

THE YELLOW DOOR

Maxwell Grant

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CHAPTER I. MURDER'S AFTERMATH

THE Jersey Central local chugged to a stop at the little Fanfield station. A wan-faced man stepped from the smoker and crossed the gloomy platform of the station. It was night; few passengers came to Fanfield at this hour. The ticket office had long since been closed.

Couplings jolted as the three-car local puffed from the station. The wan-faced man paused by a window of the dimly lighted waiting room. His features were haggard; they showed that he had lost sleep. His lips were twitchy; his eyes blinked suspiciously. The man feared that he was being followed.

Someone else had descended from the train. He was sure of it. All during the thirty minute ride from Jersey City, he had felt that eyes were watching him. He could remember the same impression while crossing by ferry from Manhattan. Yet when he eyed the entire platform, the jittery man failed to catch sight of a single human being.

There was an old automobile parked in the station driveway. It was an ancient sedan that served as local taxi

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from the Fanfield station. The driver was dozing behind the wheel. The nervous man shifted a suitcase that he was carrying. He approached the taxi, opened the door and entered. He joggled the sleepy driver.

"Take me to 64 Wesley Drive," ordered the wan-faced man. "Make it in a hurry."

The driver came to life. He grinned as he looked at his passenger.

"Sure thing, Mr. Dynoth," he said. "I'll get you there quick."

Dynoth chewed his lips; then queried: "How did you know my name?"

"I know everyone in Fanfield," chuckled the driver. "Soon as I heard your voice, I says to myself: 'That's James C. Dynoth;' and I was right."

He pressed the starter; after a few attempts, the motor rumbled. The car shot away from the station. Dynoth, jolting in the back seat, looked toward the dim platform. For a moment, he trembled nervously. He was sure that he had seen a figure standing almost at the spot where the cab had been.

Then Dynoth delivered a tense laugh, that came weakly from his lips. What he had taken for a human shape was no more than a curious shadow, cast grotesquely by the smudgy station lights.

"COME in from Chicago, Mr. Dynoth?" questioned the driver, pleasantly. "You go out there a lot, don't you?"

"I was in Buffalo," returned Dynoth, a trifle gruffly. "I didn't make Chicago, this trip."

"Thought maybe you knowed that fellow Peter Gildare," remarked the driver. "The one that was murdered yesterday. He was in the radio equipment business. That's your line, ain't it?"

"I never met Gildare."

Though the driver did not see it, Dynoth was chewing his lips, cursing the fact that he had ever chosen to reside in Fanfield. The place was too small a suburb, where a hack driver could know all about every commuter's business.

"Here we are, Mr. Dynoth. The fare's two bits."

The cab had stopped by a corner house. It was Dynoth's home, a small but attractive suburban residence. Dynoth alighted. The cab driver nudged his thumb toward the first floor of the house, where only a few hall lights were aglow.

"The missus is out," he informed. "I took her and your daughter over to a bridge party at Mrs. Dorbin's. The battery of the car was run down, so Mrs. Dynoth said –"

"Here's a half dollar," interrupted Dynoth, tartly, passing the cabby a coin. "Keep the change."

He strode toward the house. The cabby watched him unlock the front door; then he backed the sedan and started slowly toward the station. He muttered to himself as he drove along.

"A sour guy! Well, them traveling salesmen get that way. If I was –"

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The cabby jammed the rickety brake pedal to the floor; then released it. The old sedan whined, jolted and jerked forward. The driver grunted, shook his head and changed the tone of his mutter as he proceeded on his way.

"I'd ha' swore that was somebody there, crossing the street by them trees! Them arc lights sure throw funny kinds of shadows."

INSIDE his home, Dynoth had gone up to the second floor. He had passed through a hallway without turning on a light. Entering a room, he pressed the light switch. The glow revealed a bedroom that served also as an office, for there was an old-fashioned, roll-top desk in one corner.

The place was stuffy. Dynoth opened a window. He breathed fresh air; then went over by the bed and opened his suitcase. He began to unpack it, tossing crumpled clothes into a corner of the room.

From downstairs, a clock chimed eight. Dynoth glanced at his watch and noted that it tallied. A few seconds later, a telephone bell began to ring. There was a telephone on the desk, an extension of the downstairs telephone. Dynoth answered the call.

A deep, solemn voice drawled a "hello" across the wire. There was a pause, while Dynoth stood rigid. He had recognized the tone. Lips close to the mouthpiece, he gave a tense reply of three cautious words:

"The Yellow Door."

The response satisfied the speaker at the other end of the wire. The slow, deep voice spoke an order:

"Tell me about the transaction."

"It went through," asserted Dynoth, in his same nervous tone. "I – I – well, I settled the matter according to the orders you sent me. He – he didn't have much to say when I left him. He – well, maybe he might have said something within the next fifteen minutes; but nobody could have come there."

Silence. The man at the other end still listened.

"He knew more than I thought he did," expressed Dynoth. "He must have guessed a lot. But he didn't – he didn't know what I was there for. He didn't figure my part in it. He hadn't talked to anybody before me."

Dynoth paused. Then came the voice again, with an emphatic question:

"You are alone?"

"Yes," replied Dynoth. "The family is out, as I knew they would be –"

"Be gone," cut in the voice, "by twenty minutes after eight."

"To the Citadel?" queried Dynoth anxiously.

"Yes," returned the voice. "To the Citadel."

There was a click at the other end of the line. Dynoth clung to the receiver, scarcely realizing that the call had ended. Then, to his ear, came another click. He listened intently, expecting to hear the voice again. There was no voice.

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DYNOTH hung up and planted the telephone on the desk. He went to a bureau, ripped open a drawer and began to remove bundles of clothing, to pile them in his half–emptied suitcase. Glancing at his watch, he saw that it was seven minutes after eight. Panting, Dynoth hastily opened a small drawer and grabbed up valuables: studded cuff links, some rings of moderate value, other items that he considered of worth.

Suddenly he paused, to cock his head and listen. Fear showed on Dynoth's face. Strained nerves had exaggerated his imagination. He fancied that he heard footsteps upon stairs. Steadying, Dynoth grated a sickly laugh; then his face twitched.

There could be someone in this house.

Dynoth had remembered the click that had followed his telephone conversation with the voice. He thought of the downstairs telephone. Had someone lifted the lower receiver? Was that person already en route upstairs, or lying in wait below?

Frantically, Dynoth tossed his valuables into the packed bag. He leaped back to the bureau and pawed through the drawer. He found a revolver and thrust it into a pocket. Diving to the bag, he dug beneath clothing and produced a small, round bottle. Twisting off the screw cap, Dynoth shook out a large capsule. He placed it carefully between his front teeth; then closed his lips to conceal it.

Unbroken, the capsule remained in its hidden position while Dynoth buried the bottle and closed the lid of the suitcase. He tugged straps tight and lifted the suitcase, to plant it on the floor. He glanced at his watch. Twelve minutes after eight. Dynoth grinned slightly, without disturbing the capsule with his pressing teeth.

Gripping the handle of the suitcase with his left hand, Dynoth thrust his right into his coat pocket, to grasp the revolver. While he fumbled for the weapon, he turned toward the door of the bedroom. His tightened lips prevented a gasp; but his smile ended. Rigid, Dynoth faced a being on the threshold.

A SILENT intruder had arrived to confront James Dynoth. Motionless as a statue, silent as a specter, a cloaked invader stood ready to block escape. The visitor was garbed entirely in black. A cloak covered his shoulders; thin gloves encased his hands. His head wore a slouch hat, with downturned brim. The only features visible to Dynoth were burning eyes that shone with a condemning challenge.

From one black–gloved fist projected an automatic pistol, a bulky .45 with looming muzzle that formed a tunnel of certain doom. Dynoth quavered; the bag thudded as his left hand rose; the revolver turned in his pocket as his right hand came to view and also moved ceilingward.

Everything in Dynoth's manner showed that he recognized the weird personage who confronted him. His trembles were those of a guilty man; they told that James Dynoth was a murderer. He was marked as the slayer who had killed Peter Gildare in Chicago. Dynoth was a man schooled in modes of crime. That was why he had so quickly recognized the being who blocked his flight.

The black–cloaked invader was one who battled men of crime, whose power of vengeance was feared by all who dealt in evil. He was the scourge of the underworld, the master who moved by night to confront crooks and finish their outlawed careers.

James Dynoth stood trapped by The Shadow.

CHAPTER II. TRIPLE DEATH

SILENCE followed The Shadow's advent. A stillness so complete that the ticking of Dynoth's watch was audible within that hushed room.

The murderer knew that his game was known. He realized why the voice had called him across the telephone, warning that he must be gone within twenty minutes. Dynoth was but an instrument in a scheme of gigantic crime. Someone more consequential had foreseen that the murderer might be trailed.

Dynoth remembered that shadowy shape by the station platform. He recalled his earlier impression. He had been correct; an invisible trailer had followed him to Fanfield.

How much did The Shadow know?

He knew, certainly, that Dynoth had murdered Gildare. But the chances were that The Shadow had arrived too late to catch any words of Dynoth's telephone call, particularly that identifying statement: "The Yellow Door."

Dynoth kept his lips compressed.

Ticking seconds were becoming minutes. The Shadow spoke. His words terrified the murderer. There was a sinister sibilance to the whisper that filled this close-walled room.

"You slew Gildare," spoke The Shadow. "As he died, he gasped your name. He spoke other words, as well."

Dynoth shuddered. He knew that Gildare could have lived for twenty minutes, in the secluded room where Dynoth had trapped him. The Shadow had been in Chicago, summoned probably by some news concerning Gildare's fear of death. Too late to prevent murder, The Shadow had come to New York by air, arriving before Dynoth. From the time that he had left the Grand Central Terminal, Dynoth had been trailed.

Down to lower Manhattan; across the ferry; out to suburban New Jersey; here to his own home. The Shadow had finally closed in upon his prey.

"The other words," pronounced The Shadow, "were these: 'The Yellow Door.'"

Dynoth chewed his lips between the teeth that still spread to clench the hidden capsule. The jacket of that pill was not soluble. The capsule remained firm and intact between the pressure of the murderer's teeth.

"Speak!" commanded The Shadow. "State the significance of the Yellow Door!"

THE SHADOW was advancing. His eyes bored Dynoth. The murderer's nerve left him; then returned for a final spasm. Dynoth bit the capsule. He gulped; his lips opened as he delivered a hopeless gasp.

With his gulp, Dynoth had swallowed the capsule.

Only The Shadow could have divined the murderer's action. He knew what Dynoth had done. Fearful lest he would betray the secret of the Yellow Door, Dynoth had swallowed poison. He had chosen death rather than face The Shadow.

The downstairs clock had chimed the quarter hour. It was eighteen minutes after eight when Dynoth gulped the poison dose. He was counting upon the capsule to remove him from life within the next two minutes.

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Dynoth had promised to be gone from these premises by twenty minutes after eight.

"Speak!" hissed The Shadow. His gun muzzle pressed close to Dynoth's eyes. "Tell of the Yellow Door!"

Dynoth was cowering away, his hands pressed to his stomach. He gasped protesting words:

"I – I can't speak! I don't know the truth about the Yellow Door! If you ask –"

He gulped. He had almost betrayed a name. Quick to gain the advantage, The Shadow pressed that point.

"Name the man," he ordered – "the man who will tell."

"Krode," panted Dynoth. "Ferris Krode –"

"State where he lives –"

"At the Barwick Apartments, in New York. Except –"

"Except when –"

"Except when he is in Cleveland. That's all I know."

A moment's pause. Dynoth was twisted in agony. The poison had almost accomplished its result. Gasping for air, the murderer hoped to reach the open window. The Shadow stayed him with a repeated demand.

"Speak for yourself!" hissed the cloaked avenger. "Announce the secret of the Yellow Door!"

Dynoth sagged by the window sill. One hand gripped the ledge. With glassy gaze, the contorted killer met The Shadow's inflexible gaze. Even with death to save him, Dynoth could not resist The Shadow's pressure.

"The Yellow Door!" he shrieked, hoarsely. "The Yellow Door! It exists! It means –"

A TERRIFIC pang seized Dynoth. He choked; he could not complete the sentence. His hand tightened on the window sill. His body raised rigid; held its position momentarily; then wavered, about to topple. The murderer's eyes were sightless. The poison had riveted him in death.

It was exactly twenty minutes after eight.

To The Shadow, that point of time had no significance. It was something else that made him act with suddenness. A soft, purring noise had sounded beyond the window, where The Shadow stood almost eye to eye with the stricken form of Dynoth. The purr was from a halting automobile. The Shadow sensed a danger.

Instantly, he whirled away from the window, across the room toward the open door. From outside came a ripping clatter, the drill of a machine gun. Dynoth's body jolted straight upward; it came sprawling headlong to the floor, downed by a stream of bullets. Assassins of the night had come to make sure of the murderer's departure. They had seen Dynoth framed in the window. They had known that he had disobeyed a command.

The motor rumbled. The murderer's killers were on the verge of flight. The Shadow pressed the light switch. In total darkness, he sprang toward the window, hurdling Dynoth's collapsed body. Gripping the window frame with his left hand, The Shadow leaned out into the blanketing night.

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He saw the death car, a low-slung coupe, starting along the side street, rearward from Dynoth's house. Eyes glinting, The Shadow aimed. The range was short; his firm hand was about to deliver devastating bullets. Punctured tires; a riddled gas tank – such possibilities were certainties to The Shadow.

Assassins who knew the secret of the Yellow Door were at The Shadow's mercy. One second more – they would have been trapped in a crippled coupe. A short time interval; but it was not sufficient.

As The Shadow's finger squeezed the trigger of the .45, a splitting, thunderous blast quaked from below. With an upheaving roar, the entire house seemed to lift itself from the ground. The window frame shuddered, crackled sidewise. The Shadow was spun upward like a figure of straw.

Flames of the explosion swept upward from the depths. The boom of The Shadow's gun was puny, lost in the terrific blast that shook the neighborhood. The flash that tongued, unaimed, from the automatic was no more than a spark compared with the broad streaks of flame that spread upward, outward, as dynamite shattered floors, walls and roof.

The shudder that followed the explosion was featured by falling ruins, by volumes of smoke that enveloped the scene of disaster. The Shadow, the only living person in the house, was stunned, shaken, hurled helpless and incapable by the blast.

The lights of the house were instantly extinguished. The room vanished. Dynoth's body was gone. Walls had heaved outward; the roof had scaled upward; then, as after-effect, all settled back. Tumbling, pouring, the fragments of the building collapsed inward to become a smoldering pit wherein dust and smoke mingled to produce a grayish cloud amid the darkness.

INSTINCT alone saved The Shadow. Had he been at the door of Dynoth's room, he would have gone down into the pit, for the floor had split to swallow everything that was actually in the room itself. The Shadow, however, had been at the one spot that afforded safety.

Like a mammoth, clutching hand, the sucking intake of returning air had almost swept The Shadow downward. All that held him was his grip upon the window frame. His gun was gone from his right hand; instinctively, he clamped that fist along with the left. The window frame had cracked; but it formed a partial structure as it loosened from the shattered wall.

Debris, smashing downward, was deflected. Lighter than the crumbling stone, the woodwork about the window did not recover from the outward force of the explosion. Instead of rolling inward to the pit where death was certain, it scaled downward, flopping crazily, to strike the ground just beyond the fringe of the outer wall.

With it went The Shadow, twisted about, clamped in the broken frame itself. The frame struck on a corner; it broke apart and sprawled its burden on the turf. Fragments of ruined shutters, masses of splintered shingles came pouring down upon The Shadow's outstretched shape.

A stone from the falling chimney hurtled freakishly and struck the ground five inches from The Shadow's head. A chance bounce sent it away from him. That missile was the last threat of death.

For a full five seconds, The Shadow lay motionless; black beneath the night, he showed no sign of life. Then, slowly, he raised his head and shoulders. He inched forward away from the ruins.

A beam, supported by a chunk of frame, began to quiver. The Shadow could hear a warning rattle. He eased cautiously; then gave a quick twist and rolled clear, to let a crushing flow of shattered masonry come pouring

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upon the place where he had lain.

The Shadow arose weakly. He sagged; then managed to control himself with a limp. Capable of motion, he knew that he could depart from the scene of the catastrophe, though his progress would be slow. He had suffered no serious injury.

The murder car was gone. The Shadow had no chance to overtake it, even with a bullet. Triple death had been delivered to James Dynoth, the killer who had failed to cover up his trail. A zero hour had been set. Dynoth, forced to await it, had paid final penalty.

Dynoth had himself sought death by poison. Watchers, stationed outside to cover his departure, had delivered machine gun bullets to make certain of Dynoth's doom. That matter; however, had already been arranged by some other emissary of crime, who had come and gone beforehand. A huge time-bomb had been planted in Dynoth's cellar, set for twenty minutes after eight.

Triple death had halted The Shadow's trail. Three courses had been devised to prevent Dynoth from betraying the crooked master whom he had unquestionably served. Almost miraculously, The Shadow had escaped from doom. During the final moments of Dynoth's life, The Shadow had gained an extension of his trail.

The Shadow's quest was definite. He must find Ferris Krode, the man named by James Dynoth.

Krode could deliver the secret of the Yellow Door.

CHAPTER III. THE LAW ENTERS

IT was morning in Manhattan. A newspaper bore headlines that told of the explosion in Fanfield, New Jersey. That newspaper was resting upon the glass top of a mahogany desk. Beyond, windows revealed a panorama of New York's skyscrapers.

This office held one of the highest locations in lower Manhattan. It was on the fifty-eighth story of a spirelike tower. It was the private office of Dudley Birklam, president of the World Wide Shipping Corporation.

Birklam, in person, was seated behind the desk. A tall, bulky man, whose hair bore a grizzled touch, he possessed features that were rugged and square-jawed. Birklam was in his late fifties; his vigor was that of half his age. The pounds of his tight fist were emphatic when they reached the glass-topped desk.

Across from Birklam was a broad-shouldered, dark-visaged man, whose steady face was adorned with a heavy mustache. He, also, was well-known in certain circles. He was Vic Marquette, head of the Department of Justice operatives stationed in New York.

Birklam had finished a harangue. Marquette nodded that he understood.

"It's just as the police commissioner described it," declared the G-man. "I saw Commissioner Weston this morning. I agreed with him that it was a Federal case."

"Of course," rejoined Birklam. "It is liable to carry to any part of the country. It may prove international."

"Exactly," decided Marquette. "Before we proceed further, let me summarize the information just as you have given it to me. I want to be sure that I have every detail."

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Birklam nodded his willingness.

"Ten days ago," stated Marquette, "you were approached by a man named Ferris Krode. He is medium height, forty years of age, has a pointed nose and eyes that are wide apart."

"And lips that have an ugly curve," inserted Birklam. "It was their expression that made me mistrust the man."

"Ugly lips," added Marquette. "Krode, in his talk with you, showed considerable knowledge of the shipping business. He advised you that it would be a mistake for your company to buy out the Pan–Europa line."

A nod from Birklam.

"Krode intimated," resumed the G–man, "that any announcement of intended purchase would stir up ill feeling among the crews aboard Pan–Europa vessels. He added that there might be sabotage committed on those ships as soon as the deal was settled. If that happened, the World Wide Shipping Corporation would suffer immense loss."

"So great a loss," put in Birklam, "that all advantage gained by the merger would be offset. Our own company would suffer because shippers would fear that the trouble would spread to the ships already owned by the World Wide."

Vic Marquette leaned back in his chair.

"That much is settled," he asserted. "Tell me: what do you think is behind Krode's game?"

"I have two theories," replied Birklam, "It is either blackmail or a racket. Perhaps, in a sense, the two might be called one. I think that if I had offered Krode money, he would have changed his tune. But he made no demand."

"How did you forestall it?"

"By simply stating that my company was not intending to purchase the Pan–Europa line. I thanked Krode for his advice, but added that it was unnecessary."

"Do you intend to buy the Pan–Europa?"

"Absolutely! Moreover, I am sure that Krode knows it."

"Both theories are good," mused Marquette. "They are similar, of course. In straight blackmail, Krode would have simply threatened to produce the trouble himself. In a racket, he would have covered it under the pretense of giving you protection. He would have claimed the ability to prevent the impending trouble, for a given price."

"That is precisely as I estimated it, Mr. Marquette."

VIC arose and sauntered over toward the window. He stood looking out toward the bay, studying the toylike ships that were plodding through the harbor. After a brief contemplation, Marquette turned about and shook his head.

"There may be something else behind it, Mr. Birklam."

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The shipping man raised his heavy eyebrows in query.

"Some time ago," explained Vic, "there was a case in California, wherein the Golden Oil Co. was advised not to purchase certain options. The threat was intimated that the new wells would be set on fire. The Golden Oil Co. went ahead with its plans of purchase."

"What occurred?"

"Howard Bostbaum, who headed the directors of Golden Oil, was found murdered. In the confusion which followed, the options were allowed to ride. They were purchased by an almost defunct corporation, the Amerimex Co. As a result, Amerimex stock showed a tremendous profit."

"Then Amerimex was behind the threat?"

"That could not be proven. The man who made the threat to Bostbaum was named Rupert Thurlon. He had no connection with Amerimex. He has not been heard from since. The Amerimex Co. now rivals Golden Oil. We have not learned who could have profited most: those who sold the stock when it was low; those who bought and sold as it rose; or those who own it at present."

"But you are still seeking Thurlon?"

"Yes. Because he bears the same position in that case that Krode may hold in this one."

Marquette paused while Birkklam nodded a slow understanding. Vic spoke again; as he did, he picked up the newspaper from Birkklam's desk.

"You've read about the explosion in New Jersey?"

"Yes," replied Birkklam, in surprise. "Does it have a connection?"

"It does," replied Marquette. "There was a murder in Chicago, a few days ago. A man named Peter Gildare was slain. He was a manufacturer of radio equipment."

"I recall the case."

"Gildare had arranged to form a new corporation – one that would have dominated the industry. He was murdered. His plans are finished. Today, we learned that James Dynoth, the man who died in the New Jersey explosion, was the last person who saw Gildare."

Marquette threw down the newspaper and wagged his forefinger across the desk.

"Dynoth may have been with Gildare, or he may have been against him," announced the G-man. "Which, we do not know. In either case, Dynoth knew too much. That is why he died."

BIRKLAM'S face registered both puzzlement and worry.

"I can't quite grasp it," declared the shipping man. "Who could have gained by Gildare's death, and Dynoth's subsequent murder?"

"The men who control any one of a dozen manufacturing groups," explained Marquette. "Twelve or more concerns are after supremacy in the radio equipment field. Gildare's entry would have produced mergers."

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Someone wanted to eliminate him."

Birkklam was about to speak, when Marquette interrupted him.

"I know what you are about to say," declared Vic. "We should watch the other manufacturers and pick the one that gains the most through the failure of Gildare's plans. That won't work, Mr. Birkklam. We are dealing with some crafty fox, who may let others profit first. He is looking way ahead in this game. Just as he is in your case."

"In my case?"

"Yes. Can you tell me what effect may come if you do not purchase the Pan-Europa line?"

Birkklam pondered; then shook his head.

"There is no way to tell," he admitted. "Pan-Europa may strengthen. Or it may merge with some line other than World Wide. If it does merge, it may ruin the company that it joins, instead of helping it. It is like a chess game, Mr. Marquette; one can not predict the moves that are to come."

"Unless the game is fixed," returned Marquette, "and that's the way with this one. Oil, radio equipment, shipping – they are all alike to the big-shot who is pulling the strings. He can continue his manipulations, with threats and murders as his stand-bys, until he is completely covered and the payoff is due. We are opposed by a master schemer who stands to make a fabulous fortune; with proxies to help him reap the profits."

Birkklam rubbed his rugged chin; then tightened his fist and brought it hard against the desk.

"Krode is the man behind this!" he asserted. "He is the one whom we must trap!"

"That's just it," agreed Marquette, "and you are the man who can help us do it."

"Yes, I can. But we must wait until Krode comes here again. The scoundrel was too smart to tell me where I could reach him."

"He will be back – don't worry on that score. All I ask is that you don't get jittery, Mr. Birkklam."

A SMILE wreathed Birkklam's rugged face. The shipping man displayed a confidence that pleased Vic Marquette. Nevertheless, the G-man decided to add a promise that would keep Birkklam free from fear.

"We'll be ready any time you say," declared Vic. "My men will cooperate with the police. You will be guarded at all hours. For the present, though, that can wait. You handled Krode neatly. He can't possibly suspect that you have learned his game. The time to tighten will come later."

Birkklam nodded his accord. Marquette arose; they shook hands and the Department of Justice man went to the door. About to depart, he added one note of conviction:

"Krode is somewhere in New York. We'll locate him before he starts new trouble. We'll find a way to trap him."

In three sentences, Vic Marquette had made a trio of mis-statements.

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Ferris Krode was not in New York at the time when Marquette spoke. Krode, at that hour, was in Cleveland.

Nor could Marquette locate the man before he started new trouble. Krode was already engaged in that very practice, using the Middle West as his base.

Nor could Marquette be depended upon to trap Krode. There were circumstances that rendered that impossible. There was only one person who could accomplish that achievement. One who already knew Krode's whereabouts and who had divined that the wanted man was engaged in new mischief.

The one who knew was The Shadow.

CHAPTER IV. IN CLEVELAND

SHORTLY after noon that same day, a young man arrived outside the entrance of the Cleveland Union Terminal. Pausing beneath the heights of the tall Terminal Tower, he looked across the public square and eyed the incessant streams of curving trolley cars that met at that focal center.

Proceeding afoot, he reached the corner where Euclid Avenue joins the square. Choosing the main thoroughfare, he walked eastward along Euclid. Though an out-of-towner, this young man was familiar with Cleveland. He had important business in the Forest City.

The young man was Harry Vincent, trusted agent of The Shadow. Keen, clean-cut in appearance, Harry had the ability to use good headwork in a pinch. That was why The Shadow had dispatched him on the important errand of locating Ferris Krode.

For the present, The Shadow was out of combat. He had suffered severe wrenches and sprains in his fall from the dynamited house. Moreover, Krode's trail was likely to prove a double one, demanding work in New York as well as in Cleveland. The Shadow had therefore ordered Harry to take a late train to the Mid-West.

Locating Krode in Cleveland could be much like finding a very small needle in a large haystack. Upon arrival, Harry had looked up Krode's name in a telephone book, to find what he had previously learned in New York: that the man was not listed. He had then called "information" and asked for Krode's telephone number. Harry had insisted that the man had one.

He had finally been informed that there was a Krode Advertising Agency in the city; that its telephone had been installed too late for listing in the present book. It was not, however, registered as an unlisted number. Therefore, Harry received both the telephone number and the address.

There was a chance that the occupant of that office might be Ferris Krode.

Harry was familiar with facts supplied by The Shadow. In the case of James Dynoth, the pretended salesman of radio equipment had made no effort to assume an alias. It was possible that Krode would be quite as unguarded in his method. The Shadow had sent an agent to the Barwick Apartments in Manhattan. Krode's name had been on the board in the lobby, He was not listed, however, in the Manhattan telephone book; nor did "information" have his name.

Harry had therefore gained something of a break in finding a possible Krode as a telephone subscriber in Cleveland; but he could see the explanation. Posing as an advertising man, Krode had reason to have a telephone bearing his own name, so far as Cleveland was concerned.

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A TURN on a side street brought Harry to an unpretentious office building of ancient architecture. It was the address he wanted. Entering the dingy lobby, he found Krode's name. The Krode Advertising Agency occupied Suite 406.

Ascending in the elevator, Harry stepped into a long, barren hall. Suite 406 was along the passage. It bore the name of the advertising agency upon the frosted door. Harry turned the knob and entered. He found himself in an outer office, stocked with an old desk, three chairs and a quartet of second-hand filing cabinets. He saw Krode's telephone upon the desk.

There was a frosted door that bore the word "Private." It swung outward and a man filled the doorway, to eye Harry and deliver a casual nod. The man was in shirt sleeves and vest; his face was shrewd and pointed. He was standing with hands in trousers pocket, expecting Harry to say something.

"Mr. Krode?" queried Harry.

The man nodded. Harry lowered his tone for another query:

"Ferris Krode?"

A second nod. This time he was more detailed in his survey of the visitor. Harry smiled wisely. He decided that it was Krode's turn to say something. Harry's policy worked. Krode also used a lowered tone. as he questioned:

"You're Mandon?"

Harry took a chance with a nod. Krode's lips formed a tight smile of their own. Then the man snapped:

"What do you want to see me about?"

On his own, Harry could never have given a reply. He had, however, come here with instructions from The Shadow. Harry's chief had ordered him to be ready in a pinch; and The Shadow had given Harry the words to use. Tensely, his tone lowered still further, Harry spoke:

"The Yellow Door."

THE words were magical. Krode motioned Harry into the inner office. It was smaller than the outer room, and furnished only with an old desk and two chairs. There was a typewriter on the desk; beside it, a sheet of paper. Krode picked up the sheet; Harry saw that it bore a brief message, in capital letters:

EMPLOY NEW MAN

Krode showed Harry the message.

"Just typed it off a few hours ago," he confided. "It came in this morning. That lets you out of a tough proposition, Mandon. It's better to use a fellow who is on the inside. That is, if you've really got one who's sure fire."

"Don't worry about him," assured Harry. "He'll handle things right."

"Good! You didn't tell him about the Yellow Door?" Krode's tone was an anxious one.

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Harry responded: "Of course not."

Smiling, Krode picked up the sheet of typewriter paper and crumpled it. He threw the wad into the wastebasket. Then, as an afterthought, he pulled another wad of paper from his pocket. It was a small sheet, curly at the edges and reddish in color.

"The original," explained Krode, taking it for granted that Harry understood. "No need to show it to you. You saw the decoded copy."

Harry's fingers itched to hold the sheet of red paper; but Krode crumpled the wad tighter and thrust it back into his pocket. Eyeing Harry sharply, he remarked:

"You read about Dynoth."

"Yes," replied Harry. "It was a big story, even out here."

"Something must have gone wrong," stated Krode. "He had his chance to get to the Citadel. Everyone has. Probably Dynoth couldn't make it."

"We all run the risk."

"That's right, Mandon. I just mentioned it, though, because Dynoth was the only man you'd worked with, until now. I knew him, too. He probably told you that."

"He mentioned it."

"It's just luck that you and I never met before, Mandon. It was better, though, that we handled things by mail."

Harry made no comment. He was thinking how lucky it was that Krode had never met Mandon.

Harry was also considering how unlucky it would be if the real Mandon should appear within the next few minutes. It was quite possible that he would arrive, since Krode had been expecting him. Anticipating such an occurrence, Harry was groping for some plan of bluff. He could think of none.

"I SPOKE about Dynoth," stated Krode, "because he was your only contact. There are others like you, Mandon, who have never been through the Yellow Door. That comes when you make your first trip to the Citadel.

"Dynoth told you all about the Yellow Door, so you rate the same as he did. You've got a job ahead of you and since you are picking a new man to help you, the best system is to work from this office. You can take over this place from now on. That will make me free to handle other matters."

Krode had begun to rummage through the drawers of the old desk. He paused to nudge his thumb toward the outer office.

"All dummy stuff out there," he explained. "Those file cabinets are the hokum that goes with the place. You've taken over my business, that's all."

From a drawer, Krode took some sheets of blue paper, which he slipped into a large mailing envelope.

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"You have your own paper," he remarked. "Bring it down here. I'm leaving you the typewriter; I have a portable of my own at the hotel. You can have these, too."

He indicated a cardboard box with no top. It was filled with rubber keycaps, the sort that fit over the keys of a typewriter keyboard, each bearing a letter to correspond with those on the keyboard. Krode drew out a broad, flat metal box, slightly more than an inch in depth. He opened it, removed a medicine bottle filled with colorless liquid.

"I'll need these," he stated, packing them separately into the mailing envelope. "You have your own, of course. I'll send the message, telling that you are here in my place. You'll hear from me by mail, Mandon."

Krode was ready for departure, much to Harry's elation. He paused long enough to fish out an addressed envelope from the drawer. He showed it to Harry; the envelope bore the name "Ralph Mandon," with the address "Adair Apartments."

"I was going to send you another message," remarked Krode, "but that won't be necessary, since you came here. Better move from the Adair, Mandon. Use this address entirely. My name will cover you, just as your being here will give me an out if I am questioned."

"But don't forget the tip-off, in case trouble threatens. Stay aboveboard as long as you can. It's the best policy. It worked out with Dynoth. The police have an idea that he was on the level, just another unfortunate victim like Gildare.

"I'll be in New York soon enough to get word from you. But don't bother with a message unless it's necessary. Above all, don't forget to keep them brief. That's what makes them safe."

KRODE picked his coat from a chair back and donned the garment.

Tucking the mailing envelope under his arm, he started for the outer office. Harry followed. When they reached the door to the hall, Krode glanced at his watch.

"Just time enough," he decided. "I've got to check out at the hotel. So I can't stay longer, Mandon. I wanted to ask you more about this fellow Jellup; but it's not necessary. You told me enough in those last messages."

Harry nodded. He knew that Jellup must be the man whom Mandon had obtained for some special duty.

"You condensed those messages nicely," commended Krode, "but they were too long. Still, they had to be, under the circumstances. Just the same, I thought it a good idea to remind you that we want them brief.

"Remember: not a word to Jellup about the Yellow Door. He's not one of us and never will be. If he starts to get squeamish, shoot the word and we'll rub him out. Otherwise, we'll let him wait a few months and bump him quietly."

Recalling that he was in a hurry, Krode stepped out into the hall and pulled the door shut behind him. Tense, Harry listened while Krode's footsteps faded toward the elevator. He remained attentive until he heard the opening of the elevator door; then its close.

Ferris Krode had descended. At worst, he could only pass the real Ralph Mandon in the lobby and would not know that the arrival was coming to his office. Harry had played his game safely. He was in the clear. But Harry saw other possibilities, which came from a recollection of the past.

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Once, in London, Harry had worked with The Shadow and had seen his chief handle a double role. The Shadow had twice interviewed one man, but in different characters, thanks to his mastery of disguise. Harry was not adept at that art; but disguise would not be necessary here in Cleveland. This present case was the reverse of the London situation; that fact gave Harry the proper cue.

Krode had never met Mandon. Therefore, Krode had taken Harry for Mandon. Conversely, Mandon, when he came, would naturally mistake Harry for Krode.

With a confident smile, Harry Vincent returned into the inner office, prepared to play a waiting game. He had gained a key position. Harry was well placed to help The Shadow unravel the mystery of the Yellow Door.

CHAPTER V. HARRY REPORTS

WHILE he waited in Krode's inner office, Harry relieved his tenseness by concentrating upon the facts that he had learned. His first thoughts concerned the Yellow Door.

The Yellow Door was tangible. The name itself not only served as a password; but there was an existing yellow door, through which persons had been privileged to pass. The Yellow Door was at the Citadel, wherever that might be.

Krode knew where the Citadel was. So, apparently, did Mandon. The latter, however, had never seen the Yellow Door.

Jellup, Mandon's tool, had never heard of the Yellow Door; nor was he to be informed regarding it.

Messages passed between men who knew the secret of the Yellow Door. Those messages were dispatched in code. Krode had deciphered one, striking it off upon the typewriter that rested on the office desk. The messages, whenever possible, should be brief.

The coded message that Krode had received had come on red-hued paper. Krode, however, sent messages on blue paper; for he had taken blue sheets from the desk drawer. For some reason, Krode also used a metal box and a bottle of liquid.

Typewriters were used by those who knew the secret of the Yellow Door. Krode had left the office machine for Harry's use. In addition, he had left a set of rubber key-caps, which could have some purpose, even though they were not in use.

Harry began to finger the key-caps, which were right at hand in the opened drawer. He counted them; then compared the total with the keyboard of the typewriter. Harry made an immediate discovery.

The set of key-caps was not complete. One was missing. Checking, Harry found that it was the cap which bore the figure 4, with the \$ mark above it. Harry looked on the floor; in searching, he removed the wastebasket. He found the missing key-cap beneath it.

While pondering on this discovery, Harry heard the outer door open. He quickly brushed the key-caps from the desk into their box and closed the drawer. He went to the outer office. When he opened the connecting door, he saw the visitor and guessed at once that the arrival must be Ralph Mandon.

THE man in the Outer office was about thirty years of age. His face, though well formed, showed smugness. Mandon was evidently proud of his personal appearance. He was well-dressed. He had removed his hat and above his features, Harry saw dark hair that formed even waves back from the man's high forehead.

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Remembering Krode's behavior, Harry followed the same policy. He studied his visitor in quizzical style. The man spoke suavely, delivering a question:

"Mr. Krode?"

Harry nodded. The visitor spoke again:

"I'm Ralph Mandon."

"Ralph Mandon." Harry repeated the name in speculative manner; then questioned: "What did you want to see me about?"

"The Yellow Door."

Harry responded promptly to Mandon's cautious tone. He motioned the visitor into the inner office. He looked on the desk; then pretended to remember the wastebasket. From it, he fished the crumpled white paper that bore the words "Employ New Man." Harry showed the decoded words to Mandon.

"It covers Jellup," said Harry, quietly. "I destroyed the original. There's just one thing, though, Mandon. Your messages regarding Jellup were pretty well condensed. I want to know more about him."

Mandon nodded. He looked worried.

"You've heard about Dynoth," remarked Harry. "Too bad about him. But he had his chance to get to the Citadel, like we all have. You rate the same, Mandon, even though you haven't gone through the Yellow Door."

Harry's paraphrase of Krode's former statements was a glib one. It had marked effect on Mandon. The visitor showed his confidence with a brisk nod. Then he explained the source of his worry.

"I wanted to tell you about Jellup," he began. "I was cagey with him, of course, and that proved wise. Jellup won't work with us. I found that out when I had lunch with him today. That's why I was delayed in getting here."

"Sit down," suggested Harry, indicating a chair. "Suppose you tell me the whole story, Mandon. Amplify those messages of yours. Give me a line on the whole thing."

Mandon appeared pleased by the suggestion. He took a chair across the desk from Harry.

"Of course, you know how I lost out on that job I was after," stated Mandon. "Henry Adlaw decided to keep his private secretary and that put me out of luck, even though I rated better than any other applicant. I did manage to do some work for Adlaw. My first hunch was to sound out Clefter, the chap who kept the secretary's job. But I saw that wouldn't work. Clefter was too conscientious."

Harry smiled sourly. His expression indicated contempt for any one afflicted with a conscience.

"Adlaw is all set to buy the Saginaw Copper Mines," resumed Mandon. "If he takes them over, he will be sunk. So he is one fellow that doesn't have to be bumped. We want to keep him alive, which makes it easier for me than it was for Dynoth."

"Of course," nodded Harry. "Dynoth hit hot water when he finished Gildare."

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"Adlaw would ruin himself," declared Mandon, emphatically, "if he went ahead with the Saginaw Copper deal like he planned. But the old boy is just a bit too smart. He's waiting for a confidential report from that smart-alec investigator of his.

"If it comes in, the report, and says that Saginaw Copper is O.K., Adlaw will grab it like that!" Mandon snapped his fingers as an indication. "But Smythe won't send in a good report. He'll give Saginaw Copper the grand razz."

Harry took it that Smythe was the investigator. He ventured a speculative remark:

"If we could only handle this fellow Smythe –"

"We can't," inserted Mandon. "He's likely to be anywhere. Up in Wisconsin, down in West Virginia, maybe out in Montana. When his report comes in, that dumb cluck Clefter will file it; and the next day old Henry Adlaw will go over it."

"And that means –"

"That we've got to grab off the real report and shove a dummy in its place. Look" – Mandon brought papers from his pocket – "here's everything we need. Hotel stationery from wherever Smythe may be. Exact duplicates of the questions that Adlaw gave to Smythe to be answered. I copied them from the carbons; did it on Clefter's typewriter.

"Here's Smythe's handwriting; his signature. Private stationery of big copper men whom Smythe may meet. Their signatures, too. A couple of hours is all we need to fake anything that Smythe may send. We can make Saginaw Copper look like a ten-million-dollar buy, instead of a dud. But we've got to have Smythe's own report to work from, or we'll make some slip. Then old Adlaw will get in touch with Smythe direct."

HARRY understood. Playing the part of Krode to perfection, he studied the blank stationery that Mandon had brought and voiced disapproval.

"You've folded these, Mandon. You should have carried them in a briefcase."

"That won't matter," returned Mandon. "They'll be folded if they come in an envelope from Smythe."

Harry nodded as admission that his objection was overruled.

"Either one of us could fake the works," declared Mandon. "It's simply a case of waiting for Smythe to send in his stuff. He'll probably wire, from wherever he is. That will be the tip-off that the reports are on their way. We want that registered package to reach Adlaw's, where Smythe will sign for it.

"Then the switch. But I can't swing it. I'm through at Adlaw's. I can't go there day by day. We can't have somebody crack the place every night. It would be a cinch as an inside job. That's why I worked on Jellup."

"Tell me about him," suggested Harry. "What's the trouble?"

"Sidney Jellup has social contact at Adlaw's," explained Mandon, remembering Harry's admonition to amplify previous reports. "He's kept in right with the old man, because Adlaw was a friend of his father's. But Jellup is in bad with everyone else. He's borrowed dough up to the hilt.

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"Jellup played the races and welched to the tune of five grand. The bookies were ready to make it hot for him. Jellup asked me if I could help him out of the jam inside of the next two weeks. I told him I'd find a way."

Harry showed another wise smile.

"All he'd have to do," growled Mandon, becoming sour in manner, "would be to snag that report when it comes from Smythe. I told Jellup I wanted him to keep in touch with Adlaw. He guessed that it would have something to do with the old man. That didn't bother Jellup. He has no love for Adlaw.

"As soon as you gave the word, I intended to tell Jellup what he was to pull at Adlaw's. All I wanted besides, was your O.K. to sweeten the kitty to more than five grand, so as to keep Jellup happy for a while. It was in the bag, Krode, until this noon. At lunch, I saw that the deal was off."

"What happened?" queried Harry.

"The one thing I hadn't expected," replied Mandon, angrily. "When he went up to Adlaw's last night, Jellup caught the old man in a soft mood. Adlaw got in a balmy mood and began gushing about his old departed friend, Jellup's father. Jellup saw a chance and bawled on the old man's shoulder. Before he left, he touched Adlaw for ten grand, cash across the counter.

"This morning, Jellup paid off the bookies and he's riding on top of the world, with plenty of cash. Worst of all, he figures he can touch Adlaw for more dough as soon as that bank roll is gone. He wouldn't spring a fast one on Adlaw, the way things stand at present. So I laughed off the hints I'd given him. Made out that I had sent him up to Adlaw's knowing he could get in right with the old boy."

"Good stuff," approved Harry. "Did Jellup fall for it?"

"Yes," replied Mandon. "But he's out of it. We only have Cleftor as a bet; and he's too goody-goody. We can't take a chance on him."

HARRY began to drum the desk. Mandon waited, hoping for a suggestion. Picturing himself as Krode, Harry formulated a tentative plan.

"Henry Adlaw must be easy to approach," he remarked. "Provided that someone comes through the front door."

"Which I didn't," expressed Mandon. "I applied for a secretary's job. That put me out as a business man or a social light."

"Suppose," said Harry, "that I contacted Adlaw. Suppose I put on a front, made myself out to be a mine owner."

"With this office?" queried Mandon.

"The office would have to be dropped," admitted Harry. "Of course, I could handle it on the quiet, but —"

"I've got it!" ejaculated Mandon. "Here's the stunt, Krode! Adlaw owns a couple of lake steamers, passenger boats that he took over when he bought a fleet of whalebacks for hauling copper ore.

"Here's what you can do. Walk in on Adlaw. Tell him you're an advertising man, but with a flare for promotion. Say that you have dough. Flash it in a quiet way. Talk big about a plan for special lake cruises,

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using those steamers of Adlaw's. Get the old man interested in a straight partnership.

"That will hit him. You can find an excuse to call every evening, if only to leave some new data with Clefter. You can look over that office of Adlaw's – there in his home – and spot everything that's in it. Clefter always goes out to inform Adlaw who has come to see him."

"That's all I need," agreed Harry. "It ought to be a cinch to pull Smythe's report from the files."

"Sure," nodded Mandon. "You can make the fake one overnight and show up early the next morning. Load the phony into its proper place before old Adlaw is likely to call for it."

Mandon planked the sheaf of materials that he had brought with him.

"They're all yours, Krode," he declared. "Would it be all right if I took a trip up to Manitoulin Island? I'm supposed to be on the loose, not even looking for a job; and some friends asked me to go with them. It would establish me better if I went. I think you can handle this job better by yourself; but if –"

"Take the trip to Manitoulin," interposed Harry. He saw advantage in getting Mandon out of Cleveland. "I'll get in touch with you at the Adair, after you return."

"That will be in about a week."

HARRY arose. He ushered Mandon to the door. Harry had gained as much information as he could remember for the present. As soon as Mandon was gone, Harry hurried back to the inner office and began to pound the typewriter, using plain white paper that he found in a lower drawer of the desk.

Harry reported on Mandon first, putting down every detail of the interview while it was fresh in mind. Then he reverted to his preliminary conference with Krode. He mentioned all the facts of that first meeting.

Leaving the office, Harry mailed the reports to Rutledge Mann, the contact man through whom they would reach The Shadow.

Returned to the office, Harry sat down to contemplate the future. He felt somewhat as if poised upon the crater of a volcano, while continuing in this role of Ferris Krode. He knew that he might encounter difficulties; that he would be better equipped if he had answers to certain problems, especially the matter of code messages inscribed on sheets of paper, either red or blue.

But Harry was firm in the belief that his problems would soon be solved. The Shadow had a way of ferreting out the answers to the most difficult perplexities.

This, Harry was sure, would apply in the mystery that concerned the Yellow Door.

CHAPTER VI. PATHS IN THE NIGHT

LATE that afternoon, a special-delivery messenger brought an airmail letter to an office in the Badger Building, in New York City. The letter was from Cleveland. It was received by a chubby-faced, lethargic man, who happened to be alone in the office.

This was Rutledge Mann; the wording on the door announced him to be an investment broker. Mann took the letter to an inner office. He noticed the hour of the postmark. Harry Vincent's report had caught the airmail just in time for rapid delivery.

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Opening the envelope, Mann studied the report, noted its contents and placed the folded papers in another envelope. Pocketing this, he left the office. When he reached the street, he took a taxicab to Twenty-third Street.

There, Mann entered a dilapidated building and ascended a stairway. He stopped at a deserted office, where scarred paint upon the cobwebbed glass panel bore the name:

B. JONAS

Mann deposited the unaddressed envelope in the letter slit below the glass panel. He heard it plop on the other side of the door. That mission accomplished, Mann went his way.

It was dusk at the time of Mann's visit. A flickering gas jet in the dusty hall kept watch over that ancient office. No one approached the door; no shadowy streaks appeared upon the grimy glass pane. Had there been a listener, he would not have heard a sound from beyond the closed door. To all appearances, the Jonas office was forgotten.

ONE hour later, a bluish light appeared in a close-walled room distant from Twenty-third Street. Beneath the glow came hands, opening Mann's envelope. The Shadow had visited the Jonas office, unseen and unheard. He had brought the letter with him to the secret abode that he called his sanctum.

Eyes peered from darkness above the edge of the shaded lamp. Keenly, they devoured Harry Vincent's report. A soft laugh whispered amid the gloom. It was a tone of approval, commending the work that Harry had accomplished.

Earphones clattered as a hand drew them from the wall. A tiny bulb glowed as a signal that connection had been made. A methodical voice came over the wire:

"Burbank speaking."

"Report."

"Report from Hawkeye. Watching Krode's apartment. No sign of occupancy."

"Report received. Instructions."

A pause; then The Shadow ordered:

"Hawkeye to remain on duty and await contact. Relay further reports to Mann's office."

FIFTEEN minutes later, The Shadow appeared in the Badger Building. He was in a guise that he frequently chose. Clad in tuxedo, carrying a cane, The Shadow had affected a leisurely gait. His features were distinguished; they formed a firm, molded countenance that was masklike and hawkish in appearance. Sharp eyes glittered from either side of the aquiline nose.

No one would have recognized The Shadow as the cloaked avenger who roved the underworld to hunt down men of crime. There were those, however, of social caste who would have believed that they recognized him.

The guise which The Shadow had chosen was that of Lamont Cranston, a multimillionaire resident of New Jersey, member of New York's exclusive Cobalt Club and friend of Police Commissioner Ralph Weston.

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Reaching Mann's floor, The Shadow strolled to the investment broker's office. The door showed darkness. Mann had not returned. The Shadow produced a pass-key and unlocked the door. He turned on the lights of the outer office. He penetrated no farther.

The Shadow had come simply to make a study of Mann's typewriter. It was a standard machine, that was housed in the stenographer's desk; but it had a feature that interested The Shadow intensely. The typewriter had a keyboard that was equipped with detachable rubber caps.

Tight-fitting metal disks, with upper surfaces of rubber. They could hold a clue that Harry Vincent had failed to guess. In his description of Krode's office, Harry had mentioned key-caps that Krode had left, apparently as necessary to the typewriter. Those caps, however, had been in a desk drawer; not on the keyboard of the machine. Moreover, Harry had found a figure key on the floor. This added to The Shadow's assumption that the key-caps were important.

Fingering Mann's machine, The Shadow removed the caps from the keys. He studied them, rejected all caps that bore numerals or odd characters. He eyed the keyboard, with its standard three banks of letters:

Q W E R T Y U I O P

A S D F G H J K L

Z X C V B N M

The standard keyboard was devised for speedy typing. Should the letters be placed in alphabetical arrangement, they would not serve as well. Nevertheless, it would be a simple matter to pick out letters as needed.

The Shadow began to put the keycaps on the keyboard in alphabetical order. It was a rapid, easy process. When finished, the lettered keys of the typewriter formed the capped arrangement:

A B C D E F G H I J

K L M N O P Q R S

T U V W X Y Z

Referring to Harry's report of the decoded message shown him by Krode, The Shadow typed the words "Employ New Man," using the letters as they appeared upon the key-caps. Because the alphabetical arrangement did not conform to the actual keys, the words appeared thus:

TDHSGN FTV DQF

This, if The Shadow's theory were correct, would have been the coded message as it appeared upon the sheet of red paper that Krode had crumpled and thrust into his pocket. Had Harry seen that message, The Shadow's key-cap system could have been put to the test.

As it was, Harry would have to wait until another message arrived at Krode's office. He could decode it according to The Shadow's system and see if it came out right.

HARRY had reported that Krode's key-caps had been in the desk drawer. That was natural, since Krode would not have kept them on the wrong keys of the machine. Rather than rearrange them each time, in their

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proper order, he had put them in the desk drawer. This was a proof that The Shadow was following a logical chain.

However, when he had removed the key-caps from Mann's typewriter, The Shadow did not immediately replace them as they normally belonged. Instead, he laid them on the desk in the order of the actual keyboard: Q, W, E, R and so on through to M. Whispering each letter of the alphabet, The Shadow picked up each key-cap in progression and placed them upon the letters that he called.

His first key-cap, Q, went on the real A. His next, W, fitted on B. E capped the key marked C; R capped D; T capped E. The Shadow continued the process until all the key-caps were on the machine.

Eyeing the three coded words: "TDHSGN FTV DQF," The Shadow typed them slowly, picking each letter according to the key-caps that were in front of him upon the keyboard. When he drew out the sheet of paper, it bore the decoded message:

EMPLOY NEW MAN

A simple, effective system. One that required no code list, either written or memorized. Any typewriter would, itself, serve as a guide. Rubber keycaps would make the processes of inscribing and deciphering into simple mechanical actions.

To send a message, the transmitter had merely to put key-caps on letters in accordance with the alphabet. To decode a message when received, the recipient simply arranged his key-caps like the keyboard; then planted them on A, B, C, and so on through the alphabet.

Naturally, the code messages would have the weakness of an ordinary cryptogram. They would possess letter frequency, short words, various duplications. But Krode had told Harry how to offset that trouble, though Harry had not entirely understood. Krode had said to make all messages brief.

Three words, such as "Employ New Man," would not prove sufficient for a cryptogram expert. Those who knew the secret of the Yellow Door would avoid long messages whenever there was chance that such could go astray.

The Shadow began to rearrange the key-caps as he had found them on Mann's typewriter. While he was thus engaged, the telephone bell rang. The Shadow answered the call. It was Burbank, stating that he had called the Cobalt Club. A message had been left there for Lamont Cranston. It was from Commissioner Ralph Weston.

FINISHING with Mann's typewriter, The Shadow left the office and took a cab to the club. He asked for the note; he found that it contained a brief request from the commissioner. The Shadow was to meet Weston at the home of Dudley Birklam.

Leaving the club, The Shadow spoke to the doorman, who signaled to a limousine across the street. The car pulled over. The Shadow entered it and instructed the chauffeur to drive him to the address that had been given in Weston's note. As Cranston, The Shadow was riding in the millionaire's limousine.

Birklam's home was located up toward the northern tip of Manhattan. Its neighborhood was like a quiet island in the surging metropolis. Set on a height, it gave a view of the Hudson River, with the myriad lights of the George Washington Bridge. The house was almost a mansion; but it did not stand alone. There were other residences close by it on the slope.

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The street in front was quiet, but formed a usual type of thoroughfare. Encroaching upon the old-fashioned district were several apartment houses. The building boom had reached this out-of-the-way section, then had faltered. It would probably be years before the development would be completed. In the meanwhile, home owners like Birklam would be able to preserve surroundings that savored of a past generation.

The Shadow's chauffeur had trouble locating the exact address, due to dead-end streets that stopped short against the rugged slopes. At last he spied Weston's car, and it served as the final identification of Birklam's house.

ALIGHTING from the limousine, The Shadow ascended broad stone steps. He rang a bell and was admitted by a solemn-faced servant. When he gave his name, The Shadow was immediately ushered through a large hall and into a sumptuous library. He stopped in feigned surprise.

The Shadow had expected to find Commissioner Weston; also the grayish-haired man whom he knew must be Dudley Birklam. But the other occupant of the room was one whose name had not been mentioned. The third was Vic Marquette.

As Cranston, The Shadow knew the G-man. But it was The Shadow's part to show surprise at meeting Vic here; and, in fact, he had not anticipated the occurrence.

Vic's entry meant that the government was at work. It also signified that Birklam was somehow concerned. The Shadow had made an appointment with Weston to discuss the death of James Dynoth. He knew, therefore, that this conference must involve the New Jersey explosion.

The Shadow shook hands with Weston and Marquette. He was introduced to Birklam. Weston promptly made an announcement.

"I was interested, Cranston," he stated, "when you said that you had something to tell me about that Fanfield explosion. That is why I invited you here. Have a chair."

The Shadow started to sit down; he stopped abruptly and pressed his hand to his left hip. Though his face remained inflexible, it was plain that he had received a severe twinge of pain. He let himself down gradually into the chair.

"What is wrong, Cranston?" queried Weston, anxiously. "Are you in pain?"

"Just the result of a slight accident," returned The Shadow, with a faint smile, "I had a bad fall."

"At your home in New Jersey?"

"In New Jersey."

Apparently, the pang had ended. Weston saw that his friend was ready to enter the conversation.

"You seem to hold the opinion," declared the commissioner, "that the explosion in New Jersey should be investigated by the New York police. That fact interested me. What was your reason for making such a statement when you telephoned me?"

"I know the town of Fanfield," replied The Shadow, quietly. "It is exclusively a New York suburb. Whatever the reason for the explosion in Dynoth's house, you will find the answer to it in this city."

THE YELLOW DOOR

"You would have me believe that Dynoth had undercover friends in Manhattan?"

"Yes; I would wager on it. I would tell you to look for another man who traveled – as Dynoth did – between New York and the Middle West. A man who had persuasive methods; who dealt with the heads of big enterprises. One who has lately called upon men as important as Gildare; men who, like Gildare, have reason to believe that they are in danger."

A HUSH followed The Shadow's quiet delivery. Despite the calmness of the easy tone that he had used in playing the part of Cranston, The Shadow had produced impressive emphasis. The man who broke the hush was Birkklam.

"Krode!" exclaimed the shipping man. "Gad, commissioner! The description would do for Ferris Krode!"

"Krode traveled to the Mid–West?"

"Yes," nodded Birkklam. "He told me that himself."

"What cities did he visit?"

"He did not mention them."

The Shadow eyed Weston steadily.

"Who," he asked, "is Ferris Krode?"

Vic Marquette stepped forward. He passed The Shadow a typewritten sheet. The Shadow read it carefully. It was a report of Marquette's interview with Birkklam, amplified by statements from Commissioner Weston.

"We cannot locate Krode," announced Weston. "It may be that he has sublet some apartment. All that we can do is await his return. We thank you for your excellent deduction, Cranston. It is logical; it shows that we are on the right track."

"It was nothing, commissioner," smiled The Shadow. "When you progress further with this case, I should like to know the details. I may be able to strike another good guess."

"You can help us with a present suggestion. You are a man of wealth, like Mr. Birkklam. Under his present circumstances, would you feel more at ease if you had police protection?"

"That depends," replied The Shadow, slowly. "If Mr. Birkklam were in my situation, I would say no."

"Your situation?"

"Yes. I refer to my servants. They are reliable. Trustworthy to a man. I would prefer to rely upon them for sole protection. That is, until matters became more dangerous."

Birkklam pressed a button on the wall. Ten seconds later, a door opened. A stalwart, well–dressed young man made a bow. Birkklam introduced him.

"This is Jefford," he said. "He serves as a social secretary when the family is at home. At present, he is managing this household. Jefford has been with us for six years. What about the other servants, Jefford?"

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Methodically, the young man delivered a list of names; butlers, chef, chauffeurs and other hired men. He added their terms of service. He mentioned facts about them. Both butlers had served in the World War, one in a regiment commanded by Birklam's nephew. Only the chef had been in the household less than five years. Some of the servants had been in Birklam's employ for fifteen.

"You may go, Jefford."

With this dismissal, Birklam turned to his visitors. He smiled in confident fashion.

"I feel certain, gentlemen," he declared, "that I have no spies or traitors in this house. If any of my servants had such traits they would be noted and reported by the others. Do you agree?"

Weston and Marquette nodded.

"Nevertheless," stated Birklam, "if police or government men could be introduced here or at my office, I would welcome their presence. Provided, of course, that they would pose as new servants or employees."

"You should be guarded while here," agreed Weston. "I shall detail a man to that duty."

"I can add one," put in Marquette.

Birklam bowed his thanks.

BRIEF discussion followed. It concerned Krode and the man's potential schemes. The consensus was that nothing could be learned until Krode appeared again and became more specific. Soon, the conference ended.

The Shadow, silent, strolled out with Weston and Marquette, using his cane to overcome his limp. He had established facts concerning Ferris Krode; but he had discreetly said nothing regarding his own knowledge. For The Shadow knew that plans would be spoiled, if the law immediately set watch upon the Barwick Apartments. Until Krode returned to New York, The Shadow intended to preserve his own vigil at that spot.

Marquette joined another operative in a coupe. Weston stepped aboard his big car. The Shadow entered his limousine and spoke through the tube to the chauffeur.

"Downtown, Stanley," he ordered. "I shall tell you where to stop."

Paths in the night had parted. Weston and Marquette were going their individual ways, thinking but little of Cranston's possible destination. They would have been mutually amazed had they been told the immediate objective of their quiet-mannered friend.

The Shadow was en route to the Barwick Apartments, there to relieve the present watcher who awaited the return of Ferris Krode.

CHAPTER VII. THE MESSENGER

THE Barwick Apartments were situated upon a side street, near Seventy-second. Old-fashioned and only half tenanted, the apartment house lacked attendants. It depended on the name board system, with a bell for visitors to ring.

The Shadow had previously entered the apartment house. During the afternoon, he had penetrated to Krode's apartment to find it sparsely furnished and minus clues. Krode's apartment was at the front of the building;

THE YELLOW DOOR

hence The Shadow had chosen to watch it from outside.

Across the street from the Barwick was a delicatessen store; above it, the deserted rooms of an old-fashioned vacant house. The Shadow had gained entry there. The second story front room had become the lookout post.

"Hawkeye," a shrewd watcher, was on duty. His job was to note all arrivals at the Barwick; then watch for lights in Krode's apartment, which was on the fourth floor. By that means, he would have an inkling when Krode returned. Meanwhile, another factor had been introduced to the game. That was Harry Vincent's description of Ferris Krode.

If Hawkeye spotted the right man, his description would tally with Harry's. When The Shadow relieved Hawkeye for the night, he could himself identify Krode.

The Shadow, like the law, was playing a waiting game. His system included watchfulness. Harry Vincent had gained a key position. The Shadow did not want to disturb the Cleveland situation. When development occurred, The Shadow would pass word to the law. But until Krode actually returned to New York, that would be unwise; for if Krode scented danger, he might return to Cleveland and jeopardize Harry's position there.

FROM his observation post, Hawkeye was watching the Barwick lobby. A hunched, wizened-faced man, Hawkeye had a pallor that showed even in the darkness of the room above the delicatessen. Hawkeye looked like a denizen of the underworld. That was why he served The Shadow so effectively when he stole through gangland's domain. Hawkeye had a reputation as a spotter who could note faces half a block away.

So intent was Hawkeye as he watched from darkness that his quick ears did not hear the swish that occurred beside him. Hawkeye jumped, almost nervously, when he caught the tone of a whispered voice, that delivered the single word:

"Report!"

The Shadow had arrived in the gloom of the room. Cloaked in black, he was completely invisible. Hawkeye darted a sidewise glance, but saw no shape beside him. In a low tone, the little spotter reported that he had seen no one who might have entered Krode's apartment.

"Off duty!"

With The Shadow's order, Hawkeye arose from a camp-stool that he had brought here to place beside the window. His vigil was ended; yet he was reluctant to leave the post. Almost in vain hope, Hawkeye paused, standing, to make a last survey of the lighted entry across the street. His eyes saw a moving figure.

"Look!" whispered Hawkeye. "There – sneaking past the old shoe repair shop!"

There was a sibilant response from The Shadow. His sight was as keen as Hawkeye's. He, too, had seen the furtive approacher. A man came closer to the lights of the Barwick entry.

The arrival looked like a tough. His clothes were old and baggy. He had a grimy sweater beneath his worn jacket. His face was unshaven; his eyes bleary. A visored cap was tilted over his forehead. He darted glances in both directions along the street, the usual procedure for one of his ilk when anxious to avoid a patrolman.

"Weasel Hacklin!" expressed Hawkeye. "I'd know that sneak anywhere I saw him!"

THE YELLOW DOOR

"Formerly a go-between," inserted The Shadow, whose knowledge of underworld characters rivaled Hawkeye's. "Now unwanted by racketeers."

Hawkeye grinned in the darkness. He knew of "Weasel's" dilemma. The sneak had served too many self-styled big-shots who had encountered unforeseen trouble. No blame had been placed on Weasel; but it was considered bad luck to employ him. Weasel had gained a Jonah's reputation.

Hawkeye knew why. The Shadow had carved deeply into criminal games. Big-shots and their henchmen had disappeared in wholesale fashion. The underworld had never learned where they had gone. Rumor had it that The Shadow was shipping them to parts unknown. That rumor was scarcely credited, for it seemed too fabulous. Nevertheless, it was correct.

WEASEL HACKLIN, no longer wanted, had been at a loss to place his talents as a go-between. He had sunk to the level of the usual riffraff found in the bad lands.

Tonight, however, Weasel was apparently on some job. His ragged attire looked like a blind. His loafing attitude was a dodge, to make sure that the coast was clear. Satisfied, Weasel edged into the apartment house entry. The Shadow and Hawkeye had an angled view that enabled them to see Weasel approach the name board on the left.

Weasel did not press a button. Instead, he fingered a name card that was fitted into a brass slide. He tugged at the card, pulled it loose and shoved the tiny item into his coat pocket.

Hawkeye started to speak; then stopped. Words were unnecessary. The Shadow, too, had seen.

The card that Weasel had removed came from beside the exact spot where the call button of Krode's apartment was located.

Weasel was one who served the Yellow Door. He had been delegated to remove the one shred of evidence that could have led the law to Krode's Manhattan quarters. That done, Weasel was ready to sneak out into darkness.

A whisper from The Shadow:

"Remain on duty! Report to Burbank!"

While Hawkeye nodded, The Shadow was gone. Watching from the window, Hawkeye saw Weasel slink eastward along the side street. Half a minute later, Hawkeye's keen eyes caught a glimpse of gliding blackness that silhouetted itself upon a lighted space of sidewalk. He knew that The Shadow was on Weasel's trail.

Another half minute; then a taxicab rolled into sight. Hawkeye recognized the vehicle. It was manned by Moe Shrevnitz, another aid of The Shadow's. Moe's cab was actually The Shadow's property.

There was a telephone in the delicatessen store below. Hawkeye decided to go there at once and put in a call to Burbank. After that, he would continue his watch for Krode.

HEADING eastward, Weasel reached an avenue where the elevated rumbled. He crossed the street, looked about, but did not see The Shadow. Weasel started up the steps to the northbound platform. At the landing, he gave another sneaky look and took the crossover bridge to the southbound platform.

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Darkness moved from the steps below. The Shadow reached the landing. He placed his right hand over the solid rail and struck a match. It flickered reddish in the darkness. Moe saw the tiny flare from below. The taxi driver made a turn in the middle of the street and pointed his cab southward. The Shadow had spotted Weasel's dodge.

One minute later, a southbound elevated train rumbled into the station. Weasel boarded it. Just as the train was about to start, a blackened figure glided from the fringing darkness of the station and swept across the open space. The Shadow swung over the locked gate of the train's final platform. In the darkness of the last car's deserted rear platform, The Shadow was riding along with Weasel.

Below, Moe's cab was following the train. At each station, Moe waited to watch the descending passengers, or to spy a flicker from above. Each time, he let the train start ahead; then, driving like a jehu, he overhauled it before the next station.

This continued for a dozen stops. At last, Moe saw Weasel appear and slink away. He, too, had seen the man near the Barwick and was sure that Weasel was the quarry. A flickering match from the bottom of the elevated steps told Moe that he was right.

The Shadow followed Weasel on foot, while Moe kept a discreet distance to the rear. Weasel was shambling eastward, toward the Bowery. The district was disreputable; Weasel seemed at home in his surroundings. Suddenly, far ahead, Moe saw a signal flicker. He understood. When he reached the spot; he stopped.

Weasel had taken to an alleyway. The Shadow had followed. Halfway down the alley was a single light that illuminated the sidewalk and the front of a squatty brick building. Moe knew the place. Colloquially, it was called "Guzzler's Joint"; the term "Guzzler" did not refer to the patrons. The place was simply a dive on the outskirts of the underworld, maintained by a proprietor of questionable repute whose capacity for food and drink had earned him the sobriquet of "Guzzler" Rogan.

Moe caught no new signal from The Shadow. The cabby drove away to report to Burbank; then to return.

THE joint run by Guzzler Rogan was one that formed a meeting place for small-fry thugs. It was one of the first dives that the police visited when they made a round-up; they usually arrived after the "grapevine" had telegraphed the word that the raid was coming.

Guzzler's, however, had previously been visited by The Shadow, without warning. After that night, several notorious patrons had never returned. Since then, Guzzler's business had suffered somewhat; but he had recouped through a novel plan. Guzzler had capitalized on The Shadow's raid. He had made the place safe for sightseers; and members of the "upper crust" were seen at Guzzler's nightly. They came there to obtain a mistaken impression of how the other half lived.

That, in turn, had brought back some hard-boiled customers who wanted, as they expressed it, to "lamp the stuffed-shirt mugs"; thus, Guzzler frequently viewed an intermingling of social aspirants and would-be big-shots. Guzzler liked the set-up. He was living in the hope that The Shadow would stage another entry and thus add a bona fide boost to future business.

The joint consisted of a single large room; therein, a dozen rowdies were congregated at one end, while an equal number of well-dressed visitors occupied the other. The place was below the street level; the high-brow occupants had reserved tables near the outer door. At the back of the stone-walled basement was a convenient door that offered access to passages leading to a rear alley; also to upstairs rooms, with exits to other houses. The door at the back of the room gave the riffraff a quick way out.

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It also afforded an entrance, if The Shadow cared to use it. Guzzler, tending a side-wall bar in the middle of the room, was ever hopeful that The Shadow might some time arrive. Under his portly, jovial exterior, Guzzler kept that wish strictly to himself.

WHEN Weasel Hacklin entered, he naturally took a position near the rear door. He eyed the faces of fellow-rowdies, saw a few who impressed him, then turned his attention to the respectable visitors. Of the dozen, four were women; each with a male escort. Away from the throng of eight were four men who wore tuxedos, a group that occupied a corner table of their own.

Weasel bought a drink, then noted Guzzler. The proprietor was leaning on the bar, his fat arms folded, surveying the customers with a pleasant grin. To Guzzler, the middle line of the room was like the bars of a cage; on one side, the monkeys – on the other, visitors to the zoo. In comparing the boastful thugs and the society habitués, Guzzler had never yet decided which were the apes and which the humans. Guzzler was philosophical as well as imaginative.

Arguments or threatening brawls were the occurrences which usually stirred Guzzler from reverie. Tonight, a different cause was responsible. Glancing toward the rear door, Guzzler became rigid. His double chin dropped; he gulped an amazed outcry. His cherished hope had been realized.

On the threshold stood a cloaked figure, The Shadow. Gloved fists gripped compelling automatics; each .45 was swaying; the two guns were covering the dozen roughs who sat within The Shadow's range. As hoodlums turned, a sinister voice issued a double command:

"Line up! Move out!"

As he spoke, The Shadow stepped inward. His right-hand gun indicated the direction of the march. He intended to convey a procession of a dozen thugs out through the rear passage.

Cowed small-fry quailed, then rose in obedience. In every thug's thoughts – Weasel's included – there existed the same idea. Outside, The Shadow would separate his prisoners. He would take the few he wanted, and let the others go. It was better to accept that chance than to challenge the sure, quick death that could come from The Shadow's guns.

Not one hoodlum offered fight; yet a surprise was due. The Shadow had not anticipated it. Some keen impulse was all that told him when it came. Guzzler, staring at the cloaked figure, saw The Shadow wheel toward the front of the room.

The four tuxedoed men had come to their feet as one. Each was whipping out a revolver – not to aid The Shadow, but to attack him. Despite their aristocratic appearance, those men were the real desperadoes present. They were beating The Shadow to the shot.

But the cloaked invader offset their advantage. As he turned, The Shadow performed a long sidewise fade-off past the line-up of rowdies, to a spot on the other edge of the doorway that led to the front street. His automatics boomed as revolvers crackled.

Women screamed; their escorts hauled them to the floor, away from the range of fray. Revolver bullets sizzled past The Shadow. One tuxedoed rat sprawled upon the stone floor. The others dropped to cover, thwarted in their plan of assassination.

Wheeling at the front door, The Shadow faced other enemies. These were the hoodlums; their cowed manner had ended when the fight began. They were yanking revolvers; Weasel was one of the first to produce a gun.

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This time, however, The Shadow had the edge.

The cloaked warrior jabbed bullets from a lone gun, the one in his right hand. Those shots were sufficient. Some of the riffraff were unarmed; they dived for the rear doorway and the stampede seized others who remained. Two cutthroats withered before The Shadow's rapid fire, sending wild shots in return. Weasel was almost alone; he saw the mad dash and joined it. The inner end of the room was cleared.

Guzzler had dropped behind the bar; he was trying to gain nerve enough to pop up and grip a light switch on the wall. As he made such an attempt, the proprietor saw the reason why The Shadow had used a single gun against the hoodlums.

The Shadow was twisting back into the outer doorway, to be ready for the tuxedoed sharpshooters, who were entrenched behind corner tables that they had overturned. They were to The Shadow's right; hence he had saved the shells in his left-hand gun. He planned to use the doorway as a shield, reaching past the edge to dispatch left-handed shots.

THE SHADOW had gained a marked advantage. He lost it as he performed his final maneuver. Guzzler, peering over the bar, saw The Shadow crumple and pitch inward. No bullet had clipped him. Guzzler could not understand the cause.

It was simply that his left leg had failed him. The strain of his twist had been too great.

The tuxedoed foemen saw The Shadow sprawl. They leaped forward, delivering triumphant oaths. Men of their ilk were the ones who had drilled Dynoth at his window. They saw a chance to finish The Shadow. They spattered bullets just as The Shadow managed a diving crawl into the doorway. Shouting, the intended killers leaped to the center of the room.

Shots spoke suddenly from the outer steps. A new fighter had come from the alleyway, to side with The Shadow. The first of the tuxedoed trio staggered and dropped his revolver. He clutched a wounded wrist.

Propped against the steps, The Shadow aimed along with the man who had brought the timely aid. Three tuxedoed killers were caught flatfooted; one weaponless. The fourth already had been eliminated; his pals were ready for a final sprawl.

At that instant, Guzzler grabbed the light switch.

Darkness filled the dive. Women's screams replaced the bark of guns. The two unscathed revolver-bearers grabbed their wounded companion and rushed him out through the rear door, taking the path that Weasel had previously followed. The Shadow boomed blind shots; so did the man beside him. Darkness served the fleeing foemen. Their footsteps echoed from the rear exit.

The Shadow could not follow. Coming to his feet, he found his left leg barely capable of supporting his weight. He swayed; he was caught by the man beside him.

The timely arrival was Cliff Marsland, a sharp-shooting agent who was always ready in this district. Burbank had received Moe's call. He had relayed quick orders to Cliff, who had been at a usual post. Cliff had headed for Guzzler's to be at The Shadow's beck. Hearing gunfire, he had chosen the quickest mode of entry.

The Shadow gave an order. Cliff aided him to the alleyway. From the street beyond, they heard the clatter of a patrolman's nightstick, beating against the sidewalk. Shrill whistles came from the distance. Leaning heavily on Cliff, The Shadow made the end of the alley.

THE YELLOW DOOR

Lights blinked from a taxi. Moe's cab had returned. The Shadow boarded it, with Cliff close after him. A patrolman began a wild revolver fire from somewhere along the street. Moe jammed the cab in gear. The taxi wheeled away with whippet speed.

Weasel Hacklin had evaded capture. So had three assassins, placed to cover him. The Shadow saw the connection; but he knew that he had managed to conceal the purpose that had brought him to Guzzler's Joint. By cowing hoodlums in bulk, he had not revealed the fact that he wanted to capture Weasel alone.

Enemies would not guess that The Shadow had gained a lead to Ferris Krode. Hawkeye's watch upon the Barwick Apartments could still produce results.

The Shadow knew.

CHAPTER VIII. FACTS TO THE LAW

It was the next afternoon. Newspapers had told their story of a battle near the Bowery. The police had gained no clue to the identity of a tuxedo-clad assassin found on the field of fray. The law did not link the fight at Guzzler's with anything that might concern Ferris Krode.

The Shadow had sent data to Harry Vincent, in Cleveland, posting him upon all that had occurred. Hawkeye was again on duty opposite the Barwick Apartments. He had a description of Krode, gleaned from Harry's Cleveland reports; but Hawkeye had seen no one who looked like the wanted man.

To Vic Marquette, all trails seemed barren. The leader of the G-men was pondering over incomplete reports concerning Gildare and Dynoth. Vic's temporary headquarters consisted of a modest suite in a medium-priced hotel; and he was there with another operative when the unexpected came.

News was preceded by a ringing of the telephone bell. Vic's subordinate answered; then announced that Acting Inspector Cardona was in the downstairs lobby.

"Joe Cardona!" exclaimed Marquette. "He's Weston's ace. I thought he was out of town."

"He mentioned that he had just returned," supplied the operative. "He says he wants to bring some fellow up with him."

"Tell him to come along."

A few minutes later, there was a knock at the door. The subordinate answered it, to admit a stocky, swarthy-faced man whose features had a businesslike mold. Marquette greeted Cardona; but he stared puzzled when he saw the inspector's companion.

Cardona had brought a man who looked like a hoodlum – a rowdy whose face was unshaven, whose eyes were bleary. The man had a sneaky, furtive look, his clothes, frayed and baggy, did not help his appearance. Marquette noted particularly that the man was wearing a grimy, ragged sweater.

The Shadow would have recognized the derelict. Cardona's companion was Weasel Hacklin.

"Get over there," ordered Cardona, motioning Weasel to a chair by the window. Weasel obeyed the gruff command. Then, to Marquette, Joe added: "The commissioner left word for me to see you when I returned. I found his message at my office; it had full details of the case. I found that there, too."

THE YELLOW DOOR

By the emphasized "that," Cardona meant Weasel. He indicated the sneak as he spoke. Weasel framed a sickly grin.

"Who is he?" queried Marquette.

"Weasel Hacklin," replied Cardona. "Kind of a go-between. He has something to spill. He sneaked into my office along with a stool pigeon and waited there for me. He knows about Krode."

MARQUETTE snapped into action. He turned toward Weasel; then paused to question of Cardona:

"It's all right for me to quiz him?"

"Sure," replied the ace detective. "That's what I brought him here for."

Marquette approached Weasel. The go-between squirmed; before Vic could speak, Weasel put a plea.

"You ain't going to tell nobody?" he panted. "If I squawk, you ain't going to –"

"We'll look out for you," interposed Marquette. "Tell us what you know about Krode."

"It ain't much," remarked Weasel, "but it may count a lot. There's other guys mixed in it."

"Tell us about all of them."

"Right from the start?"

"Yes. Give us the whole story."

Weasel needed no more prompting. He fished in his pockets for a cigarette. Marquette supplied one; Weasel received it with a grimy hand. He had a match of his own.

"I ain't done nothing," began Weasel. "I ain't in on the racket. I'm telling you straight. The only reason I'm blabbing is because I ain't in deep. See?"

Marquette nodded. Weasel inhaled nervously; then resumed.

"Joe's right," he admitted. "I been a go-between for a lot of big-shots. That's how I got this new job. It come from a guy I never met before. He said his name was Bracy; and he mentioned a lot of guys I knowed. I ain't never seen him since.

"Here was the gag. I go to a post office over in Hoboken. I get a letter, general delivery. It's got dough in it; but I ain't to flash the mazuma. I'm to look like I was broke all the time. Along with the dough, there's envelopes with names and addresses on 'em. I'm to deliver 'em, kind of in person."

A pause. Weasel then added:

"One was to James Dynoth, over in Fanfield, New Jersey."

Marquette stared. Weasel saw his amazement and nodded emphatically.

"Yeah," he affirmed, "to Dynoth! It was more'n a week ago I took the envelope to him."

THE YELLOW DOOR

Marquette grunted for Weasel to proceed.

"There was another envelope, to a guy named Luke Saschew. He's got sort of a studio, down in Greenwich Village. Looks like he was an artist. Then there was an envelope to Ferris Krode."

"Where does he live?" demanded Marquette.

"At the Barwick Apartments," returned Weasel. "But he ain't there now. I think he took it on the lam."

Cardona was jotting down the name of Krode's apartment house. Weasel added:

"It's Apartment 4 H."

Cardona made the notation. Marquette motioned for Weasel to proceed.

"THERE was some screwy things about the job," Weasel explained. "First, there was one thing I had to say, any time I seen a guy. That was on account of there being other messengers."

"Other messengers?" demanded Marquette. "How did you know that?"

"Bracy told me, when he give me the password."

"The password?"

"Yeah. The thing I had to say. Only it wasn't just one word. What I says was: 'The Yellow Door'; and when I says that, it made it jake."

"The Yellow Door," mused Marquette. He saw Cardona write the words in a note book. "All right, Weasel. Let's hear some more."

"Here was something else," declared the squealer. "I took two notes to Krode, at different times, see? One day he told me to wait. He went into another room, in that apartment of his. I heard him hitting something off on a typewriter."

"And after that?"

"He keeps me waiting around about two hours, reading a bunch of books and magazines. Looked like he was waiting for some guy who didn't show up. Then he says he's ready to give me an answer. He walks into the other room, with me following. He picks a paper off of the window sill and looks at it, like this."

Weasel made a gesture as if picking up a sheet of paper.

"What was it?" questioned Marquette. "The message that you had brought to him?"

"That's what I figured it was," replied Weasel. "Only I didn't lamp what was on it. All I know is, it was kind of curlylike, from being in the sun. And the paper wasn't white. It was red."

As Weasel paused, Marquette turned to Cardona.

"Note that down," suggested the G-man. "Krode gets messages on red paper." Then, to Weasel: "Could you tell the shade of red?"

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"Sure," nodded Weasel, "if you showed me some hunks of red paper. This one was sort of like pink."

"We'll test you later. What else did Krode do?"

"He sits at the typewriter," explained Weasel. "It's got funny kinds of pads on the letters."

"Key-caps?"

"I guess that's what you'd call them. Then he says he's sending a message back by me. I says I don't know where to take it. Krode looks kind of surprised; then laughs. Says he wouldn't have kept me waiting around if he'd knowed. Tells me to beat it. So I scrambled."

"Some other messenger," observed Marquette. "Yes, that fits. Unless he mailed the reply somewhere. We'll talk about that later. Let's hear what else you know, Weasel."

WEASEL was nervous as he extinguished his cigarette butt against the window sill. He moistened his roughened lips; then spoke hoarsely, in a tone that showed real fear.

"It looked soft, see? Hopping over to Hoboken and getting them letters. There was a hundred bucks every time. Always a century note. Only" – he paused and shook his head in worryment – "there wasn't a letter every time I went; and I was jittery when I goed over there yesterday."

"Why?" demanded Marquette. "Had anything happened?"

"Plenty!" returned Weasel. "Dynoth had been rubbed out, hadn't he? Why do ya think they blowed up that house of his? To get rid of him, that's why! He was on the inside; he knowed all about the Yellow Door; but he was bumped.

"I was reading about it in the papers, the day before. Wondering why Dynoth had got his. I found a letter for me, general delivery, in Hoboken. There was a note for me, along with the century spot. It says this was to be the last."

"I get it," acknowledged Marquette. "You figured they were through with you."

Weasel nodded.

"There wasn't nothing in the letter to give me the willies, though," he declared. "It had an envelope that I was to deliver to Saschew, down in the Village. Then I was to go to the Barwick and yank Krode's name outta the board. That being done, I was to head for Guzzler's Joint and stick there half an hour. After that, I'd be washed up.

"I never blabbed on nobody, so I didn't figure these Yellow Door guys was going to put me on the spot. Just the same, I wasn't taking chances. I wanted to know more about the deal, so I got fooling with that envelope that was addressed to Saschew. It come open, easy.

"I seen the note that was in it. It was done on a typewriter, all in big letters; but the paper wasn't red like Krode's. It was blue."

WEASEL paused, while Cardona made the notation that Saschew received message on blue paper. Then Weasel pulled a torn edge of newspaper from his pocket and handed it to Marquette. Weasel pointed to crudely penciled letters.

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"There's what was on it. I copied it off of the blue note, before I stuck it back in the envelope."

Vic scanned Weasel's copy. He saw these coded words:

QVQOZ FTV DTLTTFUTK

Marquette passed the penciled slip to Cardona; then looked toward Weasel and inquired:

"You gave the envelope to Saschew?"

"Yeah," returned Weasel. "I says to him: 'The Yellow Door,' and he takes the envelope. Then I hops over to Krode's and yanks his card off of the name board. Here it is."

Weasel produced the evidence and handed it to Marquette. Continuing, the informant stated:

"I rides down on the el and gets to Guzzler's. I'm wise to why I'm sent there. So's somebody can lamp me and see I ain't being traileed. I'm in there pretty near ten minutes, see? It's all jake; then something happens."

"The fight began," inserted Cardona, to Marquette. "Guzzler says The Shadow moved in there. But that's what Guzzler would have said, anyhow."

"It was The Shadow," corroborated Weasel, solemnly. "He come in and lined up all the regulars that was in the joint. We was all moving out peaceful until a bunch of stuffed-shirt mugs yanks their gats and opens up on The Shadow."

"Guzzler testified the same," acknowledged Cardona, "but we weren't ready to believe him."

"What's your opinion, Weasel? Were those fellows in tuxedoes the cover-up crew?"

Weasel nodded.

"It was some of them mugs," he affirmed, "that must have blowed up Dynoth. Honest, Joe, these guys that know about the Yellow Door ain't staging no regular racket. They ain't depending on gorillas. That's why I was steered to Guzzler's."

"It was the only joint in town where some high hat torpedoes could be planted. I knowed it as soon as I'd scammed. I been laying low in a hideout, ever since then. I been scairt! Plenty scairt!"

"Suppose these dudes think I put the jinx on their racket? They'd bump me quick, like they did Dynoth. That's why I got hold of Pete Cowdy, that I knowed was a stoolie, and had him sneak me into your office, Joe. You was the only guy I could talk to. I had to blab. I ain't in on the Yellow Door racket. I don't owe them guys nothing –"

"WE understand," interrupted Marquette. He turned to the G-man by the door: "Cuyler, get out and buy some sheets of colored paper, red and blue. We're going to let Weasel pick out the right shades."

"Dynoth probably received some other color of paper; that doesn't matter, because he's dead. We'll start decoding that message. When we crack it, we can frame up two messages of our own. One for Krode, on red paper; the other for Saschew, on blue."

Weasel looked uneasy, but said nothing.

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"We'll wait until dusk," decided Marquette. "Then we can check up on Krode and Saschew."

"How about detailing men to cover their places?" queried Cardona. "It would be easy enough to trap them."

"That won't do." Marquette shook his head. "We're already counting on Krode paying another visit to Dudley Birkklam, so that he can start a shake-down. We don't want to queer that stunt."

"So we won't let Krode or Saschew know they're being watched. If we can crack that code, we'll be able to send them dummy messages. If we work it right, we may get a lead to the other members of the band. This is a nationwide game, Cardona. Thurlon, in California, was in it; so was Dynoth; also this fellow Bracy, who hired Weasel to act as messenger."

Marquette paused. He added:

"We'll start at once on the code. Meanwhile, we'll keep Weasel here. As soon as Cuyler gets back with those sample papers, Weasel can choose the ones he wants. If everything pans out, we can make a smooth move tonight."

There was confidence in Marquette's statement. The law had gained facts. Weasel had brought important clues to aid in solving the mystery of the Yellow Door. Weasel's unexpected entry had given the law facts that The Shadow had not gained.

The situation was one that promised large results. It also offered possibilities for mistakes that neither Marquette nor Cardona foresaw. There was one factor that had slipped both investigators.

Only The Shadow could have recognized the danger.

CHAPTER IX. THE SHADOW'S BARGAIN

"MR. CRANSTON has arrived, sir."

Commissioner Weston arose from his chair in the lounge room of the Cobalt Club. He glanced at his watch; it showed eight o'clock. Cranston was punctual.

Descending to the grillroom, Weston found his friend seated at a table. Weston joined him and immediately opened conversation.

"Last night, Cranston," declared the commissioner, "I told you that I would keep you posted upon any matters that concerned the expected threat against Dudley Birkklam."

The Shadow nodded.

"Something has occurred," resumed Weston. "It concerns this."

He produced a slip of paper upon which were typed the three cryptic words:

QVQOZ FTV DTLTTFUTK

"A code message," explained Weston. "Apparently a simple cryptogram, yet one that defies solution, for a very definite reason."

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"I understand," returned The Shadow. "There are not enough words in the message."

"Precisely," stated Weston. "The experts agree upon that point. Only a shrewd bit of deduction can give us the proper clue. I thought that perhaps you could produce a suggestion."

"Possibly I can," remarked The Shadow, in Cranston's easy tone, "if you give me all the details that concern this particular message."

Weston pondered; then shook his head.

"I am not quite at liberty to do so," he expressed – "unless I could be positive that such statements would aid you."

The Shadow eyed the commissioner keenly; then spoke:

"Suppose I should provide the key to this code. Would you then feel at liberty to speak?"

Weston saw subtlety in the query. He fancied that his friend had struck some thought that concerned the code message.

"Yes," decided the commissioner. "I am prepared to bargain with you, Cranston. If you can guess the meaning of that message, I shall be justified in giving you the details concerning how it came into my possession."

"Very well."

THE SHADOW began a visual study of the message. A smile fixed itself upon his thin, masklike lips. The smile was so faint that Weston did not perceive it. A few minutes passed; then The Shadow questioned:

"This is the original message?"

The Shadow expected the negative headshake that Weston delivered.

"It is only a copy," stated the commissioner.

"Can you tell me," queried The Shadow, "if the original was typewritten?"

"It was," acknowledged Weston.

"And the machine," pursued The Shadow – "did it possess any peculiarity?"

"We know nothing about the typewriter."

"Unfortunate," remarked The Shadow. "Any fact concerning the typewriter might aid me."

The Shadow had already translated the message. He was merely leading Weston along a course that would make explanations simpler. The commissioner took the bait.

"There was a typewriter," he declared, "upon which a message was decoded; but our informant did not see the message on that occasion."

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"Was the typewriter a portable?"

"I do not know. Odd, that we should have forgotten to query our informant. Let me see – do portables frequently have rubber key–caps? Or are those used only by persons who type on large machines?"

"Key–caps go on any typewriter. What made you think of key–caps?"

"The machine in question was provided with them."

The Shadow showed a prompt smile, as he drew a sheet of paper from his pocket. Weston stared, eagerly. He queried:

"You have deducted something?"

"Yes," replied The Shadow, "from your mention of key–caps. Let me visualize something, commissioner. Please do not disturb me for the next few minutes."

CLOSING his eyes, The Shadow began to write letters in rows on the sheet of paper. He finished his task, opened his eyes and passed the paper to Weston. The commissioner recognized the rows of letters which read:

Q W E R T Y U I O P

A S D F G H J K L

Z X C V B N M

"The keyboard of a typewriter!" exclaimed Weston. "You visualized it, I suppose. You must use a typewriter often, Cranston?"

"Quite frequently, commissioner. When one mentions letters on a typewriter, a person naturally thinks of the odd arrangement of the standard keyboard."

"Of course. But how does that apply?"

"Let me ask you a question, commissioner. What other arrangement of letters would occur to any one?"

"The alphabetical order."

"Certainly. Here."

The Shadow took the paper and inscribed:

A B C D E F G H I J

K L M N O P Q R S

T U V W X Y Z

"Here may be our code," announced The Shadow. "One so simple that it could not be forgotten; for it would never have to be remembered. A typewritten message, decoded upon a machine that had key–caps, gives us

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an excellent beginning commissioner."

"You mean that the key-caps were arranged in alphabetical order?"

"Yes – by the person who sent the message. But not by the recipient."

"Why not?"

"Because his problem was to decode. He used another obvious plan. He simply compared the keyboard with the alphabetical arrangement and put letters in reverse. For instance: he put the Q key-cap on the key that bore the letter A; W on B; E on C. He continued with that process. Thus his transformed keyboard began with J as the upper left letter."

"J on the real Q?"

"Yes. Because J on the standard keyboard has the position of Q in the alphabetical arrangement. It is quite simple, commissioner. Observe."

The Shadow proceeded with new rows of letters. Completed, they showed as follows:

J V T K Z N X O G H

Q L R Y U I P A S

M B E C W F D

"With the key-caps," explained The Shadow, "this process would prove automatic. The user would simply arrange them like the keyboard. Picking them up in the order Q, W, E, R and so on, he would call them A, B, C, D and continue through the alphabet."

"I see," nodded Weston. "Putting each key on the actual letter that he named aloud. Very ingenious, Cranston; but I still cannot see how you guessed it. Nor can I be sure that this is the correct system."

"Why should typewritten messages be used?" queried The Shadow, "with key-caps ready at the other end? Only because they aided with the code."

"Any one might typewrite a coded message," objected Weston.

"Certainly," agreed The Shadow, "but no one would ordinarily use a typewriter to decode a message. However, commissioner, we have a simple test. Let us apply the system to the coded message that you showed me."

Checking the three words of the message, The Shadow produced the result:

QVQOZ FTV DTLTFTFK

AWAIT NEW MESSENGER

"Quite simple," expressed The Shadow. "Merely find each letter on the standard keyboard chart. Look for the letter in the same position on the alphabetical chart. Transcribe and you have it. If working with a typewriter, you can decode by arranging the keycaps according to the odd chart that began with J, V, T."

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"Then," questioned Weston, eagerly, "to send a message, one would only have to cap the keys in alphabetical order?"

The Shadow nodded.

"Jove!" exclaimed Weston. "You have struck it! This is marvelous, Cranston! If –"

The commissioner stopped as an attendant approached. Someone was on the telephone, to talk with Mr. Cranston. The Shadow arose, with the remark:

"Remember our bargain, commissioner."

THE call was from Burbank. Hawkeye had reported. He had seen Krode arrive at the Barwick Apartments. The Shadow gave instructions. Cliff and Moe were to cover; to act if emergencies arose before The Shadow's arrival. That would be within the next half hour.

The Shadow waited a few minutes for a return call from Burbank. Word came that Cliff had been contacted.

The Shadow went back to the grillroom. Weston was chuckling over the deciphered code. The Shadow sat down and repeated the reminder:

"Our bargain?"

"Ah, yes!" Weston produced a folded paper. "Here is Cardona's full report. It concerns an informant named Weasel Hacklin. Read it, Cranston, at your leisure."

The Shadow perused the report. It covered the statements that Weasel had made at Marquette's. Completing a study of each detail, The Shadow passed the sheets back to Weston.

"I have an appointment," he remarked, rising from the table. "But tell me, commissioner, what do you intend to do about this matter?"

"We shall type two simple messages," stated Weston. "One to Krode, on red paper. The other to Saschew, on blue."

"And then?"

"Weasel will deliver the red message to Krode. Since Saschew expects a new messenger, Marquette will carry the blue note to him. Both messages will be in code. Marquette, like Weasel, will introduce himself with the words: 'The Yellow Door.'"

The Shadow paused, to shake his head.

"The messages will be simple," explained Weston. "They will say to instruct the messenger where to take a reply. Thus both Krode and Saschew will betray the information that we want, facts concerning others in the game –"

"That will not do," interposed The Shadow. "Refrain from any action, commissioner, until I return from my appointment. I shall have a better plan to offer."

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"Too late, Cranston," chuckled Weston. "When you went to answer your telephone call, I decided to make a call of my own. I called Marquette's hotel. Cardona was there with Marquette; and so was their informant, Weasel. I gave them the code. They have already prepared the messages.

"By this time" – Weston glanced at his watch – "both Weasel and Marquette are en route to their respective destinations; to see Krode and Saschew separately. Weasel has a sealed envelope containing a red paper message. Marquette has one containing a blue paper message."

The Shadow had become motionless. His eyes took on a serious glitter. Before Weston noticed the change that had come over his friend Cranston, The Shadow relaxed.

"My appointment," he reminded. "I shall see you later, commissioner."

THE SHADOW strolled away. His pace quickened when he reached the lobby. Outside, he gestured rapidly to Stanley. The limousine wheeled from across the street. Entering, The Shadow gave a quick, decisive order.

Stanley knew that his master wanted speed to the destination. The chauffeur shot the big car forward. Within the rear seat, The Shadow seized a satchel and whipped out garments of black. His cloak settled over his shoulders; automatics clicked as he whisked them beneath the dark folds of cloth.

A fierce, bitter laugh pervaded the interior of the limousine. The Shadow had fared badly in his bargain with Weston. He had not anticipated that the commissioner would pass along the information until after further conference.

There were more factors to those messages than the mere mention of a password and the delivery of notes in proper code. One factor, in particular, that The Shadow had suspected but had not mentioned. In prematurely giving the code to Cardona and Marquette, Commissioner Weston had loosed a boomerang.

Danger threatened the messengers who were calling upon Krode and Saschew. Only The Shadow had divined the reason. He had struck upon it through Cardona's report, which fitted with a fact that had come from Harry Vincent.

The Shadow had agents, prepared for emergency. He, personally, was on his way to serve in time of need. Speed was essential to meet the menace which existed.

Only The Shadow could offset the error that the law had made.

CHAPTER X. DEATH STRIKES TWICE

AT the very moment of The Shadow's departure from the Cobalt Club, Hawkeye saw motion at the entry of the Barwick Apartments. He watched; he recognized the slinking figure that came into view. It was Weasel Hacklin.

Hawkeye guessed that Weasel was on his way to visit Ferris Krode. Lights were shining from Krode's fourth-floor apartment. Weasel pressed a call button; there must have been a response, for he pushed the apartment house door and entered.

Two minutes later, a cab rolled past Hawkeye's lookout window. Hawkeye saw it swing at the next corner. It was Moe's taxi, with Cliff aboard. Emergency orders were in operation. There was a back way into the Barwick, one that Cliff would use.

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WHEN Weasel reached the fourth floor, he was clear of all observation. Shaved, supplied with a new sweater, Weasel looked more presentable than before; but he was still the skulker that he was supposed to be. Nevertheless, Weasel had recovered from his jitters. His face showed a satisfied grin as he rapped at the door of Apartment 4 H. Weasel was confident; he was working with the law.

He had good reason for satisfaction. Weasel was a rat by nature. He had perpetrated crimes in the past; and murder had been on his calendar. The law had not uncovered his buried crimes. By squaring himself with the authorities, Weasel had believed that he could completely guarantee his future. That was why he had consented to act as messenger again, bearing a faked note to Ferris Krode.

The door opened. Krode stood within. He saw Weasel and motioned him into the apartment. When Krode closed the door, Weasel delivered the usual passwords:

"The Yellow Door."

Krode nodded methodically. He took the envelope that Weasel passed him and motioned the sneak to a chair. Krode stepped into the next room. Weasel heard the click of a typewriter. After that, a pause.

Soon, Krode appeared from the next room. He sauntered out, hands in his pockets, and eyed Weasel casually. A smile produced itself on Krode's lips. Weasel sat untroubled; he had seen that twisted leer before. It was Krode's mode of expressing satisfaction.

"Come in the other room," suggested Krode. "I have something important to tell you."

Weasel nodded as he arose. He walked past Krode toward the inner room. He was at the doorway when a sudden suspicion made him stop and turn around. Weasel saw what was coming; but he spied it too late.

Krode had whipped one hand from his coat pocket. In that hand he had a revolver. As Weasel started a hoarse scream, Krode fired point-blank. Five shots boomed in quick succession, the stream of bullets riddled Weasel's rooted frame.

Without a gasp, the sneaky go-between collapsed upon the floor.

HOLDING his revolver, Krode broadened his evil grin. Stepping over Weasel's body, he seized a small package that lay on a table in the inner room. With quick step, Krode headed for the doorway to the hall.

Hearing a sound beyond the door, the killer paused. He waited for a few seconds, then yanked the door open and sprang out into the hall. His move was a smart one. Krode was in time to spy a man peering from a corner by the elevator.

It was Cliff Marsland. The Shadow's agent had arrived just after Krode's shots. From the hall, Cliff had heard Krode's approach. He had backed toward the corner, to await the killer. Krode's yank of the door had come just as Cliff ducked from sight and looked back.

Krode fired. His single bullet tore plaster from the corner of the wall. Cliff dropped from sight, not knowing that Krode had fired the only bullet left in his gun. Krode knew his own predicament. He made a sudden dart in the opposite direction. Cliff heard the man's footsteps and bounded into view just as Krode took to a fire tower.

Cliff pursued. Dashing down the tower, he roared shots every time he glimpsed Krode. Weasel's murderer had gained too good a start. He reached the ground and sped through a cement passageway to the rear street.

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When Cliff reached the next thoroughfare, he saw Krode leaping aboard a taxi, flourishing his empty revolver in front of a scared driver's face.

Cliff's shots did not stay the cab as it sped for a corner. The range was too great. Krode had made his get-away.

Cliff gained satisfaction, however, when he saw another cab wheel out from the corner and shoot away close behind the fleeing taxi. Moe was taking up the trail. Cliff's cue was to depart from this vicinity. He did so in a hurry; and with good reason.

Already, whistles were blaring from the front street. Whining sirens answered from a radio patrol. Joe Cardona had followed Weasel close to the Barwick Apartments. The ace had heard the first muffled shots; then the later bursts of Cliff's gunplay on the fire tower.

FOUR minutes later, Cardona stood viewing Weasel's outstretched body. Joe felt no regret over Weasel's demise. He had guessed that the sneak had cooperated with the law only to avoid penalty for a thuggish past. What concerned Cardona was why Weasel had been killed. The ace entered the inner room in hope of finding the explanation.

There, Cardona saw a suitcase; also a portable typewriter that Krode had left behind him in his dash. Key-caps were missing; so were other items, such as the red paper message and its decoded copy.

Cardona stood puzzled. He could not understand what had gone wrong. Nevertheless, he was seized with sudden alarm, brought by the knowledge that something was not right. Cardona hastened to a telephone in the outer room. He called Marquette's hotel and was connected with the G-man's suite. Cuyler answered. Cardona was quick with his query:

"Is Marquette there?"

"Who's calling?"

"Joe Cardona."

Cuyler recognized the voice when Joe gave his name. He answered:

"Vic's gone. To Saschew's."

Cardona hung up. For a moment, he was stunned. He had hoped to forestall Marquette from the trip. Calculating the distance from Marquette's hotel to Greenwich Village, he realized that the government man must be there by this time.

In vain hope of preventing another murder, Cardona sped a call to headquarters. He had realized that some menace hovered over any person who might carry a false message to those who held the secret of the Yellow Door.

TIMED almost to the exact minute of Cardona's headquarters call, Vic Marquette had entered a studio building in Greenwich Village. Ascending wide, bare stairs, Marquette stopped in front of a broad door where he saw the neatly painted sign:

LUKE SASCHEW

THE YELLOW DOOR

Studio

Marquette rapped. He waited a half minute, then knocked again. The door opened; a tall, big-chested man stared from within the studio. The man looked like an artist, for he was attired in smock and beret; but his mustached face was a hardened one.

"Mr. Saschew?" inquired Marquette.

The artist nodded. He motioned Vic into the studio and closed the door. Saschew was holding brush and palette; he went back to a half-finished portrait that stood on an easel in the corner. About to proceed with his painting, he paused. Eyeing the portrait as he spoke, he questioned:

"Why did you wish to see me?"

In a low tone, Marquette responded:

"The Yellow Door."

Saschew laid aside his brush and palette. He reached out his hand; Marquette produced the envelope. About to tear it open, Saschew questioned:

"You came here earlier?"

Marquette replied in the negative.

"I was not here," remarked Saschew. "I had not expected you until tomorrow. There was no reason to count upon an early message."

Saschew drew the blue sheet of paper from the envelope. He unfolded it, glanced at the typewritten lines; then motioned to a chair. Marquette sat down. Saschew walked behind a screen, in a corner of the room.

Marquette listened intently; soon he heard the click of a typewriter. He guessed that Saschew had put key-caps on the machine, to decode the message. Half a minute passed; Marquette heard a trickling sound, which reminded him of liquid pouring from a bottle.

Another interval; the typewriter clicked again. Saschew reappeared, carrying a sealed envelope. He passed it to Marquette; in a confidential tone, he stated:

"Take this message. I shall tell you where. When you leave here –"

Saschew stopped. He had wagged his left hand toward the door, while his right was pressed against Marquette's shoulder. That pressure had lessened; noting Saschew's face, Marquette gained a sudden inkling of danger. He sprang away; as he turned about, he saw a leveled revolver in Saschew's right hand. The artist had pulled the weapon from his smock; he had been about to jab the muzzle against Vic's ribs.

MARQUETTE had no chance to draw a weapon of his own. With a violent surge, he drove squarely upon Saschew and sent the artist back against the wall.

Saschew lost his aim; for a moment, the odds were even. Then the artist clutched Marquette's throat with his big left hand. More powerful than the G-man, he bent Vic backward toward the floor.

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Gasping, Marquette lost his grip. Saschew, snarling, hunched his huge shoulders upward and jammed his revolver straight down between Marquette's eyes.

Another instant and Vic Marquette would have suffered the same fate as Weasel Hacklin. Here, in this secluded studio, Saschew was about to prove himself as evil a murderer as Krode. On this occasion, however, the intended killer was to be cheated of his victim.

The door of the studio swung inward. Before Saschew could either finish Marquette or drop him to meet a new invader, an automatic blasted from the door. A zinging bullet found the one spot that surely prevented the deed of murder. It lodged in Saschew's heart.

A faltering hand dropped its revolver. Fingers loosened from Vic Marquette's throat. Stepping free as Saschew's body thudded the floor, Marquette managed to stop his choking and look to see his rescuer. He stared in profound amazement.

The Shadow had entered the studio. Clad in black, his eyes ablaze, the master sleuth had arrived in time. The Shadow had not gone to Krode's; he had left that work to his agents. Weasel's life had been unimportant; Marquette's had been of consequence.

One timely bullet from a straight-aimed .45 had curtailed the vicious work of Luke Saschew. Another adherent of the Yellow Door had received a deserved fate.

The Shadow saw the screen in the corner. He strode to it and hauled the screen aside. He beckoned to Marquette; when the G-man arrived, The Shadow pointed to a wash basin, wherein lay Vic's blue paper message. There was liquid in the basin; it had come from a small bottle that was standing by a spigot.

The Shadow whispered a laugh of understanding; then turned the spigot. Water filled the basin. The Shadow stopped the flow; peeling a glove from one hand, he removed the stopper and drew out the soaked blue paper. He wadded it and tossed it in a basket. About to speak to Marquette, he paused. The Shadow had heard a clatter from the stairs.

"Men from headquarters," he informed Marquette. "Say nothing. Await my arrival at your hotel."

There was a low skylight in a slanted, darkened corner of the studio. The Shadow moved swiftly in that direction. He opened the skylight and gained the darkness of the roof. He was gone when the first of the rescue squad arrived.

The Shadow had departed, leaving Vic Marquette to take credit for the elimination of a would-be murderer.

CHAPTER XI. THE NEXT TEST

TWENTY-FOUR hours had passed since The Shadow had checked the second step in double doom. The law had gained no trail to Ferris Krode; nor had any clues been found at Luke Saschew's. The police had learned only that Saschew, while a mere dabbler in art, had possessed some excellent social contacts. That marked him as a man who could have been used in schemes involving the seizure of wealth.

Cardona had arrived at the studio to investigate with Marquette. They had found the wadded blue paper in the wastebasket. Cardona had wondered why it was water-soaked; Marquette had offered no explanation. The Shadow had taken the little bottle from which the paper had first been moistened.

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Coolly, Marquette had taken credit for victory in the fight with Saschew. The G-man understood that The Shadow had reason for keeping free of the matter. It was better that those who backed the cause of the Yellow Door should remain in ignorance of The Shadow's definite entry into the case.

Marquette had expected to hear from The Shadow. No contact had been made. Tonight, Marquette had an appointment at Dudley Birkklam's. He went to it alone, leaving Cuyler at the hotel to forward word of any calls.

When he reached Birkklam's, Marquette was not surprised to find both Commissioner Weston and Inspector Cardona. Nor was he puzzled by the presence of Lamont Cranston. Marquette knew the part that the commissioner's friend had played in the solution of the code.

Detail by detail, Commissioner Weston was recounting all that had occurred, in so far as he knew the facts. The story began with Weasel Hacklin's confession. It followed with Cranston's solution of the code. Then came the account of the messages; how they had missed fire.

"No one saw Weasel die," Weston told Birkklam. "We thought that it was safe to send him there alone. Marquette went alone, also. Fortunately, he was able to cope with Saschew, while Weasel failed against Krode."

"Too bad," observed Birkklam, in a discouraged tone. "It would have served us well could we have captured Krode. He appears to be the brain in all these schemes."

"If I had nabbed Saschew," put in Marquette, in a rueful tone, "it would have helped. But there was only one way to handle Saschew. That was to get him before he could get me."

Nods of agreement. Cardona changed the subject.

"What I'd like to know," growled the ace, "is how those messages happened to go sour. Krode knew Weasel and should have accepted him."

"Not necessarily," inserted Weston. "Mr. Birkklam has given us the answer. Weasel had received orders to act as a messenger no longer. If Krode is the big-shot behind the Yellow Door, he would naturally have known that something was up as soon as Weasel appeared."

"An excellent deduction, commissioner!" exclaimed Birkklam. "One that escaped me completely when I expressed the thought that Krode must be the master brain."

"That would cover it," conceded Cardona, "but only so far as Weasel was concerned. Let's figure that Krode was playing it smart. Sending messages for delivery that Weasel picked up and including himself as one of the persons, just so he could check. But how does that cover Marquette's case? We know that Saschew expected a new messenger; yet he tried to shoot Marquette. Why?"

"MAYBE it was the message," suggested Marquette. "I heard Saschew decode it. He didn't make trouble until after he knew what it was about."

"I think the message would have passed muster," declared Weston. "To my mind, it is more likely that Weasel made a slip. He should have sent the blue message to Krode; and the red one to Saschew."

"Weasel wouldn't have slipped on that," objected Cardona. "He was too sure of himself."

THE YELLOW DOOR

"Saschew accepted the blue message," reminded Marquette. "It wasn't until after he had gone behind the screen that he suspected something wrong."

The Shadow spoke for the first time.

"Let us consider another factor," he remarked. "I refer to the shades of the colored papers. As I understand it, Weasel merely chose the colors from memory."

"That's right," nodded Marquette.

"Scarcely a sure plan," added The Shadow, "especially if the recipients had previous messages in their possession. Saschew, in particular, could have made a comparison."

"A likely solution," agreed Birklam. "What do you think, commissioner?"

Before Weston could reply, Cardona remembered something.

"Saschew must have soaked that message in water," he argued. "We found it wadded and damp in the wastebasket."

The Shadow inserted an explanation.

"Perhaps the usual paper bore a watermark," he suggested. "Saschew could have placed the new message in the wash basin for final study."

"That answers it!" exclaimed Weston. "That was the test that Saschew used. Shall I tell you why?" He looked about triumphantly. "Because we found no other paper in Saschew's studio. He could not have made a comparison by shades."

Dudley Birklam smiled approvingly.

"These are true processes of deduction," he affirmed. "Step by step, you gentlemen have gained the logical answer. I congratulate all of you; but I voice one regret."

Weston looked quizzical. Birklam indicated The Shadow.

"Mr. Cranston should become a professional criminologist," he stated. "As a crime hunter, he ranks with the rest of you, commissioner."

"Thank you, Mr. Birklam," remarked The Shadow, with a quiet smile. "Let me return the compliment by adding that you have also aided in our efforts to reach the final answer to the problem."

Birklam smiled, highly pleased.

"Regarding the future," announced Marquette, abruptly, "we can no longer count upon a visit on the part of Krode. He will not come to see you, Mr. Birklam. He knows that the law is on his trail."

"Is it possible," asked Birklam, anxiously, "that he supposes me to be responsible for his present difficulties?"

"Quite possible," stated Marquette. "That is why you need a real guard here. I am stationing two of my men, in addition to your servants. Cardona will have four plain-clothes men available."

THE YELLOW DOOR

"That makes me a rather expensive taxpayer," said Birklam, with a nervous attempt at a laugh. "Do you think that it will enable you to apprehend Krode?"

"It will keep him away from here," returned Marquette, emphatically, "and that's all we want! We'll get Krode, wherever he is! He is a new public enemy! Tomorrow will mark the beginning of a nation-wide manhunt."

"You shall have our cooperation in New York," promised Weston. "We shall consider the case to be yours, Marquette."

"Thanks, commissioner. I'm taking the one step that is needed. We are dealing with a ring of swindlers, who have used murder as their bludgeon. When we throw light on this case, we'll hear from other persons like Mr. Birklam. Ones that Krode or some of his outfit intended to pluck."

Rising, Marquette added a final statement:

"Maybe we'll get another slant, too. We may get to the bottom of this business about the Yellow Door. There's more to that than just a password."

THE conference had ended. Visitors departed. Cardona accompanied Weston in the latter's car. The Shadow entered Cranston's limousine and Stanley drove the big car away. Marquette remained at the door of Birklam's residence long enough to give assurance to the shipping man, promising that the house would be well guarded. Vic finally boarded his coupe.

As he started the motor, the G-man thought that he heard a sound from the door on the right. He thought nothing more of it until he passed a street lamp. Glancing to the right, Vic was puzzled when blackness blotted his view. He thought the oddity was caused by something outside; he nearly lost his grip on the wheel when he heard a whispered voice speak close beside him.

The Shadow!

The master of the night had been outside of Birklam's, to enter Vic's car unseen and unheard. Marquette never once connected The Shadow's arrival with Cranston's departure. He did not guess that the occupant of the limousine had donned black garments and dropped off without his chauffeur's knowledge.

"I waited for you," gulped Vic. "At the hotel – all day. I thought that you would come there."

"There was a trail to follow," returned The Shadow, in a low, emphatic tone. "One that was begun last night. It was broken; then regained."

"A trail? To whom?"

"To Ferris Krode."

Marquette was too astounded to put another question.

"Krode was followed," explained The Shadow. "He went to a hotel, but checked out promptly. Today he was located at another hotel. He is stopping at the Catlin."

"Registered as Ferris Krode?"

"No. As Phillip Krull."

Marquette waited. He sensed new information. It came.

"I have prepared a new message," declared The Shadow. "It is one that Krode will receive without suspicion. It will serve as a vital test; it will bring about Krode's capture."

A pause; then The Shadow added:

"You will carry the message to Krode."

A gloved hand came from the darkness. Fumbling, Vic received an envelope that crinkled as he fingered it. Driving onward, staring steadily ahead, Marquette pondered on new dangers that might lie ahead. Memory jogged him. He recalled The Shadow's prowess at Saschew's.

Without a word, Marquette thrust the envelope into his inside pocket. He had reached an avenue. He pressed his foot hard upon the accelerator. He headed southward, speedily and with determination.

Suppressed tones of eerie mirth sounded within the coupe. The Shadow's laugh was one that voiced approval. The Shadow understood the G-man's purpose.

Vic Marquette was driving directly to the Catlin Hotel.

CHAPTER XII. DOUBLE CAPTURE

"MR. KRODE?"

Vic Marquette delivered the question in a cautious tone, as he stood in the hallway outside a door marked 518. Ferris Krode, in shirt sleeves, was quick to eye the questioner who rapped.

"You're mistaken," he replied. "My name is Krull. If you will go down to the desk, perhaps they can tell you about —"

"The Yellow Door."

Marquette gave the password in the same undertone that he had used before. Krode glanced along the hallway and motioned Vic into the room. Before he closed the door, Krode took another look outside.

He saw nothing that denoted the presence of any spy. There was a window, with a fire escape beyond it. That window was open, but Krode could see the glimmer of a metal rail. He went into the room and closed the door. His right hand half to his hip, Krode faced Vic Marquette.

The G-man overcame the uneasiness that he felt. There was another room to the rear of this one; the two formed a suite. Looking through the opened connecting doorway, Marquette could see a window. Like the one to the fire escape, it was open, for the night was mild.

Marquette wondered if Krode had an aid stationed in the adjoining room. He decided that he was safe for the present. He released the stub-nosed revolver that was in his coat pocket; in its stead, he drew out the envelope that The Shadow had given him. Marquette had wisely put the message with his gun.

THE YELLOW DOOR

Krode received the envelope and briskly motioned Marquette to a chair. He tore the envelope as he walked through the connecting doorway. Marquette caught a flash of the paper within. It was blue in color.

Blue!

Vic remembered the theory that had been advanced: that Weasel had made a mistake about the colors. That theory had been rejected at Birklam's; but The Shadow had evidently accepted it. He had sent Krode a blue note, instead of a red one.

A typewriter clicked from the other room. Then there was a pause while Krode moved about, out of Marquette's sight. Suddenly the man returned to view. Marquette arose; his hand fidgeted at his pocket. He half expected Krode to act in Saschew's fashion. Instead, Krode was smiling in as friendly a fashion as was possible with his ugly lips.

"All right," nodded Krode. "You can go."

MARQUETTE was looking straight beyond Krode, through the next room to the window. He saw motion there; blackness swung in from the night. The G-man saw a living shape materialize. He sighted a fist that raised a heavy automatic.

Turning toward the outer door, Marquette paused, slid his right hand into his pocket, which was away from Krode, and whipped out the stubby revolver. He had Krode covered before the man realized what was due.

Krode's arms came up. For a moment, the man's face was vicious. Marquette expected the murderer to spring upon him. It was a sudden hiss that ended Krode's thought of fight. Hands still raised, the prisoner turned dumbly about. He saw The Shadow, covering him from the connecting door.

Between two guns, Krode was totally helpless. A sour look of resignation registered on his features.

The Shadow stepped into the outer room and beckoned with his .45, as he had done that night at Guzzler's. With Marquette jabbing his gun against the prisoner's ribs, Krode was marched into the inner room. There, Marquette forced him to a chair.

The Shadow entered while Marquette was frisking Krode. The G-man relieved the prisoner of a revolver. A word from The Shadow caused Marquette to turn toward the table where the typewriter rested.

Open on the table was a flat tin box, of watertight construction. Beside it was a bottle; some of the contents had been poured into the box. Bathed in the liquid was a note which Marquette knew must be the one that he had brought. But the color of that note had changed.

The note was red; not blue.

Krode spoke grouchily from his chair as he saw Marquette eye the transformed message, which bore the typewritten statement:

STQCT EOZN QZ GFET

"So you wised to it at last?" he growled: "Fluked it last night; and doped it out since. No – wait a minute!" He looked toward The Shadow. "I'll bet you had it all along! It was the cops and the G-men who muffed the idea.

THE YELLOW DOOR

"You sent that double-crosser Weasel to trap me, didn't you?" This question was addressed to Marquette. "He brought a red message; because he'd seen a paper once that I'd let the sun dry on the window sill. I was wise as soon as I saw Weasel's note. I typed it off, though, to see what phony message he'd brought. Then I bumped him.

"You made out better with Saschew. He expected a blue note, like I did, and I suppose he got one. When it didn't change for him, he tried to get you. Too bad he didn't land."

Marquette had remembered the bottle at Saschew's. He sniffed the contents of Krode's bottle.

"It's hydrochloric acid," snorted Krode. "They call it 'spirit of salts.' You get it at any drug store. Our messages all come through on blue litmus paper. It changes to red when you soak it in acid."

MARQUETTE had recognized the litmus. A whispered laugh came from The Shadow. Harry's report had given him an inkling of this scheme. Harry had seen only a red message – one which Krode had tested and dried. Reading Cardona's report on Weasel, The Shadow had noted mention of Krode's red paper, which Weasel had seen hours after delivery; also of Saschew's blue message, which Weasel had examined before delivery.

Those clues had confirmed The Shadow's belief. But they had come after Weasel and Marquette had already set out with messages on ordinary papers of red and blue.

"I might have known The Shadow was in this," grunted Krode. Boldly, he eyed the black-clad avenger. "Well, you're the bird who polishes off the murderers; and I suppose I'm in for it because I bumped that rat, Weasel.

"Except that this fellow looks like a G-man." Krode was staring toward Marquette. "I guess he's due to get me for a trophy, so that he can make me talk. I'm satisfied. I'm ready to go along with him."

Marquette looked toward The Shadow. He expected an order to remove Krode. A whispered voice responded, "No."

Krode glowered; about to speak, he silenced when The Shadow stepped in his direction. Minutes ticked slowly by; the scene remained unchanged. At last, there came a cautious rap from the hallway door. The Shadow motioned to Marquette to cover Krode.

Going through to the outer door, The Shadow opened it an inch. He spoke in a voice that imitated Krode's:

"Who is it?"

A cautious voice queried from the hall: "Mr. Krode?"

"Not my name," returned The Shadow. "What do you want?"

"The Yellow Door."

The Shadow stepped back, drawing the door with him. A man clad in tuxedo entered; he was pulling an envelope from his pocket. The Shadow shoved the door shut. When the man turned in his direction, he blinked squarely into the muzzle of The Shadow's automatic.

THE YELLOW DOOR

KRODE'S anxiety to depart had told The Shadow that the crook expected a bona fide messenger. The Shadow had remained to trap the arrival. He found a revolver in the messenger's pocket and took it along with the note. He shoved the fellow ahead of him, into the inner room.

While Marquette covered the pair, The Shadow removed his gloves. Opening the envelope, he read the blue-paper message. It consisted of two words:

EGCTK WOKASQD

Krode's typewriter had the key-caps on it, in position for decoding. Picking the keys, The Shadow decoded:

COVER BIRKLAM

That done, he dropped the blue sheet into the acid bath. Instantly, it changed to a reddish hue. The Shadow arose and faced the prisoners. He covered them while Marquette studied the message. Then The Shadow gave an order to the G-man:

"Notify the commissioner. Arrange a private quiz at his apartment. Have him send Cardona here to join you."

Marquette nodded; he picked up the telephone. The Shadow added a suggestion.

"Tell the commissioner," he stated, "that he can summon his friend Cranston."

The suggestion pleased Marquette. He put in a call to the commissioner's apartment and was referred to the Cobalt Club. Gaining a connection there, he told a brief story of the capture. As Vic put it, he had simply nabbed Krode and another man.

"Bracy," suggested The Shadow. "The one who originally met Weasel."

The Shadow had noted recognition between Krode and the captured messenger. A scowl from Bracy proved that The Shadow's conjecture of identity was correct. Speaking over the telephone, the G-man added that the second prisoner was Bracy.

That done, Marquette asked Weston to send Cardona to the Hotel Catlin. He added the suggestion that the commissioner request Cranston to be present at the quiz.

A dozen minutes after the telephone call, there was a sharp rap at the outer door. The Shadow motioned; Marquette marched the prisoners into the outer room. The Shadow closed the adjoining door; but Krode and Bracy, looking back, saw a gun muzzle covering them through the crack. They made no attempt at a break while Marquette was opening the door. Cardona entered with three plain-clothes men.

The Shadow's gun was gone from the connecting door. Marquette entered the inner room while Cardona and his squad were putting handcuffs on the prisoners. Marquette packed up the portable typewriter, the key-caps and the bottle of acid. He also brought along the water-tight box and the litmus paper notes.

SECLUDED in a corner, The Shadow waited while Marquette extinguished the lights of the inner room. From darkness, The Shadow heard the tramp of feet as the prisoners were taken out into the hall. When the outer door had closed, The Shadow delivered a parting taunt, repressed to a whisper that could not be heard beyond these walls.

THE YELLOW DOOR

Deduction and strategy had served The Shadow in his capture of two men who could reveal the secret of the Yellow Door. As Lamont Cranston, he would receive a note at the Cobalt Club, asking him to be present at Weston's quiz. The Shadow had turned the case over to the law; but he still planned to aid.

The Shadow's laugh prophesied final victory before this night was gone. Usually, The Shadow's predictions were correct. This time, his prophecy would be wrong.

The Shadow had done well to rely upon Vic Marquette. He was to learn that he should have left the case to the G-man alone. The coming quiz should have been scheduled for Marquette's hotel suite; not for Weston's apartment.

Once more, trouble was due because The Shadow had placed reliance in the police commissioner.

CHAPTER XIII,. WESTON DECREES

COMMISSIONER WESTON'S apartment had one room fitted as an office. It was because of that room that The Shadow had ordered Marquette to cooperate with the commissioner. The Shadow had visualized a concentrated conference, to which he could come as Cranston.

Marquette, too, had expected good results through the visit to Weston's. When the G-man and Cardona reached Weston's with the prisoners, Vic supposed that they would be promptly ushered into the little office. Instead, they were greeted by Weston in the living room.

Puzzled, Marquette looked to Cardona for an explanation. The inspector shrugged his shoulders. He, like Vic, was perplexed.

Weston eyed the sullen prisoners. Briskly, he asked which was Krode and which was Bracy. When informed, Weston nodded wisely, as though he had guessed it at first sight. Stepping to a closet, the commissioner produced hat, coat and cane.

"Come," he ordered briskly. "We are going out. Bring the prisoners along."

"Going out?" echoed Marquette. "Where to?"

"To Birkklam's," returned Weston. "We shall quiz the prisoners there."

Marquette was stunned. He remembered The Shadow's explicit orders that the quiz should be held at Weston's. Vic voiced objection.

"The quiz should be held here," he began. "Nothing can be gained by a trip to Birkklam's."

"Why not?" demanded Weston. "Birkklam is the man who can identify Krode."

"We need no further identification."

"I disagree on that point, Marquette."

Vic remained stubborn.

"I told you the contents of the message Bracy brought," he reminded. "Remember that, commissioner? When I talked to you from the Hotel Catlin?"

THE YELLOW DOOR

"Of course," acknowledged Weston. "The message told Krode to cover Birkklam."

"It did," affirmed Marquette. "It shows that this band of crooks is wise to something; that Krode is to renew his efforts to threaten Birkklam –"

"Enough!" snapped Weston. "It is unwise to mention facts in front of these prisoners. We must refrain from such procedure until we have begun the quiz."

"You've already let them know that we have contacted Birkklam."

"That is different, Marquette. The message that Krode received shows that he is conversant with the facts."

"Because it said to cover Birkklam?"

"Yes."

MARQUETTE shook his head. His interpretation of the message was that it indicated ignorance on the part of Krode and Bracy. Still stubborn in his effort to follow The Shadow's instructions, Marquette raised final objection.

"These men are my prisoners," he declared, gruffly. "They are to be quizzed here!"

"They were your prisoners," inserted Weston, in an icy tone, "but you turned them over to Inspector Cardona. You yourself certified the step and requested that I conduct the quiz."

"But –"

"'Buts' are unnecessary. You asked me to assume authority. I am taking it. There is nothing unreasonable in my decision to take the prisoners to Birkklam's. Particularly since I have already notified him that we have captured Krode."

"You called Birkklam?"

"Certainly; I talked to his secretary, that young chap Jefford. He told me that Mr. Birkklam had retired. When I explained the urgency of the matter, Jefford aroused him."

"Then you talked to Birkklam personally."

"Yes. He is anxiously awaiting our arrival. Come, Marquette! Do not remain stubborn. We have posted guards about Birkklam's mansion. Our men have reported that his servants are as trustworthy as he said. Our conference will be quite as satisfactory at Birkklam's as it would be here."

Marquette could think of no new objections. He realized that further argument would produce the one result that he wished to avoid: friction with the local authorities. Gruffly, he announced his willingness to abide by the commissioner's wish. No harm could come from it, Marquette decided. He could explain his course to The Shadow, later.

THE party made its exit. As they were placing the prisoners aboard a police car, Marquette spoke to Weston.

"What about your friend Cranston?" he questioned. "He should be present before the quiz is ended. He might furnish valuable suggestions."

THE YELLOW DOOR

"I left word for Cranston at the Cobalt Club," replied Weston, "telling him to come here."

"But we are going to Birklam's –"

"He will learn that when he arrives here. There is no time to send a new message to the club. I did not call Birklam until after I had come back to my apartment; hence I left him the word to meet me here."

Marquette realized that Cranston's arrival would be delayed considerably by the detour to Weston's apartment; but he failed to see any evil consequence that might arise. He decided that another argument would be poor policy. Marquette boarded the commissioner's car. Cardona was in another machine; he and plain-clothes men held the prisoners. The procession moved northward.

It was fully fifteen minutes later when The Shadow arrived at the Cobalt Club. Entering in leisurely fashion, he was stopped by the doorman, who gave him the commissioner's note. Garbed as Cranston, The Shadow read the terse request that concerned a visit to the commissioner's apartment.

Without haste, The Shadow strolled forth and entered his limousine. He ordered Stanley to take him to Weston's apartment. As Cranston, The Shadow had no need to be present for the preliminary quiz. He wanted to arrive when Weston was ready to summarize all that had been learned.

Then would be The Shadow's opportunity to insert additional questions. Building upon what Weston and Marquette had accomplished, he could play a lesser part, yet at the same time get at the facts that were most vitally needed.

Between Krode and Bracy, The Shadow was confident that the mystery of the Yellow Door would break. He had already seen hidden facts; certain occurrences tonight had tabbed with his theories. Even as Cranston, The Shadow was in a position to confront Krode and Bracy with questions that would alarm them.

One or the other might break. Whatever the power of the Yellow Door, it was certain that its adherents did not trust themselves beyond a certain point. Dynoth's suicide – or murder, whichever it had been – was proof of weakness.

The limousine stopped at Weston's. The Shadow alighted. He went up to the commissioner's apartment, where he was admitted by Weston's man. Casually, The Shadow inquired:

"I am expected in the office?"

"Hardly, sir," the man replied. "The commissioner has gone elsewhere. He told me to inform you, Mr. Cranston."

"Elsewhere?"

"Yes. To Mr. Birklam's."

"With the prisoners that I understood he had here?"

"Yes, Mr. Cranston."

There was a sudden glitter of The Shadow's eyes. The gleam faded. Adhering to the calm tone of Cranston, The Shadow requested:

THE YELLOW DOOR

"May I make a telephone call?"

"Certainly, Mr. Cranston," returned the servant. "Step right into the Commissioner's office."

The Shadow entered the office where the quiz should have been held. He closed the door. Picking up the desk telephone, he dialed a number: Birkklam's. There was no response. The Shadow's lips showed a cold, fixed smile as his hand replaced the telephone on the desk.

Stepping from the office, The Shadow questioned Weston's man:

"How long ago did the commissioner leave here?"

"At least half an hour, sir."

"Very well. If he calls from Mr. Birkklam's, tell him that I am on my way."

Returning to his limousine, The Shadow gave Stanley a two-word order:

"Birkklam's. Hurry!"

HALF an hour. The Shadow calculated that Weston and the prisoner had already arrived at Birkklam's. Backed by Cardona and Marquette, with G-men and plain-clothes men on duty, the situation had the earmarks of a strong one. Offsetting that was a fact that The Shadow had recognized when he had called Birkklam's.

The wires of the shipping man's telephone had been cut.

Devilry was afoot; for Weston had staged the one blunder that The Shadow had deemed unlikely. The Shadow had foreseen that Weston might notify Birkklam, even though Marquette, by telephone, had emphasized that he wanted the quiz to be held at the commissioner's apartment office.

The Shadow, however, had not believed that Weston would remove the quiz to Birkklam's. He had counted upon Marquette to prevent such folly, if the pinch came. Moreover, the message at the Cobalt Club had lulled The Shadow. Had it said "Birkklam's," The Shadow could have gone directly there, arriving soon enough to handle matters as he wanted them.

Instead, the message had requested Cranston's presence at the commissioner's. Valuable time had been lost through the unnecessary detour. The Shadow had new need for speed – a need as great as that which had impelled him on the night when he had hastened to the rescue of Vic Marquette.

The Shadow had penetrated deeply into the case of the Yellow Door. The message brought by Bracy, telling Krode to cover Birkklam, was one that had spelled an insidious menace. The Shadow had averted trouble; Weston had offset that effort.

Others who served the Yellow Door would rally tonight to aid their captured comrades. Escape would be possible for Krode and Bracy, once they had reached Birkklam's. Death would threaten all who opposed the Yellow Door.

Despite the lulling presence of police and G-men, the clipping of the telephone wires had cut off Birkklam's residence from the world. The place had become a trap.

Only The Shadow had recognized the snare.

CHAPTER XIV. TABLES TURN

"TAKE these bracelets off us. Then, maybe, we'll talk."

The suggestion came from Ferris Krode, as the man smiled in ugly fashion. Krode was seated in a big chair, in a corner of Dudley Birkklam's library. His remark referred to Bracy as well as himself. Bracy was seated beside Krode.

Commissioner Weston heeded the request. He saw that Krode and Bracy were helpless in their corner. With Weston were Marquette, Cardona and the three plain-clothes men. Birkklam was also present. More than that, Birkklam's servants were amplified by a G-man and a headquarters detective. Outside, half a dozen police and as many Federal men formed a protecting cordon.

"Take off their handcuffs," ordered Weston.

Cardona complied. Krode and Bracy rubbed their chafed wrists. Weston concentrated on Krode.

"We're ready," announced Weston. "Tell your story, Krode."

"All right." Krode shrugged his shoulders in resignation. "First of all, I'm not the big-shot in this racket. If I was, I'd —"

Krode paused as someone rapped at the door. Birkklam called for entry. Jefford appeared; the broad-shouldered secretary bowed, then exhibited pencil and note book.

"Of course!" exclaimed Birkklam. Then, to Weston: "After you telephoned, Jefford suggested to me that he might be needed to take notes. He is a competent secretary."

"We can use him," nodded Weston, noting that Cardona had been scribbling with poor speed. "Sit down, Jefford. Krode, begin again."

"I'M not the big-shot," repeated the prisoner. "That's plain enough. Bracy brought me a message that came from the big-shot."

"Who is he?" queried Weston.

"The big-shot?" returned Krode. "I don't know. He's got a brain, that's all. He made it worth while to work for him."

Krode's statement was direct. Weston believed it. He shot another question:

"What is the Yellow Door?"

"Nothing," replied Krode. "We just use it as a password."

Had The Shadow been present, playing the part of Cranston, he would have challenged the statement. Weston, however, allowed it to pass.

"Why did you call on Birkklam at his office?" quizzed the commissioner. "What was your game, Krode?"

THE YELLOW DOOR

"I can't answer that one," returned Krode. "I was following orders. I'm willing to guess that it was a build-up of some sort; but my first job was just to make contact."

"Then you admit that crime was in back of your visit?"

"I don't like to admit that, commissioner. I was told to sound out Birkklam regarding the Pan-Europa line; to tell him that there might be trouble if the World Wide bought those ships. When Birkklam told me that he wasn't interested in Pan-Europa, I believed him."

"And then –"

"I sent back word –"

Krode paused suddenly. He had made a bad slip. He had admitted return contact with the big-shot. Marquette caught it and jammed into the quiz.

"Who did you send word to?" queried Marquette. "The big-shot?"

Krode considered; then admitted: "Yes."

"Yet you don't know the big-shot," gibed Weston. "How do you fit those conflicts of statement, Krode?"

Krode leered unpleasantly. He had regained his wits.

"I prepared a message on blue litmus," he explained. "I gave it to a special messenger – one who carried word to the big-shot. I didn't know who the big-shot was –"

"But you knew the messenger?"

"By sight, yes. Not by name."

Krode's eyes showed a momentary restlessness, which Joe Cardona spotted. Instead of snapping a question to Krode, the ace swung to Bracy and demanded:

"Were you that messenger?"

BRACY was caught off guard. His lips quavered as he tried to stammer a denial. The action was sufficient. Bracy had given himself away. Weston nodded his approbation of Cardona's smart trick.

"We'll hear from you, Bracy," announced Weston. "Take down everything he says, Jefford."

Bracy chewed his lips.

"Full name," ordered Weston. "Your right one."

"Glade Bracy," stated the prisoner. "I – I wasn't deep in this, commissioner. I was only a messenger –"

"But an important one," interrupted Weston. "You signed Weasel Hacklin."

"Yes," admitted Bracy. "But I – I didn't –"

THE YELLOW DOOR

"You didn't tell him about the Yellow Door?"

"That's right, sir."

"Then you knew about the Yellow Door yourself?"

Bracy quailed. He looked askingly toward Krode and saw a sneer on the other prisoner's face. Suddenly, Bracy broke. Pleadingly, he panted.

"You've got to protect me!" he declared. "Like I suppose you promised to protect Weasel. I'll tell you about the Yellow Door. It's a society, a group of those who have – who have been through the Yellow Door. I saw the Yellow Door; I went through it. I'm risking torture to tell you this!

"You've got to save me – to keep me from them! If they take me to the Citadel, I'll suffer torment! That's where the Yellow Door is. At the Citadel. That's where the members go when they run into trouble. Thurlon is there – Rupert Thurlon, from California –"

"Is he the big-shot?" demanded Weston.

Bracy shook his head. He tightened his hands upon the arms of his chair.

"The big-shot has made millions," he declared, "but he's kept it under cover. He's after more. Thurlon handled that Amerimex oil deal; he had to murder Bostbaum to do it. Dynoth swung another job, in Chicago. He killed Gildare.

"Krode is the man who is busy at present. Saschew was all ready to start on his own. There are others, though, men who have covered their tracks completely. They are at the Citadel; they'll go out again, on new propositions, when the big-shot orders them –"

"One moment," snapped Weston, thinking the time was ripe. "Who is the big-shot?"

Nervously, Bracy licked his lips.

"That's something we're not supposed to know," declared the informant. "That's why none of the members will talk. They've been through the Yellow Door. They know what it means. If they can't name the big-shot, they know they will never be safe. That's why they'd rather die than take the risk of torture.

"But I'm talking; and it's because I've made a guess. One that fits with what's happened. I'll take a chance on it, to show you that I'm through with the Yellow Door. You won't have to look far for the big-shot! You've got him here, right in this room where you can grab him –"

BRACY was staring at the group. Their eyes immediately centered upon Krode, as the second prisoner delivered an angry snarl. Bracy's voice broke suddenly; his eyes bulged, as he tried to gasp a warning. Then came a sharp order; instinctively, Weston and others turned about.

They had forgotten Jefford. Birklam's secretary had dropped his note book. From his pocket, he had produced a short-muzzled revolver. On his feet, he was glaring at the throng.

"No moves!" snapped Jefford. "I'll finish the lot of you! I'm the big-shot that Bracy talked about! Put up your hands, all of you!"

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Jefford was taking a long chance in his move. He was dealing with fearless men. Marquette and Cardona were spaced apart; they were not the sort to be cowed by a single foeman, even though his position was strong. Nor was Weston; particularly when he knew that two plain-clothes men offered additional strength.

For the moment, the odds were five against one. Five without guns handy; but all were willing to take the risk.

With one accord, Marquette and Cardona came to their feet; Weston was on the go a fraction of a second later. Plain-clothes men, already standing, were about to join the surge.

Jefford did not fire; he side-stepped toward the door.

The move finished hopes of battle. The door swung open, as Jefford leaped toward it. Revolvers bristled from the hallway. Behind the leveled guns were the glowering faces of Birkklam's six servants. The intention of these men was obvious. They had come to back up Jefford.

There was a shout of evil glee from Krode; a terrified shriek from Bracy. Dudley Birkklam added a groan, as he observed the treachery of his trusted servants. Jefford delivered a vicious laugh as he saw Marquette and Cardona stop short. Weston and the plainclothes men halted.

The trap had closed. The power of the Yellow Door had been invoked, with Jefford as the evil instigator.

CHAPTER XV. DEATH DECREED

"FRISK them!"

Jefford snapped the order to Krode. Willingly, the prisoner came forward from his chair. Wearing his evil leer, Krode whisked guns from the pockets of Marquette and Cardona.

"Help Krode!"

Jefford's new order was given to Bracy. The informant gaped; Jefford gave him new urge.

"We still can use you at the Citadel," said Jefford. "You talked too much; but we'll let it pass."

Bracy managed a sly grin.

"I was bluffing," he asserted. "I thought it would help out. I knew you'd be ready."

"Sure," acknowledged Jefford. "I got it, Bracy. They were going to find out anyway. You stalled before telling them that I was the big-shot."

Bracy became more confident upon receiving this approval. He found the guns carried by the two plain-clothes men while Krode was frisking Weston.

"You wanted information," declared Jefford, facing the new prisoners, "and you received some. I can give you more. The Yellow Door was my idea. It began while I was working here. I saw what could be done by smooth finance. To get results, I organized the Yellow Door.

"Birkklam can tell you that I have taken frequent vacations. During those periods I established the Citadel and swore in workers who gave allegiance to the Yellow Door. I had money of my own; a legacy that Birkklam did

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not know I possessed. That was the capital behind my scheme.

"Nor did Birkklam know that in my six years here, I subsidized his servants. One by one, they became members of the Yellow Door. Tonight, working together, they overpowered your two watchers separately. Your G-man and your detective are bound and gagged in the cellar."

Jefford's tone had become one of derision.

"Bracy told you the facts," resumed the self-styled master of the Yellow Door. "Bostbaum and Gildare tried to block my schemes. They were murdered because of their meddlesome tactics. They were but a few among many. Others have died; some have lived; but always I have gained what I sought.

"Wealth! That was my desire. By preventing certain mergers; by encouraging others, I have gained control of industries, so effectively that no one can trace my schemes. My work, in a sense, has just begun. Other deals, larger ones, are under way at present.

"The one involving Pan-Europa presented a difficult test. I foresaw trouble when I sent Krode to treat with Birkklam. But my own position, here in Birkklam's home, enabled me to keep a watch upon developments. You have seen, gentlemen, how excellently my enterprise has proceeded."

JEFFORD signaled two of the servants. They approached and conducted the plain-clothes men out into the hall. Jefford's next words were concentrated upon the four who remained: Weston and Birkklam; Marquette and Cardona.

They formed two separate pairs, and Jefford apparently planned to deal with them accordingly. He spoke to Weston and Birkklam.

"I shall take both of you to the Citadel," he announced. "You, commissioner, shall serve me as a hostage, so that the law will not attempt too strong an action. You, Birkklam, will be held in order to complete the transaction that I require. The World Wide Shipping Corporation will not buy the Pan-Europa line while you are in my custody.

"We shall leave here in your car, commissioner. You, Birkklam and myself will go out by the front door, accompanied by one of these servants. I warn you: there must be no resistance. Two men will be covering us with rifles. It will mean death for you and members of the cordon, if you cause any trouble."

Jefford turned to Marquette and Cardona.

"You two will remain here," he added, "to be bound and gagged with the other prisoners. That will take place, however, after I have left with my two companions. During our stroll to the commissioner's car, you will be covered by revolvers."

The intent was plain. Marquette and Cardona were to be held at the point of death as another guarantee that Weston and Birkklam would not make trouble.

AN order from Jefford. The prisoners were marched out into the hall. The two servants who had taken away the plain-clothes men appeared with rifles. Jefford stationed them at tiny windows on each side of the front door. From these loopholes, the two servants could cover the passage to Weston's car.

There were three other servants. Jefford placed them under Krode's command. Bracy remained with Krode. The servants stood guarding Marquette and Cardona. Krode and Bracy chose positions near the center of the

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large hall.

"Cover efficiently," instructed Jefford. "Afterward, Krode, the servants will show you an exit through the cellar. All of you can leave with ease. The cordon will be guarding a deserted house, except" – Jefford chuckled – "except for their own companions, whom they will find here."

He motioned Weston and Birklam to the front door. The servant who was with him opened it. Weston and Birklam stepped out through the doorway; immediately Jefford and the servant followed, closing the door as they went.

Krode and Bracy sprang to the front door, ready to yank it open in case there should be trouble outside. They were awaiting reports from the two riflemen who peered through the little windows. Krode decided that he might need another man at the door. He signaled; one of the three servants left his post beside Marquette and Cardona.

Seconds seemed endless to Vic and Joe. Hands half raised, they waited; hearing no disturbance, they knew that Weston and Birklam must have submitted peacefully to Jefford's urge. Both could picture the commissioner and the shipping man, passing the cordon without difficulty, recognized by guardians of the law.

They could also visualize Jefford and the servant with him, posing as two additional passengers for Weston's car. What irked the two inside prisoners was the fact that their particular dilemma prevented Weston from turning the tables on Jefford. Vic heard Joe mutter beneath his breath.

The guarding servants paid no attention to Cardona's mumbles. Marquette took an opportunity to whisper in an undertone:

"Shall we let them get away with it?"

"What else?" muttered Cardona. "The odds are all against us."

Marquette gave a slight nod of agreement. Then a thought struck him.

"After this?" whispered the G-man. "What then?"

Cardona flashed a quick glance.

"You mean," he muttered, "that they'll bump us anyway?"

"We're the two," returned Marquette, "who could queer the Yellow Door."

THE words hit home. Cardona could foresee crooks in their get-away through the cellar. He pictured himself and Marquette, helpless below, ready fodder for guns that could not be heard from those depths. Jefford had said that members of the cordon would find their companions of the law; but he had not specified whether they would find them dead or alive.

Probably Krode, who now held sway, would spare four prisoners already bound and gagged in the cellar; but Cardona could not feel any guarantee that the murderer would do more than that. Joe was certain that he and Vic were doomed. It would be better to act at this moment, to receive death when the crackle of guns could warn the cordon that all was not well. That would give Weston and Birklam a chance to break from Jefford.

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"I'm ready," muttered Cardona, grimly. "Let's go."

"Hold it!" Marquette's whisper was barely audible. Then, after a momentary pause: "Go!"

Marquette had been staring toward a curtain on the far side of the hall. He had seen the drapery rustle. He had withheld Cardona until the curtain moved again – this time, with a definite swish. Banking on a wild hope, Marquette had given the word.

Simultaneously, Vic and Joe each wheeled upon a guarding servant. The two menials were spaced five feet apart; neither expected the surge that came. With equal skill, Marquette and Cardona each grabbed for an enemy's gun hand. They hurled their foemen backward, wrists shoved upward, as the servants fired.

A bullet skimmed Marquette's ear and whistled to the ceiling. Cardona felt a tingle from his left shoulder as a slug singed his flesh. Grappling fiercely, the two tried to wrest the weapons from their adversaries. Tumult filled the rear of the hallway.

Krode spun about with an oath. It was his job to end that fray while the riflemen kept their guard at the windows. Bracy and the odd servant swung along with Krode, prepared to jab quick shots that would finish Marquette and Cardona. All three stopped rigid.

The curtain at the side of the hall had swept away. From a darkened, deserted room, a menacing figure had stepped into view. The breeze from an opened window stirred a black cloak that enshrouded hidden shoulders. Brilliant eyes sparkled from beneath a hat brim. Gloved fists aimed huge automatics.

The Shadow had arrived at Birkham's. He had slipped through the law's outer cordons. He had entered the house through a window of the unused room. He had reached the curtain just after the front door had closed. The Shadow had seen the predicament that held Marquette and Cardona.

More than that, he had seen the G-man stare in his direction. The rustle of the curtain had been The Shadow's signal. As he had hoped, The Shadow had seen Marquette pass the word to Cardona. The double leap had cleared the way for action. The Shadow had divined why riflemen were at the loopholes. He had wanted complete freedom to deal with those at the front of the hall.

The Shadow had gained his wish. Marquette and Cardona were battling on equal terms with the men whom they had grabbed. One against five, The Shadow was prepared to battle Krode, Bracy and the trio with them.

A sinister laugh was The Shadow's challenge. Weird amid the echoes of discharged guns, that sardonic mirth was mockery, when heard by those who represented crime.

Death had been decreed by men of evil. The Shadow was prepared to deliver it to those who supported the decree.

CHAPTER XVI. THE GAME CHANGES

IN facing Krode and Bracy, The Shadow covered two men whom he had met before. He had cowed the pair on this very night. They knew The Shadow's prowess. They feared the black-clad entrant. That factor had effect.

Krode, as commander of the crooks who had remained, found it his part to open conflict. Quick with his aim, he fired at The Shadow. Krode's hand lacked the surety that it had shown when he had poured bullets into Weasel Hacklin.

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Krode was not a sure shot. The Shadow knew that from the evidence in Weasel's death: five bullets used at close range. Bracy and the servant were the unknown factors. The Shadow ignored Krode to aim for them. Krode's gun flashed a wide bullet, as the man snapped the trigger too hastily.

The Shadow's shots came simultaneously. One automatic blasted a message that flattened the aiming servant. The other gun dispatched a bullet that missed Bracy by a scant quarter-inch. Bracy had dived suddenly as The Shadow fired.

Bracy's direction had deceived The Shadow. The man had leaped toward Krode. Swinging his gun about, he aimed for the man whose commands he was supposed to obey. The reason for his action was the one point that The Shadow had not guessed.

There was no evidence to tell of the partial confession that Bracy had made. Seeing him with Krode, The Shadow had naturally taken Bracy to be an enemy in full standing with his tribe. Bracy, however, had only half-trusted Jefford's promise of amnesty. He had pretended to accept it when he had seen the tables turn against the law.

The Shadow's arrival had terrorized Bracy; with it, the turncoat had seen a chance to escape the vengeance of the Yellow Door. By attacking Krode, he was fighting with The Shadow. Through such a course, there was a chance for safety. Bracy was ever ready to join the side that offered the best prospects.

Bracy's shift hastened the happening that The Shadow wanted. He had expected to draw the riflemen from the windows. He knew that quick fight would cause Krode to call them. Attacked by Bracy, Krode raised a wild shout for quick aid. Hearing it, the servants at the windows were swift to forget their other duty. They spun about to meet The Shadow.

By so doing, they saved themselves from bullets in the back. Forgetting Krode, The Shadow opened against these foemen. His pistols spat swift bullets. One marksman crumpled, while he aimed. The other dodged behind Krode and Bracy; he grabbed the doorknob, turned it and made a dive for the outside.

WITH whirlwind speed, The Shadow followed, revolving as he headed for the door. Marquette had gained his antagonist's revolver. A muffled report spelled the crook's doom. The Shadow saw Marquette's foeman keeling toward the floor. The Shadow also saw Cardona, reeling backward from a vicious punch. Joe's enemy was aiming toward the inspector.

The Shadow fired two quick shots from the doorway. Cardona's attacker sagged. Leaving the field to Marquette and Cardona, The Shadow continued in pursuit of the servant who had fled. Guns barked as The Shadow reached the steps.

The man with the rifle had run squarely into the cordon. A deluge of bullets sent him sprawling to the sidewalk. From the curb, a shout was raised. Weston had leaped for Jefford, grabbing at the gun that the secretary had suddenly whipped into sight.

Birklam was already in the commissioner's car, covered by the man who had gone along with Jefford. The Shadow turned to open long-range fire; so did G-men and police who formed the aroused cordon. Jefford sprang for safety, into the front seat of Weston's car. The commissioner's chauffeur came tumbling to the street, ejected by a vicious punch from Jefford.

Instantly, the car shot away. Jefford was driving, seeking flight, with Birklam a prisoner in the rear seat. Weston was shaking his fist from the curb. The Shadow fired along with cordon members, as the car wheeled past the corner. Luck was with Jefford. The range was long; The Shadow's shots gained no result. The men

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who aimed from closer range were wide in their fire.

Pursuers boarded cars to take up mad pursuit. The Shadow stepped to darkness beside the front steps as other men from the cordon headed into the house. Two grappling figures reeled suddenly into view. Krode and Bracy were still locked in their struggle. Neither Marquette nor Cardona had found a chance to break them.

A flashing shot came muffled from between the strugglers. One man sagged floorward. It was Bracy. Crawling, groping, he tried to find the door, while Krode faced the inrush of two G-men and a trio of detectives. Revolvers rattled their fire with the clatter of a machine gun. Riddled with bullets, Krode fell dead.

Staccato shots told that two wounded crooks had opened fire from the floor of the hall. To save themselves, the men from the invading cordon were forced to drill those stubborn survivors. A last burst of gunfire finished all resistance to the law.

BRACY had reached the front steps. Sprawling downward, he rolled upon his back. His glazed eyes saw The Shadow. Mortally wounded, Bracy tried to cough last facts that might bring ruin to the Yellow Door.

"Jefford!" he gasped. "Jefford is –"

A spasm ended the information that Bracy sought to give. Dying lips twitched; apparently, Bracy thought that he was forming words, for there was a break in sequence when he again made himself coherent.

"To the Citadel," he muttered. "If – if in danger. Weldon's farm – near Newburgh. Go alone – alone –"

A last cough racked Bracy's crumpled form. Fingers loosened their slim grip upon the steps. The man's dead body slipped from the spot where it lay and rolled crazily to the bottom of the steps. Commissioner Weston, coming from farther down the street, stopped to view and recognize the body of Bracy.

Standing in a place of darkness, The Shadow waited until Weston had entered the house. Unobserved, The Shadow glided toward the corner where he had ordered Stanley to park. Wisely, he had placed the limousine out of sight. It was too late to pursue the commissioner's car. That was up to the half dozen men of the outside cordon. They had followed in other machines; Weston's dethroned chauffeur had gone with them.

The Shadow reached the limousine, entered it and ordered Stanley to drive to the Cobalt Club. A few blocks from Birkklam's, he saw cars returning from the chase. Jefford had managed somehow to make a get-away, carrying Birkklam and the gun-bearing servant with him.

IT was an hour later when Commissioner Weston stopped at the club to find his friend Cranston there. In a secluded corner of the lobby, Weston queried why Cranston had not come to Birkklam's. The Shadow expressed annoyance, in Cranston's style. He remarked that when he had not found Weston at his apartment, he had decided to return to the club.

"It was fortunate that you did not come to Birkklam's," declared Weston. "That chap Jefford turned out to be the ringleader of a criminal band called the Yellow Door. He abducted Birkklam and carried him away in my car. I was fortunate enough to escape similar capture."

"He fled in your car?" queried The Shadow, in feigned surprise. "How has he managed to stay at large? I should suppose that the car would be easily recognized."

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"He staged a cute trick," returned Weston. "Jefford must know those dead-end streets like a book. He led the pursuing cars down a blind thoroughfare; doubled back, somehow, through a driveway and took a shortcut to the George Washington Bridge."

"He fled across to New Jersey?"

"Yes. By the time we were able to spread the alarm, he had made a complete get-away. The men who chased him came back to report; but they were too late."

"You could have ordered the bridge closed to traffic."

"The telephone wires were cut at Birkklam's. By the time we found another telephone, Jefford had crossed the bridge."

"And you have no clue to his destination?"

"None whatever. Krode killed Bracy, the man whom we hoped would turn informant. Krode himself was slain, along with all but one of Birkklam's servants. The odd man escaped with Jefford. They were all a lot of traitors; that is why Birkklam never learned it. One honest man would have spoiled their game; unfortunately, all were crooked."

Dejectedly, Weston departed. His last statement was one that explained his new dilemma. Weston muttered an uncompleted sentence: "They have gone to their Citadel; if we had one clue –"

The Shadow's lips showed a smile when Weston had gone. The Shadow held the clue that the commissioner wanted. He had gained it from Bracy's dying words, that way to reach the Citadel. Brief statements, that must apply for all members of the Yellow Door.

"If in danger – Weldon's farm near Newburgh – go alone –"

The farm could not be the Citadel. The Shadow recognized that it must serve a different purpose. It was a place where a member of the Yellow Door would find protection; where he would contact a cover-up crew that would take action against any trailers or pursuers. Discreetly, The Shadow had avoided mention of these facts to Weston.

Not only had The Shadow seen the error of allowing Weston too much leeway; he recognized also that the town of Newburgh was outside of Weston's bailiwick. There was one man qualified to aid The Shadow in the game that was to come – one upon whose cooperation The Shadow could depend. The Shadow strolled from the Cobalt Club and entered his big car.

SEATED in the living room of his hotel suite, Vic Marquette was the picture of dejection. He and Joe Cardona had departed, with mutual congratulations over their escape from death. After that, Marquette had lost all elation.

No one knew better than he that the game had changed. Members of the Yellow Door had been eliminated; but they represented a mere portion of the desperate band. Krode and Bracy were dead; they alone could have shown the route to the Citadel. Jefford had taken Birkklam there; at the Citadel, the big-shot of crime would be free to concoct new modes of evil, to complete the schemes that had already been begun.

The opening of the door did not arouse Marquette. He thought that it was Cuyler entering the suite. A whispered greeting brought Marquette to sudden attention. Looking up, the G-man saw The Shadow. Facing

keen eyes, Marquette listened.

The Shadow spoke. With every sentence, Marquette nodded. His own eyes shone with eagerness. The Shadow was stating facts that awoke new confidence within Vic Marquette. With the facts came orders, which, if followed, would bring results in the game that lay ahead.

Vic Marquette was ready to accept The Shadow's full command.

CHAPTER XVII. HARRY'S VISITOR

FIVE o'clock the next afternoon found Harry Vincent, in Cleveland, seated in the inner office of the Krode Advertising Agency. Copies of the Cleveland evening newspapers were on the desk. Harry scanned them with a troubled air.

The newspapers told of battle in New York; the death of a crook named Ferris Krode. Harry wondered just how soon someone in Cleveland might connect the name of the dead swindler with that of the advertising agency.

Harry felt some security in the fact that he was playing the part of Ralph Mandon; that, however, would not apply should Mandon return from his trip to Manitoulin Island. In such an event, Harry had intended to swing back to his part of Ferris Krode; that would now be inadvisable, since Krode was dead.

A message had come in today – a blue paper, in an airmail letter postmarked Jersey City. Harry had been puzzled by the blue paper; nevertheless, he had decoded the message according to The Shadow's system. The coded message read:

EGDT ZG EOZQRTS

By using key–caps on the typewriter, Harry had produced:

COME TO CITADEL

The message was certainly intended for Mandon, since crooks knew that Krode was dead. Krode had probably passed the word that Mandon was running the advertising office in Cleveland. The letter had been mailed from Jersey City at about midnight. Because of this letter, Harry had made a telephone call to Rutledge Mann, in New York. He had been told to sit tight.

It was time to close the office. No word yet from The Shadow. Harry could not escape worry; for he knew the wide–spread power of the Yellow Door, even though the facts concerning the society had been kept from the public. There had been no message from The Shadow, to give the details of last night's battle at Birkham's; but the news of the shipping man's abduction was sufficient to let Harry guess the basic facts.

Harry realized that he might be under observation. As Mandon, not yet initiated into the rites of the Yellow Door, Harry might be an object of mistrust. Harry had resolved to use caution when he left the office.

It was time to go. Harry went out through the suite and opened the outside door. He heard shuffling footsteps in the corridor. With a quick glance, Harry eyed a stooped old man, who was hobbling with a cane. The fellow had grimy, short–clipped whiskers; eyes that squinted from above leathery cheeks.

The old man was a peddler, the sort that Harry had seen previously in this building. He was selling lead pencils, which he carried in a clawlike fist. Pitifully, the peddler approached Harry with his wares, thrust the

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pencils forward and muttered through his beard:

"Need pencils, mister?"

Harry reached in his pocket and produced a quarter dollar, intending to buy some pencils. The old man's chin came to a level with Harry's shoulder. In a hoarse whisper, the peddler spoke:

"The Yellow Door!"

The words electrified Harry. With a slight nod, he reopened the door of the office and motioned the old man inward. He dropped the twenty-five-cent piece into his coat pocket; the move enabled him to grip an automatic. Harry saw possible danger from this emissary.

The old man had straightened when Harry closed the door. He produced no envelope; instead, he ragged away his whiskers. Harry stared in amazement as he saw a face that was smooth-shaven except for a dark mustache. He recognized the square, darkish features. Harry delivered a whispered exclamation:

"Vic Marquette!"

The G-man nodded. He and Harry had worked together in the past. Vic knew Harry to be an agent of The Shadow. Quietly, he suggested that they occupy the inner office. When they had passed the connecting door, Marquette produced a sealed envelope. Harry opened it to read a message from The Shadow, in ink that faded immediately afterward.

"I'm working with you, Vic," announced Harry. "I suppose you know it already."

Marquette nodded. He saw the blue paper message on Harry's desk; the decoded copy with it. The G-man asked:

"This came today?"

Harry nodded.

"We'd better give it the acid test," decided Marquette. He pulled a bottle from a ragged pocket. "Here – we can place the paper in this ash tray."

Folding the blue message, Marquette dropped it into a wide, shallow ash tray and poured liquid upon it. Harry blinked as he saw the blue paper redden.

The answer hit him.

"Litmus paper!" exclaimed Harry. "We used to use it in chemical tests. Acid turns it red; an alkali solution makes it blue. What's the acid in the bottle, Vic?"

"Hydrochloric. The message is O.K. It's for Mandon, Vincent."

"And I'm Mandon –"

Marquette nodded. Harry understood.

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"HOW am I to get to the Citadel?" queried The Shadow's agent. "I'm supposed to know where it is; but I don't. We can't get hold of Mandon; I haven't heard from him since he went to Manitoulin Island.

"There is a way to get to the Citadel," explained Marquette. "A fellow named Bracy told your chief. You go to Weldon's farm, near Newburgh on the Hudson. It's an emergency measure, Vincent."

"To be used in case I am followed?"

"Apparently. You're the man who can play the game and find the Citadel that belongs to the Yellow Door."

"Belongs to The Yellow Door? I thought the Yellow Door was at the Citadel."

"There probably is a yellow door there. But the Yellow Door is also the name of the society. Only a few of the members know the identity of the big-shot who runs the Yellow Door. As Mandon, your game is to play dumb."

"Because I'm a rookie in the outfit?"

"Just that. We'll take a train East tonight. Before we reach Beacon – across the river from Newburgh – we'll have new orders. Somehow, The Shadow has figured out a way to locate the Citadel through your trip there. We'll know more about it tomorrow."

Marquette paused; then explained his presence in Cleveland.

"I came by train last night," said the G-man. "I knew that you'd be here until five o'clock. I had business that took up part of the afternoon. When I came here, I used the peddler's disguise, just to shake off any members of the Yellow Door that might be around."

Harry nodded. He knew that Vic had followed a method ordered by The Shadow.

"The coast was clear," stated Marquette. "But the easiest way to get in here was to say 'The Yellow Door'; that fixed it so that I didn't have to identify myself in the corridor. I wanted to keep up the whisker game until we were in here alone."

"I'm ready to go ahead as Mandon," declared Harry. "Nobody in the Yellow Door knows me. Dynoth was Mandon's only contact. Still, I shall probably be called upon to properly establish my identity."

"Your chief told me that," returned Marquette. "That's why I couldn't get here sooner, Vincent. I went to get these papers."

Harry stared as Marquette produced a sheaf of folded letters and other documents. Understanding came to him as Marquette began an explanation.

"I WENT out to see old Henry Adlaw," stated Marquette. "As a government operative, I gave him enough facts to make him understand the plot against him and to assure him that we needed his cooperation. He gave me these papers."

"The reports from Smythe, on Saginaw Copper?"

"Yes. They came in yesterday. Smythe reported that Saginaw Copper was a lemon. Adlaw does not intend to buy it. But he is going to make a bluff at it."

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"So that it will look as though I switched the papers."

"Yes. You can tell any story that you want when you get to the Citadel. You will have the evidence to back it: these papers from Adlaw's own files."

"The crooks will think that Adlaw has the forged reports!"

Harry's exclamation displayed his admiration for a device which he knew was of The Shadow's creation. He realized how definitely the bona fide report would establish him as Mandon when he reached the Citadel. He saw a reason why The Shadow had chosen Vic Marquette as an aid.

Through the G-man, The Shadow had gained quick possession of the papers that would be Harry's passport, proof that Harry, as Mandon, had completed a required job. Vic's visit to Adlaw had also insured the copper magnate's cooperation.

Marquette was mentioning that visit again, as he donned his peddler's beard.

"I had to travel over beyond the High Level Bridge," he told Harry. "Adlaw lives in Lakewood and his house is a long way out. He gave me an interview quick enough, though, when I arrived there.

"His secretary, Clefter, knows that I am a government man, because I told him. But Clefter is reliable, according to what Mandon told you, Vincent."

Harry agreed with the statement.

"I'll hobble out," declared Marquette, "I won't see you until tomorrow, Vincent. I'm taking the New York Limited, at two o'clock in the morning. It gets to Beacon along about two tomorrow afternoon.

"You take the same train. Sometime after we leave Albany, you can meet me on the train. Bedroom B, Car L69."

AGAIN disguised, Marquette shambled through the outer office. Harry opened the door; the pretended peddler hobbled toward the stairway. The corridor was deserted; Harry's path lay clear.

Methodically, The Shadow's agent packed a few belongings, including the typewriter key-caps and the transformed message that had come today. He scraped the name from the glass panel of the door; pored through the filing cabinets and destroyed the few papers that bore the name of Krode.

Instructions from The Shadow had told Harry to remove any clues, in case some later visitor would check over the premises. As Mandon, Harry would naturally cover his trail. His final tasks completed, Harry left the building.

Walking west on Euclid Avenue, Harry chose an arcade that led through to Superior Avenue. He was bound for a restaurant where he would eat his last dinner in Cleveland. Tonight, to Harry, meant the beginning of a journey that would lead to new adventure.

The coming mission promised danger. That was an element that Harry had often faced in the service of The Shadow.

CHAPTER XVIII. THE UNSEEN TRAIL

THE New York Limited was speeding southward from Albany. Harry Vincent was seated by a window of the dining car, enjoying lunch as he watched the passing panorama of the Hudson River.

The train was nearly two hours late; it would not reach Beacon until nearly four o'clock. Harry was one passenger who was pleased because the Limited was not on time. He had not wanted to reach the Weldon farm until late in the afternoon.

Vic Marquette had just finished lunch. Without displaying any recognition of Harry, he had departed the diner. Concluding his own meal, Harry walked forward. He reached a sleeper that carried the name Hyacinth. In the window beside the narrow interior passage were cardboard squares that bore the number L69.

Harry pressed the button beside the door of Bedroom B. The door opened; Harry stepped in with Vic Marquette.

"This came on at Albany," informed Marquette, pointing to a suitcase that lay on the wide, couchlike seat. "I don't know who left it here, but it's for you, Vincent."

Harry opened the suitcase; he found an envelope, in it a message. While he was reading word from The Shadow, inscribed in special code, Harry heard Marquette remark:

"We've got to trail you after you make contact. But it will be a tough job, Vincent."

"Why?" questioned Harry. He was wearing a smile, as the message faded. "That shouldn't be difficult, Vic."

"The old system is to tag a car," explained Marquette. "To keep radio calls coming in to headquarters. Let new patrol cars report when they see the wanted machine go past. But there are disadvantages. The crooks may pick up some of those short-wave signals themselves. What's more, they're apt to spot patrol cars."

"It's all right, maybe, when a manhunt is on. But this isn't a manhunt. You're supposed to be Mandon, shaking off any one that's after you. The better you shake them, the more chance you'll have of getting to the Citadel."

"So I don't suppose we'll cover. But how will we know where you are when you get there? How will you know, if these pals of Mandon's take you all over the map? They can lose you, Vincent."

"Not very well," interposed Harry. "Look at this, Vic."

Standing the suitcase upright, he pried at the bottom. A flap lifted; Marquette stared at a cavity beneath. He saw a simple apparatus arranged in compact form. It was a radio device.

The apparatus consisted of a coil, a tube, with several dry-cell batteries. Packed with it, ready for attachment, was a tiny object that looked like a sending key.

"I don't get it," grunted Marquette. "You can't send with that outfit. You'll have no chance to rig up an aerial."

"I don't need to," returned Harry, still smiling. "I have my instructions. I will attach these batteries before we reach Beacon. When I close the flap, I can gum the paper lining of the suitcase over it. There won't be a trace of the hidden apparatus."

"But how —"

THE YELLOW DOOR

"I'll fix it in my own compartment, Vic. Don't worry about my part. When you get off at Beacon, you will find a coupe with the license number 40-S-2-G-7. Take it and follow the only local taxi that has a green stop-light."

Marquette gaped, puzzled.

"You'll arrive at an old house on the Hudson," added Harry. "Go in and ask for Burbank. He is the man who boarded this train at Albany, to leave the suitcase. Your instructions were in the message, Vic."

Marquette nodded; he jotted down the license number; also the name Burbank. Harry left the bedroom, carrying the suitcase.

CLOUDS prophesied an early dusk, when the Limited hauled into Beacon. Harry Vincent was carrying the new suitcase. He had left an old one on the train, after transferring his belongings to the special bag. Harry chose a random taxi. He told the driver to take him across the river to Newburgh.

As he rode away, Harry saw the taxi with the green stop-light. He caught sight of a passenger boarding it. The man's back was turned; Harry did not see his face. But he knew that the chap was Burbank. Harry also saw Marquette picking out the unlocked coupe that was at the station for him.

Harry's taxi took the ferry to Newburgh; the driver informed the passenger that he would have to pay for the round trip. They caught a boat that was about to leave. Seven minutes after its departure from Beacon, the ferry entered the Newburgh slip.

As they rolled westward along Second Street, Harry mentioned that he wanted to ride out to the Weldon farm. The driver scratched his head; then stopped to make inquiry at a garage. He came back with the information:

"There's a Weldon farm about eight miles west of town –"

"All right," interrupted Harry, "take me there."

Twenty minutes later, the puzzled taxi driver was stopped at a sign post, trying to figure the route to the farm. A long, white building showed in the dusk of a hillside. Harry supposed that it might be the farm. He made no comment, however; for he saw a long sedan that was moving slowly from a side lane.

"This is the place," announced Harry, pulling money from his pocket. "Let me off here."

Two minutes more; Harry was standing in the road. The taxi was heading back to Newburgh; the sedan was nosing in Harry's direction. Harry turned about as the car stopped. A gruff-voiced driver queried:

"Looking for some place, bud?"

"Yes," replied Harry, lifting his suitcase to the running board. "I want to find the Weldon farm."

"That's it over there."

"The place with the Yellow Door?"

Harry looked toward the hazy farmhouse as he spoke. There was no yellow door to be seen; but his question was a natural one. The artful use of the password brought quick results.

THE YELLOW DOOR

"Who are you?" queried the driver, leaning from the wheel. "What's your name?"

"Ralph Mandon."

"I'm Chuck Lawston. Maybe Dynoth mentioned me to you. We thought maybe you were Mandon. Any one trailing you?"

"No," replied Harry; "but I was afraid of a jam out in Cleveland. That's why I headed here."

"Sure. Instead of going straight to the Citadel. Good stuff, Mandon! Hop aboard."

Harry entered the front seat of the sedan. There were two other men in back; Lawston did not introduce them. Instead, the driver began a circuitous course. Settling dusk made it impossible for Harry to guess the direction.

HARRY had tossed his suitcase into the rear seat. Flickers of guarded flashlights made him guess that the men in back were examining the contents. Harry smiled to himself. All that they would find were the documents that established his role of Mandon.

Along a curving road, Harry noted that Lawston was picking out the lights of other cars. Somewhere, they would meet a cover-up crew. Harry remembered his conversation with Marquette. Ordinary measures of trailing would ruin this expedition. The men of the Yellow Door had means of making sure that they were neither followed nor checked while en route to their Citadel.

Harry, however, was confident. He leaned back in the seat and let darkness cover his smile. The inspection of the suitcase had ended. The men in back had not guessed that it contained a sealed apparatus. Just before Beacon, Harry had attached the dry-cell batteries. He had no need to worry whether he was being carried.

THE answer to this remarkable situation was to be found in an upstairs room of a deserted mansion that overlooked the Hudson, some miles from the town of Beacon. To that house, Vic Marquette had followed the taxi with the green stoplight. He had seen a man enter the building; he had watched the taxi leave.

Approaching, Marquette had knocked at the front door. A huge, broad-smiling African had admitted him. The man was Jericho, a resident of Harlem whom The Shadow employed for certain tasks. Jericho had been placed in charge of this old, empty house. When Marquette asked for Burbank, the African bowed and conducted the G-man upstairs.

In the room that Marquette had entered, a lone man was seated at a table in the corner. There was a vacant chair beside him. Marquette sat down; but his position did not enable him to glimpse the man's face. He guessed, however, that this was Burbank.

In a glow of light lay a map, marked off into tiny squares. At one spot was a large red dot, which represented the location of this house. At another spot, in New Jersey, was a green dot. Though Marquette did not guess it, that stood for the country residence of Lamont Cranston.

In front of Burbank was an apparatus that Marquette recognized as a radio direction finder. It was evidently set to locate a certain radio beam of a specified short wave length. As Marquette watched, he heard a whispered voice from a loud-speaker that was attached to a special telephone.

"Direction north-northeast, three-quarters east."

THE YELLOW DOOR

The intonation was The Shadow's!

Burbank placed a ruled edge straight from the green dot in the direction that The Shadow had mentioned. He drew a line along it; at the same time, he checked by his own direction finder and spoke methodically:

"West, one-half south."

Turning a metal ruler so that it ran from the red dot, Burbank drew a line of his own. It crossed The Shadow's line at a spot on a second-class highway. Marquette watched Burbank pencil the road in blue, up to that given point.

With that, the situation dawned on Vic Marquette.

The radio beam came from the apparatus in Harry Vincent's suitcase. Using direction finders at two distant points, The Shadow and Burbank were separately gaining their compass readings. Through established telephonic communication, they were passing their individual findings back and forth.

Each had a map, set according to the compass beside it. Each was limited to the simple discovery of a straight line to whatever place Harry's bag might be. But wherever The Shadow's direction line crossed Burbank's, the spot located was an exact indicator of Harry's position.

New directions were coming from The Shadow. Burbank was methodically repeating his own new readings. Marquette watched Burbank repeat his process on the map, finally moving the blue line further along the road; then left at a crossing, on to another highway. Vic knew that The Shadow was employing the same process at his own station.

Minute by minute, mile by mile, The Shadow and Burbank were tracing the car that was manned by members of the Yellow Door. The unseen trail was being followed to the lair where crooks possessed their unknown stronghold.

The trail would continue until The Shadow located the hidden Citadel!

CHAPTER XIX. THE CITADEL

THE sedan had reached the end of its journey.

Harry Vincent knew that they were near the Citadel, by the direct course that the car had taken. Until the present, Lawston had changed from one road to another, threading a mazelike course that had totally baffled Harry.

At last, the driver was keeping to one road; the headlights showed a high-picketed iron fence alongside. The road was a dirt one, lonely amid its enshrouding trees; but beyond the fence was open ground.

Harry was sure that the fence encircled the premises of the Citadel. His surmise proved correct when the car swung in from the road and stopped before a large double gate.

Harry could not guess which of three states boasted this hidden retreat. It might be New York, New Jersey, or Pennsylvania. He knew only that they had not crossed the Hudson River; but whether they had ridden south, north, west, or merely circled, was something that he could not answer.

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He knew that Lawston's deceptive route had been carried through to shake off any followers; but it had deceived Harry in addition.

A narrow-beamed searchlight shone from a high spot in the darkness. It bathed the standing car in a circle of vivid light. Lawston chuckled to Harry.

"They're on the job in the control room," stated the driver. "They knew when we crossed the signal wire. It flashed the blue light."

The sedan had been identified. The big gates were swinging open. Lawston spoke again as he drove forward.

"We got the red signal one night when I was on duty," he added. "Gave the whole fence full voltage when we saw it. Turned out to be a deer that must have been scratching his antlers on the fence."

From these remarks, Harry made definite conjectures. The searchlight had come from some lookout post that served also as control room. Hidden wires along the road would bring a blue signal when a car approached. Anything touching the iron fence would produce red. The fence must be fitted with powerful wires, ready to deliver a death charge of electricity.

HARRY heard the gates clang shut behind the sedan. The searchlight was extinguished. A full moon, struggling to pierce the clouded sky, gave Harry a brief glimpse of a square-walled house some sixty yards ahead. The structure was two stories tall and flat-roofed; but at the front, Harry saw a square-shaped structure that reminded him of a conning tower. It projected upward, like a chimney, above the roof.

The fading glimpse was ended. Harry knew that he had spied the control room of which Lawston had spoken. It was from the tower that the searchlight's glow had come.

"You always shoot the juice?"

Harry put the query as Lawston swung into a driveway beside the house. The headlights showed a bulky door sliding; this was an entrance to a garage.

"When we see the red light?" questioned Lawston. "Sure! What if we do knock off some guy once in a while? The guys that sneak around these woods are the kind that are never missed. We get the green lights once in a while, too."

Lawston jolted the car into a lighted garage; as he applied the brakes, he added:

"But we let the green lights ride. They're for emergency only. We can't take a chance and blow up half the hillside."

Harry's new guess was that hidden mines lay all about the outside terrain. Green lights would give a warning that persons were on their way toward the fence. In an emergency, dynamite would blast invaders skyward before they could approach close enough to chance the hazard of the fence.

All depended upon that control room that topped the Citadel. Of all spots in this square-walled building, it would be the hardest to reach.

Men were alighting from the sedan. Harry copied their example. He started to follow Lawston toward an inner door, when the man stopped him with a laugh.

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"What about your suitcase, Mandon?"

"That's right," returned Harry. "I almost forgot it."

He returned to the car and fished out the bag. Carrying it, he followed the others through the door and up a flight of steps. They reached a large hall on the ground floor. There, Harry was approached by a man with stolid face.

"Hello, Mandon," greeted this fellow, as he caught a nod from Lawston. "I'm Jefford. Come along, I'll give you a room."

He conducted Harry to a corner of the ground floor and opened a door. Harry stepped into a small bedroom and deposited his suitcase on a chair. Jefford closed the door.

"What happened?"

"It worked," replied Harry. "I used Jellup to get old Adlaw's papers. He pulled the stunt last night."

"Adlaw received Smythe's report yesterday?"

"Yes. I had your message, but I didn't head here because I knew that Smythe's report was due."

"You faked a different report?"

"Yes – right after dinner last night. I found a chance to go to Adlaw's myself and plant the phonies."

"Then Jellup isn't wise?"

"Not beyond the fact that he swiped something from Adlaw's files."

JEFFORD congratulated Harry with a hearty clap on the back. Harry knew that the man had heard Krode's story and supposed that the plan had gone through as originally arranged. Suddenly, however, Jefford showed apprehension.

"What was the emergency?"

Harry knew that Jefford's allusion concerned the fact that Harry had come by way of Newburgh. Harry had a prompt answer.

"There was a fellow on the train who looked like a G-man. He came aboard at Albany."

"Describe him."

Harry gave a fair description of Vic Marquette. Jefford whistled softly.

"Marquette!" he muttered. "I wonder how he got into it?"

"There were some papers in Krode's files," chanced Harry, "that told about an advertising account in Albany."

"So Marquette went to Albany. Then it was just luck that he boarded your train."

THE YELLOW DOOR

"That's what I figured afterward," declared Harry. "I was coming into New York. When I saw the fellow, I hopped off at Beacon."

"Did you see him after that?"

"No."

"Then he wasn't trailing you. Well, Mandon, you worked it right. We're all here at last except those who took the bump – and tonight, you'll have your chance to pass through the Yellow Door."

Jefford turned to the door of the room and placed his hand on the knob.

"Come upstairs when you're ready," he said. "We'll all be in the dining room. The meeting comes afterward. We'll all stay upstairs to watch you pass through the Yellow Door."

Harry motioned for Jefford to remain a moment. Unfastening the suitcase, Harry produced Adlaw's papers. He grinned as he passed them to Jefford.

"Smythe's report," stated Harry. "It would have queered the Saginaw deal."

Jefford smiled, well pleased. He took the papers and departed. As soon as the man's footsteps had faded, Harry became busy. He opened the suitcase, ripped the bottom lining and attached the special sending key to the radio apparatus.

MILES away, Burbank was seated in the old house on the Hudson, his finger on the map, while Vic Marquette watched anxiously. Burbank put a quiet statement to the G-man.

"Practically no change in the last ten minutes," declared Burbank. "It looks like the Citadel."

"Square K-52," remarked Marquette, looking over Burbank's shoulder. "West of Nyack, inside the New Jersey border."

"Less than forty miles from New York," asserted Burbank, methodically, "and about the same distance from here, via the Bear Mountain Bridge."

The Shadow's voice came in sudden whisper from the telephone loudspeaker.

"Instructions!" spoke The Shadow. "Connect Marquette with his hotel in New York. Have him detail his men to surround Sector M in Square K-52. Marquette is to join them after contact call from the store at crossroads in Square K-53."

The Shadow had decided that Harry was at the Citadel. He was planning a move for Marquette and the G-men. Burbank produced a map that showed K-52 in detail. Sector M represented the area where the Citadel was located.

Burbank pulled a plug from a small switchboard at his side. He inserted it elsewhere; made a methodical call. Marquette heard Cuyler's voice.

"Hello, Cuyler," announced Vic. "We've got a lead on the Yellow Door. I want you to start out with the squad, full strength, to a place in New Jersey. Form a cordon, but hold back until I join you. When –"

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Burbank interrupted with a single word: "Wait."

Marquette paused. He noted that Burbank seemed to be having trouble with the radio beam. It was breaking; then resuming. Vic started to speak. Burbank motioned for silence.

IN the top room of Lamont Cranston's New Jersey mansion, The Shadow, too, was noting the interruption of the beam. Seated at a table, The Shadow was jotting dots and dashes on a sheet of paper. His laugh was a whispered one that denoted new satisfaction. Harry Vincent was corroborating the fact that he was at the Citadel.

By simple manipulation of the attached key, Harry was breaking the current provided by the dry-cell batteries. Each pressure temporarily disturbed the beam; thereby, Harry was flashing a code-word message. Short-break dots, long-break dashes told their story.

The message ended. To facts gained from Lawston, Harry had added that the members of the Yellow Door would soon assemble on the second floor; that there, after a dinner, Harry, as Mandon, would be taken to the meeting room. Therein, he would see the Yellow Door itself, upon the second floor of the Citadel.

The Shadow pressed a switch to signal Burbank by telephone. Connection came; Burbank had cut off the New York G-men in order that he and Marquette might hear The Shadow's order. The Shadow repeated terse facts that Burbank, too, had heard from Harry. To these, he added comment of his own.

"Citadel fence electrified," announced The Shadow. "Terrain mined. Close approach unsafe. Keep clear of Sector M in Square K-52. Await two-dot, one-dash, three-dot signal from Citadel control room. Then close in Sector M."

The Shadow pulled the plug to end connection. Burbank was free to switch Marquette to the New York call.

In his secluded room, The Shadow arose and extinguished the light by the direction finder. A swish sounded in the darkness. Cloaked, The Shadow was prepared for prompt departure from the house that he occupied as Lamont Cranston.

The unseen trail had worked. The Shadow had learned the Citadel's location, though Harry himself could not guess where he was. Harry, however, had managed to cooperate well, while he played the part of Mandon.

Through his interruption of the beam, Harry had radioed important facts. From those, The Shadow's keen brain had devised a way to deal promptly with the band that called itself the Yellow Door.

CHAPTER XX. BEYOND THE DOOR

DINNER had ended at the Citadel. It had been a prompt meal and a rather brief one. Harry Vincent estimated that less than an hour had passed since he had dispatched word through his process with the sending key.

Harry had used a spare strip of gummed paper to reline the bottom of the suitcase. He knew that the hidden device would again escape detection, if the bag should be examined in his absence.

However, as Ralph Mandon, Harry had no cause for worry while with the members of the Yellow Door. Twenty strong, they had received him with enthusiasm about the huge dining table where Jefford had introduced him.

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Harry's exploit had been heralded by Jefford. He was a hero among the crooks, for they credited him with the completion of Ferris Krode's unfinished task. Henry Adlaw, as purchaser of Saginaw Copper, would be ruined. Enterprises which the Yellow Door held by proxy would gain more than two million dollars through the magnate's failure. So thought the members of the Yellow Door.

As dinner ended, two of the diners ascended a spiral stairway in a hall outside the dining room. Harry knew that they were going to the control room. While he chatted with Rupert Thurlon, a sly-faced rogue whom Harry knew to be the murderer of Howard Bostbaum, Harry saw two men descend from the stairway, and enter the dining room.

Obviously, the members of the Yellow Door took their turn in two-man shifts. Never empty, the control room tower was the vital spot of the Citadel. Harry itched to pay a visit to that spot above. He curbed the urge, for he knew that he was to be taken elsewhere. As Mandon, Harry was to pass through the Yellow Door.

JEFFORD led the way to a large meeting room across the hall from the dining room. The members entered; Harry saw a luxurious room completely furnished in rich purple. Velvet curtains hung from the walls on all sides. The thickly tufted carpet was of the same royal hue. Even the chairs were covered with a purple plush.

There was little ceremony when the meeting began. Jefford began to speak; his remarks were addressed to Harry. It was taken for granted that the newcomer knew about the Yellow Door and had long looked forward to the privilege of passing through that honored barrier. One interruption came, however, soon after Jefford had begun to speak.

It was the tingling of a tiny bell, located somewhere behind a curtain. When he heard the muffled sound, Jefford turned to Thurlon and told him to visit the control room. When Thurlon went out, two others followed.

Jefford continued his talk. Light was mellow in this purple-walled room, for the illumination came from high up near the ceiling, from bulbs nestled in niches behind the tops of curtains. Harry could feel a hypnotic effect from his surroundings; he scarcely caught the import of Jefford's words, until the man's voice rang out:

"And to you, our fellow member, comes the privilege of passing beyond the Yellow Door, there to declare your allegiance to golden walls that hear; to jeweled panels whose gems are seeing eyes!"

Stepping to the far wall, Jefford drew a hanging cord. Curtains spread; the light showed a door of brilliant yellow. Its color was rendered vivid by the opposite contrast of the purple curtains.

"Approach!"

Jefford gave the command. Voices repeated it:

"Approach!"

Harry arose and walked to the Yellow Door.

"Shall he enter?"

Jefford put the query to the throng. In chorus, the members answered:

"He may enter!"

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Jefford placed his hand upon a panel of the door. To Harry, he said a single word:

"Pass!"

Before Jefford could spring the hidden catch that controlled the Yellow Door, a shout came from the front end of the meeting room. Thurlon had returned with his companions. With them was a new arrival. Despite the somberness of the light, Harry recognized the newcomer.

The man was the real Ralph Mandon!

FROZEN, Harry could make no move. The odds were twenty to one against him. Thurlon approached Jefford; the two held conference. Jefford motioned to Mandon, then to Harry. He brought the two together. Harry met Mandon's challenging gaze; he saw an expression of puzzlement come over the other man's face.

Jefford addressed the members of the Yellow Door.

"We have two claimants to membership," he announced, in a dry, hard tone. "One whom we have accepted as Ralph Mandon, who came here by our emergency route. The other, who claims to be Ralph Mandon, who found his way here alone. Which shall we choose?"

It was Thurlon who replied.

"Choose the one," he stated, "who can meet the test."

"The test," approved the members.

Jefford turned to Harry. He put the question: "What lies beyond the Yellow Door?"

"Golden walls that hear," replied Harry, calmly, "and jeweled eyes with gems that see."

"What else?"

Harry made no answer.

"What else?"

This time Jefford's question was directed to Mandon. The man spoke in reply.

"Power," he declared. "Power lies beyond the Yellow Door!"

In that instant, Harry knew that his game was ended. He felt no chill. He was ready to meet whatever torture these rogues might offer. No men seized him; such an act was unnecessary, considering the hopeless odds that Harry faced. Jefford merely eyed Harry; then turned to Mandon, to query:

"Do you know who this man is?"

Mandon shook his head.

"He claimed to be Ferris Krode," he stated. "When I read in the newspapers that Krode was dead, I ended my vacation and hurried East."

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Jefford threw a glare toward Harry. There was evil in his gaze; for Jefford could see Harry as the instigator of the trouble that had come to the Yellow Door. While Jefford glared, the muffled bell tingled. Jefford gave no order. Thurlon and two others left to visit the control room and learn the cause of the new summons.

"You passed as Krode," accused Jefford, harshly. "That, perhaps, explains Krode's death. You are our enemy _"

A tremendous clangor reverberated through the room. Curtains vibrated with the sound of a huge alarm bell. Jefford spun about to face the outer door. It was half opened; from the hallway came the roar of guns.

Thurlon's voice raised a loud shriek. In screaming tone, the man pronounced a name:

"The Shadow!"

IN a flash, Harry understood. The Shadow had arrived by autogiro. Soaring above the roof of the Citadel, he had managed a silent descent from the night. Watchers in the control room had heard the thud when the ship struck the roof. Not realizing the full menace, they had first pressed the summons bell.

The Shadow had invaded. Smashing through a lookout window, he had downed the control room guards with shots. One had managed to sound the huge alarm; that was all. The Shadow had reached the spiral stairway. Descending, he had encountered Thurlon and the murderer's two companions. Two of them had felt the swiftness of The Shadow's vengeance. Thurlon would come later.

Harry whipped an automatic from his pocket, ready to do battle in the meeting room. Mandon saw the move; he flung himself upon The Shadow's agent. In that moment, Harry could have been overwhelmed by force of numbers, had others aided Mandon's task. All, however, were diverted elsewhere.

The door of the meeting room was flung wide. A fierce, sardonic laugh quivered the purple walls, replacing the clangor of the alarm. The Shadow was on the threshold, his ready automatics bulging from his fists.

Jefford shouted. A horde surged forward, whipping guns to view. The Shadow did not stay to face such impossible odds. He would have been a target for fifteen guns. Instead, he whirled away. He was gone when revolvers began to bark. Jefford and the crooks drove forth to overtake their lone foe.

The Shadow's withdrawal was not flight. It was strategy. He was leaping back to the spiral stairway, dashing upward to the control room, while bullets clanged the rail. The Shadow reached the top unscathed; the control room was his pill-box. To attack it would be suicide.

Jefford shouted to his men; they dived to other rooms, to return with oval-shaped bombs. The members of the Yellow Door were ready to blast The Shadow from his stronghold.

Automatics thrust their muzzles into view. Echoing shots sent bombers scattering from the foot of the spiral stairs. Crooks rallied; Harry, still struggling with Mandon, could hear their evil shouts. Then, before men of crime could make another move, an explosion boomed from below.

Smoke poured up the stairway from the ground floor. From it emerged Vic Marquette and a massed throng of G-men, armed with Tommy guns and submachine guns. The Shadow's laugh rose strident from the heights of the control room.

UPON his capture of the control room, The Shadow had paused above the forms of two sagging foemen to blink the dot-dash signal with the searchlight. That had told Marquette that Sector M was clear. Covering the

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control room, The Shadow could prevent action when red or green lights flashed.

Marquette's sturdy squad had overhurlled the useless picket fence. Reaching the Citadel, they had blasted the front door. They were here to deliver final destruction to the Yellow Door.

A bomber poised to fling a "pineapple" down the stairway. Swinging from the control room, The Shadow sped a bullet to the bomber's hand. The missile exploded; the bomber and two crooks beside him were blasted to destruction. Wildly, others hurled themselves down against the G-men, only to wither, sprawl and tumble as machine gun fire reached them.

The rest scattered, most of them away from the meeting room. A few – Jefford and Thurlon with them – sprang into that apartment where Harry fought alone with Mandon. The Shadow bounded down the spiral stairway; he dashed through the deserted second floor hall.

Harry had gained his chance. His right hand free, he crippled Mandon with a bullet; then turned to open hectic fire as Jefford and the others entered. Harry winged Thurlon. Jefford replied; but his shots were wide. Bullets studded the hard wood of the Yellow Door.

Then came The Shadow.

Jefford went sprawling as he turned to meet the cloaked battler. Harry had gained a timely shot. Three others sprang upon The Shadow. Arms swung; guns spoke. Harry fired his last shots at one man who came hurtling sidewise from the fray. Then the group sprawled and lay still. The Shadow crawled free from the bodies of the last vanquished foemen.

Harry was beside his chief. Vaguely, he heard gunfire outside the meeting room, where the G-men were scattering after fleeing crooks. As Harry stooped to raise The Shadow, another man arrived. It was Vic Marquette. He crouched to aid Harry with his chief.

A splotch of blood showed upon The Shadow's forehead. In all the hail of bullets, he had outguessed his foemen. It was a glancing gun blow that had half stunned him; already he was recovering from the blow.

"He's all right, Vincent!" exclaimed Marquette. "Help me get him to his feet –"

A grating sound ended Vic's sentence. He and Harry stared toward the Yellow Door. The barrier had opened. Beyond, they saw a room with golden walls, a tiny space from which gem-studded panels glittered.

A man stood in the doorway, holding a leveled revolver. A flood of golden light showed his gray-tinged hair, and revealed the venomous sneer of tightened lips. This man was a foeman – and Marquette recognized him.

Vic's lips gasped the name:

"Dudley Birklam!"

CHAPTER XXI. THE SETTLEMENT

DUDLEY BIRKLAM was master of the Yellow Door.

That thought shot home to Vic Marquette; and Harry Vincent grasped it. Helpless, their guns away, the two supported the limp body of The Shadow, whose gunless hands dangled around their necks.

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Marquette to The Shadow's left; Harry to his right; at their very feet a crook's revolver that they could not reach. Outside were G-men, rounding up scattered members of the Yellow Door. Yet there was no aid, here in the deserted meeting room.

"Birkklam!" The Shadow's eyes were closed; his lips, barely visible below the slouch hat, muttered dazed words: "Birkklam! I came here to find him. His game was plain!"

Birkklam caught the utterance. He stepped closer, his revolver tight within his fist.

"Birkklam told of Krode," mumbled The Shadow, "to cover his own game. He sent Krode to Cleveland – claimed he did not know where to find him in New York. Birkklam pretended – to be a victim – like the rest – to cover his own game."

Birkklam indulged in a malicious grin. He relished these mutterings from The Shadow.

"Conference with Birkklam," added The Shadow, his head tilted forward. "Tried to mislead us. About the paper. After that, word to Krode. Through Bracy. 'Cover Birkklam' meant to stay away."

A pause. The Shadow gasped broken sentences.

"Jefford not at conferences – only Birkklam knew – servants would not have turned traitors – too many men at one spot – not needed – Bracy knew Birkklam was the big-shot – Jefford acted to prevent Bracy giving name. Abduction faked – so Birkklam could return –"

The Shadow sagged; with an effort, he managed final words:

"I knew –"

Dead weight pulled Harry and Vic downward. Half stooped, they let The Shadow rest upon the floor. He toppled forward, his black cloak spread like a wide, inky blot. Harry glanced at Marquette and caught a nod. They must bluff; make Birkklam think The Shadow dead. Later, The Shadow would revive from his senseless condition.

If Birkklam fired bullets to down Harry and Marquette, he might attract the G-men. In that case, there was a chance that the master crook would not linger to pump bullets into The Shadow's form. Harry and Marquette were both working on the same thought.

"You have heard facts," sneered Birkklam. He was shifting his revolver from man to man; and all the while he saw the outer door, beyond which tumult was distant. "Maudlin facts, but actual ones. I am the master of the Yellow Door! My band is gone, my Citadel taken; yet I shall renew my crimes!"

"Brass walls that look like gold. Glass that shines with the glitter of gems. Bah! There is no value beyond the Yellow Door. I have lost nothing. I shall leave here, by my hidden route. I shall be found by your own men, Marquette. Rescued, I shall be ready to build another group, greater than the Yellow Door.

"You two will die! Do not suppose that your childish effort to save The Shadow will avail. In that spot where he lies senseless, he will receive bullets to insure his death. But your doom comes first. You die together!"

Stepping back, his revolver still moving, Birkklam jerked his left hand to his pocket and brought a second weapon into view. Crouching, he aimed the guns simultaneously – one straight for Harry, the other toward Vic. A gloating chuckle sounded like an order to a firing squad. Birkklam was playing the part of commander

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to himself.

There was a pressure close by Harry's elbow; a quick motion as an arm swept forward, upward. The folds of The Shadow's cloak whipped from the floor, impelled by a hand that came with trip hammer speed. A revolver barrel glistened.

Birklam saw the motion. Viciously, he jabbed both guns downward, toward the rising head and shoulders of The Shadow. Birklam was a moment late. A gloved finger pressed the revolver trigger before the master of the Yellow Door had finished his aim. Half muffled by the folds of the cloak, the revolver blasted its message.

Birklam jolted, hit. He reeled sidewise, beyond Vic Marquette, there to rally and take aim as The Shadow rose. The cloaked fighter, though slow in body motion was quick with the revolver that he had taken from the floor. He was swifter than Birklam, in aim. Still, he had no need to fire.

Marquette had pulled his own gun with The Shadow's shot; Harry was staging the same maneuver. The G-man gained the lead. He ripped rapid bullets from the nearest range. A hail of slugs found Birklam's body. As the master of the Yellow Door went toppling, The Shadow's aim followed downward, to be ready if necessary. Birklam subsided with a gasp.

THE SHADOW tossed the revolver to the floor, beside the body of the crook who had owned it. He picked up his automatics, which lay some space away and placed them beneath his cloak. The Shadow spoke an order to Harry; with his agent following, he strode from the room.

Vic Marquette had charge of the field of battle. The Department of Justice man stood pondering over The Shadow's strategy. Recovered from a stunning gun blow, The Shadow had seen Birklam gain control. Weaponless, The Shadow had provided the antidote for the master-crook's poison.

Mumbled words, uttered as in delirium: those had been The Shadow's strategy. They had held Birklam intent; they had made the leering foeman chortle as he heard his own devices revealed. Birklam had believed The Shadow downed. So, for that matter, had Harry and Marquette.

Slumped, The Shadow had covered the useful revolver that Harry and Marquette had wanted. Choosing the vital moment, he had used it. With one quick-aimed shot, The Shadow had vanquished the master of the Yellow Door.

G-MEN had completed their round-up when Vic Marquette joined them. The law stood victorious. Outside the Citadel, surviving crooks were huddled in a captive band. As Marquette surveyed these remnants of the Yellow Door, he heard a thrumming from above. Against the dim white of the moon-clouded sky, Vic saw an autogiro rising high into the night.

Whirling blades were visible as the ship continued upward. Clouds thickened; tree boughs added blackness. Only the fading roar of the laboring motor remained.

The Shadow had departed, triumphant.

THE END