupert Gancy."

CARDONA was speechless. Through the blue lens, the cigar band had turned yellow. To Cardona's ears had come the name of another man that he had met the night before. Both of Cardona's eyes were open again. They saw The Shadow extract a long ribbon from the envelope.

As The Shadow stretched the decoration, Cardona was treated to a remarkable illusion.

With one eye, he saw that the band was a deep maroon in hue. The other eye, looking through the glass, observed the color as yellow!

"Señor Laflores wore this ribbon," informed The Shadow. "It was placed with his evening clothes by a valet who sold out to the Yellow Band. It marked him as the man who had charge of the Cuban funds. That wealth was stolen by James Zunick."

Cardona could not doubt the facts that The Shadow had stated. With it all, though, he saw a lacking factor.

Unsupported by further proof or testimony, these links were insufficient to convict the three men that The Shadow had named. Joe saw the only answer.

The real move would be to trap the trio in new crime.

Cardona saw who could do it. Lyman Thexter was the man. If Thexter would be game enough to pose as a mark for criminals, instead of seeking a protection against them, he would be the magnet that would draw the members of the Yellow Band into a mesh that they could not slip.

"If we show these to Thexter," began Cardona, pointing to the clues—"that is, if I show them to him, he will be willing to—"

"No one will see these clues," interposed The Shadow. He was replacing the items in the envelope. "The past must remain vague; the future, definite. There is a better way.

The envelope went beneath The Shadow's cloak; the broken spectacles were included, for Cardona had passed them across the table.

"Follow the usual police procedure," ordered The Shadow. "Look into the affairs of every one who might be a suspect. That is, give the impression that you have done so, without their knowledge. We want facts concerning three men: Wylett, Gancy, Zunick.

"Get your information through New York. I shall provide additional data. If necessary details are not obtainable, they can be prepared, well enough to pass inspection. This is not a case at law. The object is to impress Lyman Thexter; and to obtain the full cooperation of the Miami police."

Cardona understood. His admiration was complete. This plan was the final proof of The Shadow's genius. Joe could picture himself, armed with enough documents to stagger Kurman and Cleer. A collection that would make them jump at the opportunity to trap the Yellow Band.

But it would have to be through Thexter, in whatever manner Cardona advised. Otherwise, Joe could threaten to tuck his case-book under his arm and take the train back to New York. The records would belong to Joe. He could set the terms.

Cardona was sitting with eyes half shut, expecting a further statement from The Shadow. None came to interrupt Joe's reverie. Opening his eyes, Cardona looked at the opposite chair. It was vacant.

To Cardona's ears came a whispered laugh, that might have issued from near the door. It faded; lingering echoes whispered back that token of departure.

Joe Cardona knew the meaning of that final tone. When the time came, Joe would set the terms for the capture of the Yellow Band. But with all the importance that his position would give him, Cardona would be speaking for some one other than himself.

The actual trapping of the Yellow Band would be arranged by The Shadow.

CHAPTER XVIII. THE SHADOW'S PROXY.

CRIME vanished from Miami during the next week. The Yellow Band had gorged the profits that it had set out to get. Wylett, Gancy and Zunick were comfortably situated. They were in no hurry to divide their pooled loot.

Kurman and Cleer, of course, took credit for crime's lull. They labeled Allard as the supercrook who had subsidized so many bands of Miami thugs. Since they hadn't caught Allard, the local detectives bore down on the hoodlums.

Northward travel hit a new high for that season, as mobbies took the hint and cleared out. The police policy suited The Shadow. The Yellow Band would be crimped for trigger-men, later.

There was another timely detail. Kurman and Cleer were too busy rounding up riffraff to bother further with Allard's Xınca servants. The Indians remained, unmolested, in their master's hotel suite.

Meanwhile, Cardona spent most of his time at Thexter's. He was giving the millionaire personal protection; and was also making vague promises of future results. Cardona was doubtful, though, what the results would be. Reports from New York were meager. Joe left them for The Shadow, who supplied duplicates of his own records, which were also sketchy.

Wylett-Gancy-Zunick. The three were canny. Wherever they had encountered individual trouble in the past, they had managed to wriggle out. Crime had never been fully proven against any one of them."

The future looked pretty blank, as Cardona sized it-untill, one afternoon, a package was delivered to Joe's room, from The Shadow. In the flat bundle, Cardona found a scrapbook, its pages filled with clippings, photos, police, reports and other material.

The scrapbook dealt with Wylett, Gancy and Zunick. All known facts were included; but they formed a mere framework. To the actual data, The Shadow had added the finest collection of faked material that it had ever been Cardona's privilege to view.

Everything was based on facts, so closely that it all looked real. The crooks themselves would have been stunned had they seen these documents. Confidential reports from imaginary detective agencies; doctored photographs that looked like rogues gallery pictures; partial finger-print impressions, supposedly found at certain scenes of crime; newspaper clippings that had never actually appeared in the journals to which they were attributed.

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Although the faked evidence wouldn't hold in court, for Cardona's purpose, however, the scrapbook was just what he had wanted. It would impress Thexter when the millionaire saw it; and the effect would be stupendous upon Kurman and Cleer.

With the scrapbook was an envelope containing instructions from The Shadow. Cardona read every detail of the message; soon afterward, the inked writing faded. That was the way with communications that came from The Shadow.

PURSUANT to the first instructions, Cardona called Miami police headquarters. He left word for Kurman and Cleer to meet him at Thexter's home, at half past five. Wrapping up the scrapbook, Cardona put on his hat and started for a preliminary visit with Thexter.

On the way, he stopped at the Seaboard station to buy a ticket and Pullman reservation on the New York-Florida limited that went north at nine-thirty that evening. The Shadow had ordered Cardona to take the Seaboard instead of the Florida East Coast Railway, because a Seaboard train would be the first to leave.

Once at Thexter's, Cardona began to prime the millionaire for the visit from the Miami detectives. He told Thexter that he was ready to crack the case; but would have to do it in his own way.

Thexter knew what that meant. All week, Joe had been pointing out that the one way to catch a crook—whether or not Allard was the man—would be to lure him to another field for crime.

Maybe there were several in it, Cardona had intimated. If there were, they'd have to do their own covering this time, with no mobbies in Miami. If Thexter would consent to the use of his home as a trap, that would fix things for the future. Cardona would guarantee that Kurman and Cleer would play ball.

The idea had intrigued Thexter; and he liked it more than ever when Cardona made this new visit to tell him that the time was at hand. Thexter wondered what information Cardona had in the package; but Joe wouldn't open it until the others arrived. Such were The Shadow's instructions; and Cardona saw good reason.

As Cardona analyzed it, a man in Thexter's position could easily begin to get jittery, when faced by an actual meeting with a gang of murderous criminals. The Shadow wanted Thexter coaxed along until he had reached a point where he couldn't back out.

Kurman and Cleer arrived promptly at five-thirty. By that time, Thexter's curiosity had reached the breaking point. In fact, he was so well sold on the matter, that Cardona let him do the talking.

"INSPECTOR CARDONA has done some research," explained Thexter. "He believes that he has learned who is responsible for the deaths of Dorsan and Brullander; also the robbery at the Tropicana."

"We know that already," put in Kurman, bluntly. "We've pinned it on Allard."

"Cardona intimates that there may be others," insisted Thexter. "He has a plan regarding them. He wants me to cooperate; and I have assured him that I shall, to the last detail."

"That's all right," volunteered Cleer, "but where do we come in?"

"Cardona wants your cooperation also," declared Thexter. "He says that if you will follow the terms as he supplies them, he will step out and give you full credit for the capture."

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That suited the local sleuths. They nodded their agreement; Cardona opened the package. His hand on the scrapbook, Cardona eyed the listeners as he said:

"Three men are incriminated. Kent Allard is not one of them. The three are others whom you have met. Craig Wylett, Rupert Gancy, James Zunick."

Kurman and Cleer exchanged grins. This was old stuff; an idea that they had rejected, long ago. It was a good laugh, to hear Cardona, the New York ace, pick up their cast-off theories. Lyman Thexter showed deep disappointment. He shook his head solemnly.

"Those men were proven innocent," said Thexter. "Even I, with all my worries, could not regard those three with apprehension. Why, they have been guests in this house! They have even called here, during the past week!"

Cardona was steady. He knew the part that he was playing. Joe was The Shadow's proxy. The Shadow had entrusted him to see this matter through; and Joe was going to do it, the way the Shadow wanted.

"You said you'd work with me, Mr. Thexter," reminded Cardona. "I know you'll remember that promise. As for you fellows"—Joe eyed Kurman and Cleer—you're going to stick by what you said. I can prove what I've told you. Take a look!"

WHEN Cardona started through the scrapbook, doubt faded from the faces of Kurman and Cleer. The two gawked like a pair of rural constables. Thexter stood leaning on the desk, staring at the records in real amazement.

"Say!" ejaculated Kurman. "Look at that dope on Wylett. He'd be tagged for a ten-year stretch in San Quentin, if he ever showed up in California."

"He sure would," asserted Cardona. "He was engaged to that movie queen, just like he is to Dorsan's daughter."

"Then he busted the engagement," put in Cleer, reading a faked clipping, "and the dame hasn't seen her jewels since."

Pages crinkled as Cardona turned them. Photos of Rupert Gancy came on display. A neat composite job was a trick photograph of Gancy at a baseball park, with a dour-faced man.

"World Series, 1932," remarked Cardona. "Photo taken in Chicago. The fellow there with Gancy is the big-shot that staged the holdup of the Lakeside National Bank. This picture was taken the day before.

"The big-shot is doing a stretch in Joliet pen. Funny thing, Gancy being a pal of his. Here's dope from New Orleans. Some of the stolen bank dough fluttered there, just after Gancy came to town."

Cardona turned pages to the next exhibit.

"See that newspaper photograph?" questioned Joe. "In the middle of that group is the fake French count who swindled a lot of Boston blue bloods. He looks like James Zunick. Even to the monocle. Here's a photostat of the fake Frenchman's signature, with a sample of Zunick's writing that I picked up. Look how they compare."

Kurman turned to Cleer. With a tilt of his derby hat, the chunky dick shouted:

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"Let's go! We'll round up those three inside an hour!"

"Wait a minute," intervened Cardona. He produced his railroad ticket and laid it on Thexter's desk. Joe began to wrap up the scrapbook. "I'm leaving at nine-thirty, for New York. This book goes with me. You fellows will have to dig up your own records."

It was Kurman who growled: "I get it! We've got to handle it your way. All right. Let's hear it."

"It will be for your own good," assured Cardona. "I've proven that these fellows are crooks. But you've got to pin them here, in Miami. Otherwise, every crook in the country will have a laugh at your expense; and at mine, too."

"These fellows know Mr. Thexter. They know he has plenty of money. They'd like to get it. All right, give them a chance to get started, right here, to-night. Let Mr. Thexter call them, and invite them to dinner."

"You fellows can be on deck, in case trouble starts. If Mr. Thexter baits them right—and he can do it—they'll say enough to give themselves away. If you go through with it, I'll leave this book for you, down at headquarters, before I take my train."

THE suggestion pleased both Kurman and Cleer. They took it up with Thexter, who smiled his agreement. It was then that Kurman put the one question that bothered Cardona.

"Suppose," said Kurman, "that these three birds don't accept the invitation to come here?"

Cardona's answer was not the one that he himself would have made. He felt that it shoved him far out on thin ice, where the whole plan might collapse. Nevertheless, The Shadow had ordered a definite answer, so Cardona gave it.

"If any of the three refuse the invitation," declared Cardona, "the scrapbook is yours. Mr. Thexter and I will go to headquarters with you; we'll wait there until you've arrested the trio."

"What's more, I'll stay in Miami and help you solve the case. I've got a few hunches about those robberies that were pulled in this town. Maybe I'll make the prisoners talk."

Kurman and Cleer snapped up the proposition. They wanted Thexter to make the telephone calls at once. Thexter did; and he used his most persuasive tone to press the invitations, a fact that Cardona appreciated. Gancy first; then Wylett; finally Zunick.

To Cardona's keen relish, every one of the three accepted. Smiling as he completed the final call, Thexter announced that all would arrive at half past six.

With the scrapbook beneath his arm, Cardona turned to Kurman and Cleer. He gave a sideward gesture with one hand to indicate that the rest of the work was theirs.

When Joe Cardona reached his hotel room, he found a message from The Shadow. The opening paragraph showed that The Shadow had taken it for granted that Cardona would arrange the trap. That was amazing enough; but the paragraphs that came later evoked Joe's complete astonishment.

Like a man in a trance, Joe Cardona stood looking from his hotel window toward the dusk above the palm trees of Miami Beach. There, to-night, crooks would meet their Waterloo. It would be the finish of the Yellow Band.

Yet the disaster that awaited that evil organization was far greater than Joe Cardona had envisioned. Only The Shadow could have foreseen the magnitude of the events that were to come.

CHAPTER XIX. CROOKS COMBINE.

CARDONA had left the details of the trap to Kurman and Cleer. It didn't take the Miami detectives long to arrange it. So long as they went through with the game to a reasonable degree, they could do the rest when they received Cardona's book of records.

Naturally, crooks wouldn't try to wangle anything if they knew that the detectives were around; so the dicks agreed that it was best to leave the meeting entirely to Thexter. After dinner, the millionaire could bring his guests into his office and give them an opportunity to start some talk involving cash.

The best stunt, agreed Kurman and Cleer, would be for Thexter to let the crooks get going on a swindle scheme. If they built it up too far, Thexter could openly accuse them of attempted extortion and demand their arrest. If that wouldn't work, the arrest could be based on the knowledge that Cardona had dug up from the past.

Thexter was confident that he could bait the evil trio. He was a bit worried, though, that he might overdo it. From his desk chair, Thexter observed the push buttons on the wall beside the vault. He smiled an idea.

"I shall tell my secretaries that I shall not need them to-night," decided Thexter. "The visitors, however, will not know that. If I ring for a secretary, you will hear the call." He looked toward the detectives. "It will be your signal to come here."

"A good idea," agreed Kurman. "Only how will we know what's up?"

"Yeah," added Cleer. "Maybe you'll want us to just mosey in; or maybe you'll need us in a hurry."

Thexter considered that angle. He chose a simple solution.

"A single push of the button," he said, "will mean that I suspect danger; because under such a circumstance, it would be necessary for me to act with calm. Two or three quick pushes—impatient ones—will tell that all is well.

"In either case, I feel certain, there will be evidence for you when you arrive. If these crooks are as bold as they seem to be, it should be easy to draw them out. Leave that to me."

The detectives nodded. Kurman made a remark to Cleer:

"This will make Cardona strong for us. Don't forget that he's got some other ideas. Probably they don't amount to much yet; but he'll develop them. He's a bearcat for detail."

It was nearly half past six. Thexter suggested that the detectives eat in the kitchen; by hurrying through their meal, they could be posted somewhere on the ground floor by the time Thexter and guests had finished.

Kurman and Cleer welcomed the suggestion. They were gone when the doorbell announced the first of Thexter's visitors.

THE arrival was Zunick; and it wasn't long before Wylett arrived with Gancy. Dinner was served

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immediately and all through the meal, Kurman and Cleer kept busy in the kitchen. Every time a servant arrived from the dining room, the detectives had questions.

The reports were always the same. Mr. Thexter was conversing with his guests on very trivial subjects.

When dessert went into the dining room, the detectives did a sneak out into the hall. They stationed themselves behind the curtains of a small side parlor, where they could hear Thexter's buzzer.

They saw Thexter and his guests stroll toward the office, smoking cigars as they went past. Thexter was walking with Gancy. Behind them, Wylett came with Zunick. The watchers saw Wylett whisper something to Zunick—a remark that brought a wise smile from the man who heard it.

Time dragged after that. Cleer edged impatiently from the curtains. Kurman pulled him back, with a whisper:

"Stick here. We'll hear from Thexter."

"It don't strike me right," returned Cleer. "Thexter ought to know how he stands by this time. Besides, we ought to know if those crooks brought anybody with them."

"Who could they have brought? They'd be marked if any mobbies came along. We've tagged all the gorillas in town."

"I know. Only that door over there makes me nervous."

Kurman saw the door as Cleer pointed to it. It was a door that led outside, from the end of a short hall. There was a vestibule beyond it, visible through a glass pane; but the space was absolutely dark.

"A swell spot for a trigger-man," vouchsafed Cleer. "We ought to make sure there's nobody there."

"Go ahead, then," said Kurman. "Only, take it easy. I'll cover from here."

Cleer went. As he neared the door, he thought he saw it move, as if closing tighter. Cleer had his revolver; he knew that Kurman was backing him. Opening the door quickly, Cleer edged to one side, poking his gun into the darkness. His tone was hoarse.

"Stick them up, whoever you are!"

There was no response except a warning growl from Kurman, back at the side room. Cleer shifted through the vestibule; reached the outer door and found it locked. He poked about with his gun, trying to probe all possible places. Finding nothing, he came out, to see Kurman beckon.

"Good thing you didn't use a flashlight," said Kurman, when Cleer joined him. "You were dumb enough as it was! Somebody might have spotted a glim from one of the office windows."

"I didn't need a flashlight," retorted Cleer. "I covered every inch in the dark. So we know nobody's in there. That's that."

As Cleer spoke, a motion of the door belied his statement. Some one was in the vestibule; an invisible observer, who had drawn himself into darkness at Cleer's approach. A hidden figure had silently avoided Cleer's clumsy search.

The Yellow Band

The Shadow was a secret visitor in Thexter's mansion. Alone, he had come to watch the developments that he himself had planned.

KURMAN and Cleer resumed their vigil. Their new wait was very short. A buzzer sounded suddenly in the hall. Its jabs were brisk, impatient ones; The dicks started forward. Again, Kurman held Cleer back.

"Take it easy," whispered Kurman, as they passed the vestibule. "You know what those quick rings mean. Thexter's sitting pretty. Shove that revolver into your pocket."

Kurman's own hand was out of sight. He was fixed to pull a gun if he needed it. Cleer copied Kurman's example.

They were at the office door. Cleer shoved it open and took a long stride toward the desk where Thexter was seated, with Gancy beside him. Stepping sidewise, Cleer turned about, to look for the others.

The dick's eyes stared straight into a gun muzzle, aimed by Zunick. To the left, Cleer saw Wylett step forward from behind the door to poke a revolver against Kurman's ribs, just as the second detective came through.

Hands came up; no chance to pull those revolvers that nestled uselessly in coat pockets. Stupefied, the detectives stared toward Thexter for an answer. It was then that they saw the millionaire's plight to be as bad as their own.

Gancy had Thexter covered beneath the desk. Rising, Gancy gave a nudge that made Thexter lift his arms. While Wylett and Zunick were plucking the useless revolvers from the pockets of the captured dicks, Gancy came backing across the room, covering Thexter all the while.

When he reached the door, Gancy closed it without turning to watch what he did. He heard the click of the latch; that was sufficient.

What Gancy did not notice was the action that followed his own. The knob turned behind Gancy's back. While Gancy's body still covered it, the door inched inward. Through the crack peered a keen eye; beneath it was the blackened muzzle of a .45 automatic.

The door edge itself blocked the light so that the crack was not visible when Gancy stepped away. In the center of the room, Gancy stopped; he received nods from Wylett and Zunick, indicating that he was to be their spokesman. Contemptuous, the crook chuckled as he eyed the prisoners.

Again, the Yellow Band was on the verge of crime; this time, three crooks were united in action. They had turned Thexter's trap to their own advantage.

The very situation that The Shadow had indirectly arranged was a scene that the Yellow Band had dominated.

So, at least, it appeared. But there was a difference that neither the captors nor their prisoners recognized. A power stronger than the Yellow Band was covering the very criminals who thought they stood triumphant.

The Shadow, alone, was ready to break the game, the moment that any killer started a murderous move. Unseen, his presence unsuspected, The Shadow held the bulge on the Yellow Band.

CHAPTER XX. GATHERED SPOILS.

LOOKING about the room, Rupert Gancy finally centered his gaze on Lyman Thexter. Pleased at the millionaire's strained position. Gancy snapped an order, as he indicated Kurman and Cleer:

"Talk to them if you want to, Thexter."

Thexter licked his lips. In a tone that showed a tremolo, he stated:

"They suspected something. But I didn't know it until too late. I started to press the button, intending to buzz it only once. They stopped me."

Before Thexter continued speaking, Gancy delivered an interjection.

"So that was it?" he queried. "Say, it's lucky I jabbed that button a couple of times, the way I thought you usually did it. That's another surprise. The first"—he looked at Kurman and Cleer—"was when you clowns walked in. We were ready to grab Thexter's secretaries."

Viciously, Gancy swung across the desk to face Thexter, with the demand:

"Who started all this? That New York bull, Cardona? The guy you've had out here?"

Thexter nodded weakly. Gancy, his need for polish ended, was talking in the fashion of a racketeer. Wylett and Zunick, too, had lost their veneer. Wylett no longer looked the part of a sleek society man, while Zunick had dropped his foreign pose. Such pretenses were no longer necessary in their business.

"We figured it was Cardona," stated Gancy, "while we were talking it over on the way out here. Before we sent Zunick in ahead of us. The set-up looked phony, the three of us getting a hurry-up invite to dinner.

"That's why we had our eyes open. We knew you were wise to our racket, Thexter; but we saw we could turn the tables on you. We can't get Cardona"—Gancy's tone was gritty—"because this town's gone short on mobs. That means we're labeled; so our stunt will be another big job, right here!

"After that, we'll lam," declared Gancy. Then, to Kurman and Cleer:

"You dopes won't have to worry. It wouldn't be worth while to croak a couple of stupes like you. Unless—"

There was a rasped drawl to the word "unless"; with it, Gancy again faced Thexter.

"No," decided Gancy, "we won't rub out those dumb dicks, unless you make us do it, Thexter."

"I?" gasped Thexter. "I—how can I force you to murder?"

"We want to get into that big vault of yours," explained Gancy. "You've got guts, Thexter, or you wouldn't have tried to trap us. You're the kind of fellow who could stand a lot of heat before you spilled that vault combination.

"We haven't got time to waste. So the threat we're giving you is this:

Slip us the combination, or it's curtains for Kurman and Cleer!"

The Yellow Band

THEXTER stared, wild-eyed. He looked at the detectives. They were plaintive, even though they had grit enough not to beg Thexter to comply.

Thexter controlled himself, enough to give defiance:

"You wouldn't go through with it!"

"Wouldn't we, though?" snapped Gancy. "Look them over, Thexter. Which one goes first—Kurman or Cleer? You see"—the killer's tone was one of bitter taunt—"we won't croak them both at once. We'll let you see how one looks, after we've bumped him!"

It was too much for Thexter. The millionaire buried his face in his hands. Gancy waited. Thexter's eyes came up. Quavering, the millionaire questioned:

"You promise—that if I give you the combination—you—you won't—"

"There won't be anybody hurt," assured Gancy. "Provided that you answer a few questions, along with it."

Thexter reached timidly to a desk drawer, while Gancy kept him covered. He brought out a small packet of papers that looked unimportant. From them, he extracted a slip of paper.

"The combination," said Thexter, drearily.

While Wylett and Zunick kept control, Gancy opened the vault.

Bundles of currency, stacks of securities were prompt proof that here was chance for the greatest haul that crooks could want. Pocketing his revolver, Gancy went eagerly through the bundles with a skill that showed him an expert in choice.

He stacked piles of wealth beside him; then brought the bundles to the desk, a huge armload. To Thexter, Gancy snapped:

"You're not so bad off as you might be. We got about half of all that Dorsan owned. All of Brullander's; and the same with the Cubans. But you'll have a lot left. Many of your securities are the sort of stuff that can't be unloaded.

"Most of this looks all right." Gancy eyed the swag that he had selected. "We're going to travel light, though. So we'll make sure about it. Any of these bank notes listed? What about all these securities?"

"I have no complete records," replied Thexter. He had recovered some of his calm. "My secretaries may have made some notations; but I don't think that—"

"We'll find out!"

Gancy began a rapid search of desk drawers. He found a few papers that interested him; he referred to one when he looked over the swag. Shaking his head, Gancy stuffed the papers in his pocket. He finished with the desk and started for the closet.

Thexter chewed his lips. Kurman saw it; so did Cleer. The millionaire managed to steady before either Wylett or Zunick noticed him. They were busy covering the detectives.

The Yellow Band

Gancy rummaged through the closet, and stopped when he came to the highest shelf. He could just reach it; and his fingers felt nothing when they probed beyond the edge.

"You didn't cross us, Thexter," snapped Gancy, when he returned to the desk. "So there'll be no shooting! This is the stuff we want." He spread the swag that he had chosen; tossed one small, doubtful, bundle back into the vault. "You'll pardon us, while we make our divvy."

RAPIDLY, Gancy divided the currency and securities into three big heaps. Kurman and Cleer gaped, despite their predicament. At their lowest estimate, the crooks were getting away with half a million dollars. Stocks and bank notes fairly glared with thousand-dollar markings.

"All done," declared Gancy, "except for this."

He pulled a large roll of adhesive plaster from his pocket, tore off a strip and plastered it over Thexter's mouth. The millionaire plopped back into his chair; Gancy yanked him from it and forced him face downward on the floor. Yanking out the wire of a floor lamp, Gancy used it to bind Thexter's arms behind him.

The job took only half the wire. Taking big scissors from the desk, Gancy clipped off the rest and used the new supply of wire to tie Thexter's ankles.

Kurman was next. Gancy applied the plaster to his lips and used another floor-lamp wire to bind the detective in the same fashion as Thexter. When he came to Cleer, Gancy chuckled:

"We're out of floor lamps. But this will do better."

He clipped the long extension cord from the telephone, cutting it short at both ends. Snipping it in half, he used the insulated wire for Cleer's bonds. While he was tying the last prisoner, Gancy added a comment.

"Sometimes," he said, "smart guys manage to knock a telephone off its stand and dial the operator with their noses. That won't help in this case. The telephone wire's gone."

"Good stuff, Gancy," commented Wylett, coolly, "only I'd like to have used that telephone. I wanted to call up Ethel Dorsan and take her along with me. Where I'm going, it won't hurt if she hears what happened—if she ever does."

"You can call her from my room," suggested Zunick. "I'm going to stop there to pack."

"I'll drop you fellows at the Southern Plaza, since that's the case," said Gancy. "I'm in a bigger hurry. I won't be able to wait."

The crooks were busy bundling their shares of swag. Gancy used a fat briefcase that he found in Thexter's closet. Wylett made a neat, square-shaped package out of some wrapping paper that had been addressed to Thexter; he carefully saw to it that the writing was on the inside.

Zunick emptied two metal boxes that were in the vault. He packed his loot and placed one box upon the other, to wrap them in newspaper.

All the while, Thexter watched the process along with Kurman and Cleer. Gancy saw the three men staring helplessly from the floor. He laughed as he placed his hand upon the wall switch.

The Yellow Band

"Thanks for giving the help an evening off," mocked Gancy. "Lights out next; and you won't mind if we lock the door and take the key. We'd rather have people think you're out."

"You'll sleep better, too," added Wylett. "Somebody will find you in the morning."

"And it won't matter to us, by that time," finished Zunick. "So don't get headaches, staying awake to think about us."

THE lights snapped off, Gancy opened the door and motioned the others out into the hallway. He locked the door behind him. Stealing along with their big bundles, the evil three took the vestibule route that led outside.

Oddly, there was no watcher who saw them go. The Shadow had deserted his post at the office door; that was why Gancy had found it latched when he opened it. Nor was the Shadow in his former lurking spot, that darkened vestibule that the crooks chose as their route.

Instead of blocking the departure, The Shadow had for some reason let these criminals carry away their spoils unmolested. It seemed that The Shadow had withdrawn from his purpose, once he was sure that robbery, not murder, was intended.

It was a paradox; but such odd changes of plans were deceiving when The Shadow used them. His shift of action did not mean that The Shadow had abandoned a chosen quest.

On the contrary, it seemed to hold an opposite significance. Chances were that The Shadow had not yet finished with the Yellow Band.

CHAPTER XXI. THREE IN A ROW.

RUPERT GANCY delivered a basso chuckle when he sat alone in his sleek sedan outside the entrance of the Southern Plaza, back in Miami. His pals in crime were going up the hotel steps, each carrying a separate bundle. Gancy's own share of swag was on the seat beside him.

Less than one hundred and eighty miles away was Tampa; he'd make the Gulf coast city soon after midnight, the way this car could travel.

They'd never locate Gancy in Tampa. He had the right sort of hide-out there, with some Spanish friends who would serve as lookouts. There were places to go from Tampa. Plenty of them; and somewhere along the line, Gancy would head for Old Mexico.

No need to stop at the hotel. Let the luggage stay there. Gancy's route would be right out Eighth Street, to strike the Tamiami Trail. He was picturing that open highway, built for the speed that his car could make, at the moment when he slammed the front door shut.

There was an odd echo to the slam of that car door. It came from the left side of the sedan, in back, as though a rear door had shut along with the front one.

Gancy didn't notice it. The only echoes he was thinking of were the ones that the motor would make as the speedy car thrummed across the Florida peninsula.

It took Gancy just half a block to realize that he had missed something. Coldness chilled a vertebra just above his coat collar. A hand from the inner darkness of the sedan had pressed a gun mouth against Gancy's neck.

The Yellow Band

The chill from the automatic was warm; however, compared to the shivers that a voice created.

"Stop beside the curb! At the cigar store on the left!"

Gancy couldn't believe that human lips had voiced that sentence. It came with sinister sibilance, like a tone from an outer sphere of space. Gancy's hands froze on the steering wheel. It was as though the voice—not his own strength—impelled him to cross to the left-side curb. Mechanically, Gancy's right foot pressed the break pedal to screech the big car to a halt.

The voice of The Shadow!

Gancy recognized the tone, although he had never heard it. Every man of crime knew of The Shadow; and Gancy was no exception. He knew, too, that The Shadow arrived in unexpected places. The very impossibility of The Shadow's presence was its most potent factor.

STIFFENED in the stopped ear, Gancy tried to believe that imagination caused that cold spot on his neck. He heard the voice no longer; but its order throbbed through his brain. Maybe it was imagination; but Gancy wanted to get over the shock.

A man was stepping from the cigar store. Stocky of build, he approached the halted car with quick stride. Gancy scarcely noticed him. The crook still felt the chill of muzzle steel. The man from the sidewalk opened the door on Gancy's left, gave a sharp order:

"Shove over!"

Pressure from the gun muzzle was stronger than the newcomer's spoken order. Still staring straight ahead. Gancy shifted to the right. The stocky man climbed in beside him. Hands moved toward Gancy's wrists. There was pressure on those wrists; a click. But Gancy barely noticed it. He felt sudden elation, for The Shadow's gun had, moved away.

Imagination, after all. It couldn't have been The Shadow, thought Gancy. The Shadow wouldn't have let him go. But who was this lug who had stepped into the car; the stocky fellow at the wheel, who was starting to shove the gear shift?

Gancy started a hand toward his gun pocket. His hand was anchored. Gancy stared into the glow of the dashlight; for the first time, he remembered the clamp that he had scarcely felt. Around his wrists, the crook saw the glimmer of handcuffs. He looked quickly at the face of the man who had applied the bracelets.

Gancy recognized Joe Cardona.

Tensely, the crook tried to shove away the briefcase that had slid to the floor. Cardona reached down and picked up the fat bagload of swag. With a heave, the New York ace flipped the briefcase into the rear seat. Gancy stared after it; a passing street lamp showed the rear seat devoid of any living occupant.

The Shadow had gone; but Gancy had not profited. The crook was a helpless prisoner in the capable hands of Joe Cardona.

"Settle back," cautioned Cardona. "We're driving around a while, so you can cool off. A nice bus, this. Too bad you won't be driving it again."

The Yellow Band

UNAWARE of the fate that had awaited Gancy, the two other criminals had reached Zunick's hotel room. There, Wylett was making a telephone call to Ethel Dorsan. His message was brief.

"Take a drive down to the city yacht basin, Ethel," suggested Wylett. "I'll meet you there. Don't tell any one where you're going, though. I have a real surprise for you."

With a few minutes to spare, Wylett lighted a cigarette. He puffed steadily until he had almost finished it. Picking up his wrapped package, he gave a wave to Zunick.

"Happy landings, Jim," said Wylett, "I've got to grab a cab and meet the girl friend."

James Zunick smiled when Wylett had left. He didn't care what plans his pals had. His were the best. He knew of a plane that was leaving for Cuba in half an hour. A quick flight would land him in Havana. There he would contact Ramoras, the valet who had sold out Jose Laflores. Nobody would ever locate Zunick in the places that Ramoras could take him.

Picking up his heavy pair of swag-laden boxes, Zunick turned toward the door. Blackness glided across the floor. The crook stared as it disappeared. Where had that moving streak come from?

Zunick couldn't figure it. It wasn't his own shadow. But it couldn't have belonged to any one else. Why waste time bothering about it? A delay might mean that he would miss the plane. Zunick reached for the cord of the floor lamp, the only light that illuminated the room.

The light went out as his fingers touched the cord. Zunick delivered a surprised grunt. That was odd. He hadn't pulled the cord. What had happened to the lamp?

In the darkness, Zunick remembered that the wall socket was on the other side of the room. Maybe the connection had come loose. That was a sensible answer; but it didn't tell what had loosened the connection. The room chilled Zunick. Something was wrong in here. He didn't like it. Shakily, he groped toward the door, all the while trying to down an increasing sensation that he was not alone.

His grip on the doorknob nerved him; only for an instant. What followed shattered all the false courage that the crook had mustered. From somewhere in the room came a sound—a whispered token of another presence. It was an eerie laugh; sibilant, unreal. It seemed that the walls were flinging it in Zunick's ears.

Repressed, that mirth was ghostly. It froze James Zunick. As the tone died, the crook tugged the doorknob. The door resisted; then snapped open. The laugh came again—low, weird, yet audible. The laugh of a ghost!

The thought gave Zunick the right answer.

It was the laugh of The Shadow! The master-foe of crimedom was in this very room! Bullets couldn't find a ghost; but they could clip The Shadow.

There was one way to do it: get to cover and drill shots all through the room. Trust to luck to wound The Shadow with a chance bullet. Then make for that Havana plane, before police arrived to learn what the shooting was about.

THE hallway offered Zunick the cover that he wanted; but the direction of his aim would be toward the darkened room. That was why the crook spun about as he sprang into the corridor. His left arm clung to the swag boxes, while his right hand yanked a revolver.

The Yellow Band

Zunick never pressed that gun trigger; nor did he retain the heavy bundle that he had brought from Thexter's.

From each side stepped a stalwart foeman. Hands with the feel of stone clutched Zunick. His revolver was plucked away; the swag went from his grasp. Arms wrenched behind him, Zunick doubled backward, looking up to the faces of his captors.

He was in the grip of Allard's Xincas. Their faces were as cold as those stone images. When Zunick sagged between them, the two Indians dragged him along like a figure of straw, down a remote stairway, to the outside air.

There they placed Zunick in the rear seat of a car that was obscured beneath a row of palm trees. The Xincas were awaiting some one. James Zunick and his swag waited with them.

DOWN by the tree-spread walks near the city yacht basin, Craig Wylett met Ethel Dorsan. They walked toward a dock, where Ethel saw a trim cabin cruiser moored.

"This is the surprise," smiled Wylett. "Step aboard and see my new boat."

Ethel was enthusiastic. Wylett showed her to a compact cabin, that was tastefully furnished. He was dangling the keys of Ethel's coupé; he had casually taken them when the girl stepped from her car.

"We're leaving for the Bahamas," informed Wylett. "I know of an island there, where no one will ever find us. Together, Ethel, we can forget the world, with its past misfortunes—"

There was too much suavity in Wylett's tone. Ethel's eyes showed startlement. Wylett's smooth reference to the past gave her a sudden suspicion. Wylett saw it; he whipped a revolver from his pocket.

"Stand where you are!" he told the girl. "You're going with me, quietly! We're heaving off inside of five minutes. I'm sending a man to see to it that your car will be found a long way from where you left it."

Shuffling sounds from the deck told that the boat's crew had come from quarters, and was preparing to cast off. Wylett turned slightly, to open the cabin door and call the man he needed. For the moment, his gun no longer covered Ethel.

Out from a curtained closet sprang an attacker who clamped Wylett's gun and tossed it to the floor. The crook locked in a hand-to-hand fight with a man he recognized. It was Harry Vincent, posted here by The Shadow's order.

Harry had the edge in that flaying struggle; but Wylett managed to prolong the fight. Ethel couldn't find the revolver; it had skidded deep beneath a bunk. Wylett's hoarse shout was heard above. Crew members were starting for the cabin to aid him.

Then, on deck, came a counter attack. A swift-moving figure had reached the pier. It was The Shadow, here from Zunick's, where he had finished that crook's capture within ten minutes after Wylett's departure.

A whirl of blackness, The Shadow landed amid the quartet of huskies that served as Wylett's boat crew. They saw their adversary as he landed, but they were too late to stem the attack. A swinging automatic thudded one rowdy to the deck.

A second husky, springing in, met a punch that was already on its way from The Shadow's other fist. The fellow bounced back like a rubber ball that had hit a stone wall. Hitting the rail, he went over backward and

thwacked the water with a flat splash.

Twisting, The Shadow was in upon the last pair. He hoisted one man in a titanic grip, as if to fling him at the other. With a backward heave, he sent the struggling man over his shoulder, propelled in a long sprawled dive. That rowdy cleared the other rail head foremost. Another smacking splash resounded.

Wylett's last henchman saw a big gun muzzle swing toward him. The fellow didn't wait. He sprang for the rail of his own volition and dived over it. Hitting the water, he struck out for the shore.

SPRINGING to the cabin door, The Shadow flung inward. He stopped, still in the outer darkness.

Harry had driven home a powerful punch. Wylett was sagging, groggy. The Shadow stepped back, while Harry spoke to Ethel. He watched the two lift Wylett between them and start the battered crook up to the deck.

They were taking Wylett to the coupé; that was in accord with The Shadow's instructions to Harry. The shrouded being watched the procession reach the shore. He saw Wylett shoved aboard the car. Ethel took the wheel; Harry remained on the right, with Wylett slumped between them.

From the darkness outside the little cabin came a strange, low-toned laugh. It was uncanny, that mirth, for it seemed to issue from aboard a boat that looked entirely deserted.

The laugh of The Shadow! It reviewed the actions of the past. It foretold more events that were soon to come.

CHAPTER XXII. THE BAND UNITED.

How long the bound men had lain in Thexter's darkened office, not one of them could tell. They had come to the conclusion, though, that the parting words of crooks had been correct. This plight would last until morning. All had given up hope of being rescued earlier.

Then, amid that melancholy stillness, came a new sound. Some one was trying the door of the prison room. After that, there were voices that sounded puzzled at first. Finally, keys were tried in the lock. One key worked it.

The door came open. The lights glared on. Staring upward from the floor, the bound men saw three rescuers. Two were Thexter's secretaries; Carling and Nesbitt; but it was obvious that they had not thought of this rescue. They were taking orders from a person who accompanied them.

The third arrival was Kent Allard.

Calmly, efficiently, Allard unbound Thexter while the secretaries were releasing Kurman and Cleer. While thus engaged, Allard quietly explained his return to Miami.

"I called Cardona by long distance," said Allard. "That was last night. He told me that he had found the real culprits, so I started for Miami. Cardona wasn't at his hotel, so I telephoned here.

"The operator could get no answer." Allard turned to Thexter, who had settled weakly in his chair. "So I came in person and finally roused your secretaries from upstairs."

Thexter nodded his gratitude. Allard had neatly removed the adhesive plaster from the millionaire's lips.

The Yellow Band

After a few long breaths, Thexter pointed to the vault and gasped out the names of the pilferers. He also detailed how the trio had managed their robbery.

Kurman and Cleer were free. They yanked the tape that covered their mouths.

"We've got to work quick!" asserted Kurman. He pointed to a desk clock. "Those thugs have gotten away to a two-hour start!"

"I'll call headquarters," added Cleer. "We'll send out names and descriptions."

Kurman waited while Cleer clattered with the telephone. Both were too excited to remember that it had no wire. Thexter was too slumped to care. Allard observed it, and turned to the secretaries with a helpful suggestion.

"Why not check on what is missing?" he queried. "Doesn't Mr. Thexter have a ledger, in which you copy all the lists he gives you?"

"Of course!" exclaimed Carling. He started for the closet. "I'll get it. We keep it on the top shelf."

"It will tell everything," said Nesbitt. "Mr. Thexter always lists the numbers of large bank notes, as well as his securities. We copy them every day."

Thexter had come back to life. He, too, had remembered the ledger. His enthusiasm was unrestrained.

"I thought of that big book!" he told Kurman and Cleer. "Believe me, my heart was thumping when Gancy looked in the closet. I was afraid that he would find it!"

CARLING had the ledger. He spread it on the desk. Nesbitt began to give the listing of the wealth that the crooks had not taken. From those, the secretaries would soon be able to check off the swag that was actually gone.

"This thing's dead!" exclaimed Cleer suddenly, referring to the telephone. "I'd forgotten that the wire was cut."

"Let's go, then," snapped Kurman. "We can't waste time here."

"You will have the lists, shortly," remarked Allard, pointing to the working secretaries. "Why not wait until then?"

Kurman shook his head; so did Cleer. It would take ten minutes, maybe fifteen, before the lists were complete. They moved toward the door. This time, Allard blocked them.

"You must wait," he informed. "I have some real news for you."

He turned, gave a low call in a strange tongue. The sound must have penetrated to the outside, for soon there was a clumping sound from the direction of the vestibule. Into the office came the Xincas; between them, a faltering man whose heavy footsteps had made the thumps.

Lyman Thexter stared across his desk to see James Zunick. The crook was saggy; his sallow face had become very pale. Allard spoke. The Xincas pushed Zunick into the astonished hands of Kurman and Cleer.

The Yellow Band

A moment later, the dicks came to their senses. They raced to get handcuffs on the prisoner. Cleer won out.

Disappointed, Kurman shoved his own handcuffs back into his pocket. He rubbed his bald head; realized for the first time that he didn't have his hat. Kurman saw the derby on top of a floor lamp, where one of the crooks had placed it. He clamped the hat on his head.

"My servants must have suspected this fellow," expressed Allard. "Uncanny, the way they are sometimes. They went to his hotel and took him. They kept him for me; so I brought him here."

The Xincas delivered Zunick's swag. Kurman yanked open one box; Cleer the other. They found the boxes stuffed with stolen goods. Zunick's spoils were intact. But before the detectives or Thexter could recover from that surprise, a new one came.

More footsteps. Harry Vincent arrived, bringing Craig Wylett. With a grin at Cleer, Kurman took the privilege of slipping bracelets on the second prisoner. It was Harry who explained the capture, in a fashion that The Shadow had ordered.

"I saw Wylett come into my hotel with Zunick," said Harry. "When Wylett went out, he was carrying a big package that he had brought in with him. It didn't look right, so I followed him. He put the package aboard a boat; then went to meet Miss Dorsan.

"I stepped on the boat ahead of him and went into the cabin. Wylett threatened the girl with a gun, so I stepped into it."

"What about the package?" demanded Kurman.

"I brought it along," replied Harry. "It's in the back of Miss Dorsan's car."

"Get it!" exclaimed Cleer. "It's full of swag, too!"

Harry went out and returned with the package. The dicks opened it, found Wylett's share of the swag. They passed the wrapping to Thexter, who nodded.

The inside of the paper bore the millionaire's name and address. It was the same wrapping paper that Wylett had used to make the bundle.

A VOICE spoke from the door. Thexter stared in new amazement; Kurman and Cleer did the same. They saw Joe Cardona, with Rupert Gancy. The crook was handcuffed; Joe was prodding him with a revolver.

In his left hand, the New York ace held the briefcase that Gancy had taken from Thexter's closet. Joe handed it to Kurman.

Out came the third crook's spoils, while Cardona told how he had run into Gancy. Joe had decided to stay over in Miami. Coming out of a cigar store, he had seen a car stopped at the curb, with Gancy in it.

Cardona didn't tell why he had happened to go into that cigar store. Like Harry and the Xincas, Joe had received a telephone call from The Shadow, telling him where to be.

Cardona supposed that Allard had been called by The Shadow; not merely to become an aid, but to clear himself of charges against him.

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The Yellow Band was again united, thanks to The Shadow's methods. There was something else, though, that was due. Something that Cardona had not forgotten. The Shadow had told Cardona to stay here, and had given him a reason for it.

Though Cardona hadn't grasped the full idea, it meant that he had a task to complete, so he intended to go through with it. In fact, it was better that Cardona did not know what was due to follow. If he had, he might have spoiled it by becoming overzealous.

One more stroke was necessary to clinch the victory over the Yellow Band. The Shadow had foreseen that need.

CHAPTER XXIII. FINAL TRIUMPH.

IT was Harry Vincent who promptly decided that he was no longer needed. Harry, too, was following instructions from The Shadow. Harry offered to take Ethel Dorsan to her home, and the girl accepted the invitation.

Kent Allard decided to go also. He shook hands with Thexter and Cardona; gave a nod to his former pursuers, Kurman and Cleer. Followed by his faithful Xincas, Allard departed.

Carling and Nesbitt were still busy with the ledger. Thexter remarked that their work was no longer necessary. Bundling the heaps of wealth that had been recovered from the crooks, Thexter told the secretaries to stack it in the vault.

It was time for Cardona's suggestion.

"Hold it," said Joe. "You've got the records. Why not make sure that everything tallies?"

"Hardly necessary," assured Thexter. "We identified the boxes, the wrapping paper, the briefcase. I have estimated that the full amount of stolen wealth is here."

"We've got to clinch this case," remonstrated Cardona. "When it comes to court, you can't just testify that these fellows took some of the stuff from your vault. Smart lawyers will want you to tell just what they took."

"I'm going through that ledger book, because it lists the works. We'll have every security named, and the number of every bank note. No shyster will laugh that off. You fellows call off the stuff that was stolen"—Joe turned to Carling and Nesbitt—"while I check it in the ledger."

Carling began with the securities. Nesbitt started to call off the numbers of bank notes that were in series. Cardona studied the ledger narrowly; he held up his hand.

"Wait a minute," he said. "None of that stuff is listed here! According to these records, it can't be the same—"

"It is the same!" The interruption was rasped. Cardona stared toward Lyman Thexter. "The same that was stolen; but not recorded!"

Thexter had brought a big revolver from the desk drawer. He had shifted his position to get a line on three men he wanted to cover: Cardona, Kurman and Cleer. Thexter's secretaries, though they weren't in his game, were no help to the law. Thexter had purposely chosen a pair of weaklings for secretaries.

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"The first man that moves," said Thexter, "gets drilled! All right"—he looked toward the three handcuffed crooks—"let them have it!"

Thexter's face was demonic. In speaking to Wylett, Gancy and Zunick, he was not addressing enemies. Those three were his associates. Lyman Thexter was the real man behind crime and murder. He was the master of the Yellow Band!

FACES agleam, the three crooks raised their manacled hands above their heads. Each had a helpless victim that he intended to slug down, using heavy handcuffs as a bludgeon. Wylett was taking Cleer; Zunick was picking Kurman.

Gancy, most powerful of the trio, had chosen Cardona.

All that the threatened men needed was a break; something that would cause a drift of Thexter's gun, away from them. If that came, they could turn in time to ward off the slugging blows. Carling and Nesbitt were too scared to provide the needed aid.

Nevertheless, the break arrived.

A fierce laugh toned from the door. Strident mockery hurled challenge to Thexter's ears. The master-crook could not stand heedless of that gibe.

Thexter swung, glaring, to aim at an unexpected foeman. The big-shot saw The Shadow, raising an automatic to meet the swing of Thexter's own gun.

The weapons mouthed flame. The roars were simultaneous. Both guns were properly aimed. There was a difference though, in the shifts of the marksmen who fired.

The Shadow's figure faded, outward beyond the door, even before his automatic furnished its recoil. Thexter, eager to down his cloaked opponent, lunged forward as he pressed the trigger.

The Shadow's twist took him wide of Thexter's fire. The crook's bullet zipped through space, where The Shadow's form had been. Thexter's case was just the opposite. The Shadow's aim was for Thexter's gum arm. The master of the Yellow Band thrust his body into the bullet's path.

Lyman Thexter crumpled on the desk top. Cardona and the detectives saw him flounder; they jumped around to struggle with the crooks who threatened them. Cardona, powerful in a pinch, stopped Gancy's heavy swing with a stout arm-thrust. He landed a hard fist on the thug's unprotected chin.

Cleer, tall and limber, gave his stooped shoulders a high lift. His head went above and away from Wylett's swing. The blow jolted Cleer's shoulder. A moment later, the dick had recovered from the jar. He had Wylett by the throat.

Kurman managed to slow Zunick's hard stroke; but not enough to stop it. The blow landed, hard enough to crack an unprotected skull. Kurman, however, had protection. It was his derby hat. The handcuffs ruined the head-piece in which Kurman took such pride; but the crushed hat saved its owner.

The broken blow wasn't enough to stop Kurman. He wallowed in at Zunick and hammered the fellow hard against the wall.

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Lyman Thexter, succumbing to a mortal wound, looked up with a last fading gaze. The master of the Yellow Band saw the complete suppression of the three henchmen who had served him in his murderous quest for mammoth wealth.

From the doorway trailed a solemn laugh; it was mirthless, like a knell. When men looked toward the spot, they saw only the dimness of the half-darkened hall beyond. The Shadow was gone.

It was Joe Cardona who told the details to Lamont Cranston, when the tall globe-trotter dropped in to see him later.

Seated beside the floor lamp in his hotel room, Cardona explained how The Shadow had contacted him. He told, also, how he had followed The Shadow's instructions, which included a longer stay in Miami, to provide the last deed that had exposed Lyman Thexter.

"The Shadow must have watched it from the start," affirmed Cardona. "He suspected Wylett of killing Dorsan; and he saw the fellow meet up with Gancy and Zunick at Thexter's. So he watched both of them.

"Gancy managed to get Brullander; and, as luck had it, he might have passed the swag along to Zunick. So The Shadow kept hard on Zunick. How Zunick managed to rob Jose Laflares, I don't know, unless The Shadow let him.

"But the trail stopped with Zunick. He didn't have the swag; he couldn't have passed it to either Wylett or Gancy, because they were tied up with Kurman and Cleer, all that evening. That"—Joe was positive in his statement—"is when The Shadow knew for sure that there was another man in it. One who held all the swag. The biggest crook in the game.

Cranston was nodding. He seemed to agree with all that Cardona said. Joe continued.

"Zunick met some friends at the Cafe Occidental," remembered Joe Cardona. "That was his alibi. It happens, though, that Thexter was dining there, too. His car was outside. All Zunick had to do was stow the swag in it, for Thexter.

"It fitted right with the way The Shadow had it, when he saw Thexter as the big-shot. The crooks unloaded direct to Thexter. Wylett left Dorsan's stuff out there, the night of the party. Gancy took Brullander's dough there. Only Gancy fiddled around a while, first, just to make Thexter look stronger."

Cranston had a question. He smiled as he asked it.

"Why didn't The Shadow send you straight out to Thexter's, to expose the crook in the first place?"

Cardona had a hunch that Cranston already knew the answer; nevertheless, he went through with a reply.

"The Shadow fixed everything with that case-book," explained Cardona. "Even Thexter thought it proved plenty against his pals. They were threatened with arrest; the only thing for them to do was clear out. But Thexter was holding their shares for them.

"Thexter's place was to be the trap. His game was to stay; and keep on putting up a front, because he wasn't suspected. So he saw—like The Shadow figured he would—that he could handle two stunts at once.

"One was to give his three henchmen their divvy. The other was to strengthen his position. A fake robbery would do it; Thexter had been thinking of one all along. He was ready for it. His books showed it. He'd been

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absorbing stolen stuff like Dorsan's securities and Brullander's money.

But the shares that were to go to the others were faked in the books. So when Thexter passed over the money that belonged to his pals, he could account for his own affairs through what seemed to be legitimate transactions."

JOE'S story was told. He found himself shaking hands with Cranston as the visitor stood at the door. Cranston's manner was one of congratulation. That fact made Cardona nod to himself, after Cranston left. Joe was convinced that Cranston was The Shadow.

What Cardona did not know, was that The Shadow himself had tried to convey that impression. Already, The Shadow was on his way to discard the guise of Lamont Cranston and again become Kent Allard.

No longer was Allard under doubt. The Shadow had cleared his own status when he had ended the existence of the Yellow Band.

THE END

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