

# **The Blue Sphinx**

Maxwell Grant

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# The Blue Sphinx

Maxwell Grant

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## CHAPTER I. HAWKEYE HEARS NEWS

"WHAT you doin' in this doorway, fellow?"

The policeman growled the question as he stepped suddenly into the entryway of an old, dilapidated store. Flickering a flashlight, he studied a shrewd, pointed face that showed above the collar of a turtle-neck sweater.

"Just keepin' out of the rain, officer." The sweated man grinned as he made reply. "Smokin' a cig while I'm waitin' for it to let up. Comin' heavy, ain't it?"

Short of stature, the sweated man straightened his stooped shoulders as he spoke. He made two gestures. One, with his left hand, showed the lighted cigarette of which he had spoken. With his right hand, the little man indicated the steady downpour that was dripping about the structure of an elevated line.

A train came rumbling along before the cop had another chance to speak. The little man puffed nonchalantly

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at his cigarette while the bluecoat continued to scrutinize him with the flashlight. Then, as the clatter faded, the cop delivered another question.

"Keepin' out of the wet, eh?" he challenged, "Lookin' out for your health, I guess?"

"That's it," returned the little man, with another puff at the cigarette.

"Yeah?" growled the bluecoat. "Well, wise boy, I'm tellin' you somethin'. You won't find a doorway a healthy place on my beat."

"This one's not so bad, officer."

"Yeah? Why not?"

"Because the store's empty. Use that glim you've got an' you'll see. That's why I picked this spot. Figured you might be comin' along."

The cop flashed his light on grimy, empty windows. He saw that the sweated man's statement was correct. This doorway offered no inducement for crime. Whatever the man's purpose here, burglary could not be a motive.

"Lucky the dragnet's not operatin'," declared the cop, gruffly. "If it was, I'd run you in. Move along! If I catch you loiterin' again, I'll make the pinch!"

The sweated man flicked his cigarette into the gutter. With a shrug of his shoulders, he slouched from the doorway and headed down the street.

The patrolman, using the doorway as his own temporary post, watched until he saw the fellow cross the next street. Swinging his club, he resumed his beat.

TWO minutes after the policeman had passed the corner, a hunched figure stepped from the shelter of an elevated post. A drizzle-dulled street lamp showed the same crafty face above the rolled neck of the sweater.

Moving swiftly, the little man returned to the doorway from which the officer had ejected him. Crouching in the darkness, he lighted a fresh cigarette. As he smoked, he kept the glow hidden by his hand.

This doorway occupant was well known to certain characters of Manhattan's underworld. He was nicknamed "Hawkeye," and the moniker was well chosen. For Hawkeye possessed an uncanny ability in keeping watch on the business of other people; and he was also famed for his skill in detecting the approach of any danger.

Hawkeye had slipped to-night. His muttering was testimony to that fact. It had been a long while since any flatfoot had uncovered Hawkeye nestled in a hiding place. Hawkeye knew the reason: the policeman had spotted the glow of the cigarette. That was why the crafty-faced fellow was keeping the new glow covered.

Hawkeye's mutters ended in a chuckle. After all, he had talked the cop out of making a pinch. That showed foresight on Hawkeye's part. He had chosen this lurking place because the patrolman was new on the beat. Others might have recognized Hawkeye; but this bluecoat had not.

There was another reason, also, why Hawkeye had picked this place to loiter. The borders of the underworld were cut by definite routes along which crooks traveled. This particular block and the one beyond it formed a highroad of the bad lands.

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Passers had thinned while the patrolman was in sight. With the officers gone, new figures came in sight. A shambling hop-head; a cane-toting peddler; two hard-faced gorillas these were men who went by while Hawkeye watched. From the darkness of the doorway, the wary-eyed observer continued his vigil.

Hawkeye was looking for old faces. Identified with crooks, he was constantly on the lookout for old pals who had long been missing. More figures passed. Hawkeye stamped out his consumed cigarette and cautiously lighted another. Then his low chuckle came again as he spied a man approaching on the other side of the street.

The newcomer's face was not discernible at this distance. But his gait, half stroll, half slouch, seemed familiar to Hawkeye. The watcher waited until the man had passed; then, after a quick peer from the doorway, Hawkeye emerged and took up the trail.

Half a block ahead, the stroller turned into an alleyway. Hawkeye quickened his pace as he crossed beneath the elevated. When he reached the alley, he looked through to a lighted street at the other end. There was no sign of the stroller.

Hawkeye knew where he had gone. Halfway down the alley was the darkened entry of a dive that regulars called "Luke's Joint."

That, alone, could have been the stroller's destination.

HAWKEYE had entrance to Luke's Joint. He went along the alley, descended three steps and gave a short, quick rap. A door opened; a scarred face met Hawkeye's. A nod and a growl; and the little fellow was admitted into a dimly lighted entry.

Continuing through, Hawkeye entered a fair-sized room where half a dozen rough-faced rowdies were seated at tables.

One man, seated in a far corner, was alone. He had apparently just entered, for Luke, the proprietor, was setting a bottle and glass on the table. Hawkeye caught a glimpse of the man's face. Strolling over, he stepped up as Luke was turning and nudged the seated man on the shoulder.

The fellow wheeled. His square, pock-marked face showed a scowl as challenging epithets came to his bloated lips. Then the scowl changed to a leer. A big hand grabbed Hawkeye's and dragged the little man to the table.

"How're you, Tinker?" chuckled Hawkeye. "Thought it was you, the minute I lamped your mug. Say you're the last guy I thought I was goin' to see when I come in here."

"Yeah?" laughed "Tinker." "Well, it's the same here, Hawkeye. I ain't knowed anything about you since we was up in the Big House together. Have a drink. Then tell me the news."

Hawkeye shrugged his shoulders. That indicated that he had nothing to talk about. His eyes, however, were shrewdly questioning.

Tinker caught their meaning. He laughed; then spoke low.

"Figuring something, ain't you?" he asked. "Figuring that the big town ain't no spot for Tinker Furriss."

"That's it," nodded Hawkeye.

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"I ain't staying here long," declared Tinker. "Moving out day after to-morrow."

"Where to?"

"A town called Latuna. Ever hear of it?"

"A long way from here, ain't it?"

"Yeah." Tinker nodded. Then, carefully, he added. "What else have you heard about that town?"

"Nothin' much," replied Hawkeye, in an indifferent tone. "Only enough to make me figure it ain't healthy. Cuckoo Mohart was down in Latuna once. Took it on the lam with some other gorillas when the town had a clean-up. Told me it was too hot."

"It was," decided Tinker. "But it ain't now. Konk Zitz is sitting pretty in Latuna."

"Yeah? What's his racket?"

"He don't seem to have none yet. But he wants me down there with him. What's more, he can use any guy that's a pal of mine. More than one, for that matter."

"Meanin' me, for instance?"

"Yeah."

TINKER'S proposition was a prompt one; but it brought a shake of the head from Hawkeye. Tinker eyed his former prison mate. Apparently, Hawkeye preferred to remain in New York. Tinker made a statement instead of putting a query.

"Might use you on a job here," he suggested. "To-morrow night. That's why I'm in town."

"A job for Konk Zitz?" inquired Hawkeye.

"No," replied Tinker. "A lay that I wised up to on my own. I can let you in on it, Hawkeye, if you can get me the guy I want."

"Who's that?"

"A bird you used to travel around with. Fellow named Tapper. Pretty good safe-cracker, ain't he?"

"Not many better."

"Can you get him?"

"Maybe." Hawkeye was cagey for a moment; then, looking around warily, he turned to Tinker and spoke in a whisper. "Tapper's like me. We're both dodgin' the bulls. Ain't no use takin' too many chances."

"This one's a set-up for a guy like Tapper."

"Yeah. I've heard of set-ups before. So has Tapper. It was a set-up put him in the Big House. We're keepin' out of stir, Tapper an' me —"

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"Listen," interrupted Tinker, with a low growl. "You know where old Cobleton's hock shop is, don't you?"

"Sure!" responded Hawkeye. "Next block to where Bingo's old speak used to be."

"Well, Cobleton's would be a cinch, wouldn't it?"

"Sure for a guy that'd want to drag away a lot of theatrical trunks an' old stage stuff. Every busted vaudeville troupe unloads its junk on that guy."

"That's what people think. But I know different. Heard it from an actor that had some jewelry along with his old curtains. He hocked a back drop with Cobleton, then asked him about getting cash for the rocks. This ham saw some of the sparklers that old Cobleton had in his safe."

Hawkeye looked up and blinked. Tinker Furriss laughed. He saw awakened interest.

"Cobleton thinks that junk is a good blind," whispered Tinker. "But it ain't no longer, now that I'm wise. He leaves the hock shop at night. It'll be a cinch with Tapper for the job. Well are you getting him?"

"Sure!" responded Hawkeye. "I'll talk to him."

"All right." Tinker pushed the bottle toward the little man. "Have another drink. Then slide out. Meet me here to-morrow night, with Tapper. In the back room. And listen. This means taking it on the lam, see? Latuna for us, as soon as the job's over. Before the bulls get on our trail. We'll be all set when we get with Konk Zitz."

Hawkeye nodded slowly. He finished his drink, growled a good-bye and slouched from Luke's joint. Reaching the alley, he turned away from the direction of the street where he had spied Tinker Furriss.

A SHREWD smile showed on Hawkeye's lips as the sweated spotter neared a lighted area. Hawkeye was heading from the borders of the underworld. His mission for to-night was accomplished. Out of many passers he had spied one who looked like quarry. From that one he had learned the details of a contemplated plan.

There had been method in Hawkeye's reluctance to join forces with Tinker Furriss. For Hawkeye had long since left the paths of crime. Accepted as a crook by the underworld, this crafty worker was doing his part to offset men of evil.

Hawkeye had gone straight since his discharge from Sing Sing. That, however, had been but his first step in a new career. After abandoning crime as a profession, Hawkeye had done his part to beat the workers of the underworld. He had become an agent of The Shadow.

Through his connections in the bad lands, Hawkeye had become a useful aid to the hidden master who battled men of crime. Whatever Hawkeye learned went to that superfighter whose very name had become terror to all crookdom.

Tinker Furriss had come to New York to complete a deed of crime. That finished, he intended to leave for the town of Latuna, to serve as underling for "Konk" Zitz, a powerful crook leader whose whereabouts had long been undiscovered.

Two clues from Hawkeye to The Shadow: Known crime to be thwarted; unknown evil to be forestalled. Such would be Hawkeye's contribution to the chief whom he now served. Yet the double information offered a dilemma to Hawkeye, despite the enthusiasm that the crafty spotter felt.

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To prevent Tinker Furriss from completing crime; yet to leave Tinker free to join Konk Zitz in Latuna such would be The Shadow's problem. How The Shadow would accomplish both was a puzzle to Hawkeye.

Yet the crafty smile did not fade from Hawkeye's lips. His part was done. The action lay with The Shadow. And Hawkeye, acquainted with the prowess of his hidden chief, could feel no doubt. Somehow, Hawkeye knew, The Shadow would solve the problem.

### CHAPTER II. THE SECOND LINK

ON the following morning, a rotund, chubby-faced man alighted from a taxicab near Times Square. The steady rain had ended shortly after dawn; and the freshness of the morning air brought a pleased smile to this leisurely, methodical-looking individual.

The chubby man paused outside the entrance of the mammoth Badger Building; then, with a reluctant manner, he entered the lobby and took an elevator. He alighted at one of the higher floors and strolled along a corridor until he reached a door that bore the lettering:

RUTLEDGE MANN

INVESTMENTS

With a smile that denoted ownership, the chubby man entered to greet a stenographer and an office boy who had arrived before him. He walked into an inner office where he found a stack of newspapers on his desk, with a small pile of letters close by.

Opening the letters, Mann read them briefly until he came to one that was written in ink of vivid blue.

The message could not have been deciphered by an ordinary reader, for it was in code. Mann, however, perused it with ease. At the same time, he was careful to note every detail of the odd epistle. He seemed to be memorizing the letter as he read.

Mann placed the message on his desk, when he had finished. He stared meditatively from the window and began to tap his forefinger upon the desk as he recalled what he had read.

While Mann was thus engaged in thought, the writing on the letter started to fade. Words disappeared in irregular order, as though some ghostly hand had stretched forth to eradicate them. When Mann again turned toward the desk, the sheet of paper was a total blank.

The investment broker did not appear surprised. He simply crumpled the blank sheet and tossed it in the wastebasket. Then he rang for the office boy.

"Go down to the Times Square news stand, Horace," ordered Mann. "I want you to obtain some more out-of-town newspapers."

"Did I forget some, Mr. Mann?" questioned Horace, anxiously. "I brought all that were on your list, sir. At least I thought I did —"

"You did," interposed Mann, quietly. "The ones that I want were not on my original list. Buy some recent journals all that you can obtain from the city of Latuna."



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"Yes, sir."

After Horace had left, Mann drew a fountain pen from his pocket and began to write a message of his own. It was in the same ink of vivid blue; it was also a note in code. As soon as the ink had dried, Mann folded the sheet and sealed it in an envelope.

The message that Rutledge Mann had received was from a man named Slade Farrow, a criminologist who was ever ready to aid The Shadow. Slade Farrow was Hawkeye's sponsor. It was Farrow who had turned the ex-crook straight.

Last night, Farrow had received Hawkeye's information. Using special ink supplied him at The Shadow's order, Farrow had passed on the word to Rutledge Mann. For this chubby-faced gentleman who posed as an investment broker was actually an aid of The Shadow. Mann served as contact agent between the active workers and their mysterious chief.

In writing to The Shadow, Mann had merely repeated the report as received from Hawkeye. But he had also taken on another duty. One of Mann's functions was to go through out-of-town newspapers in search of items that might give inklings of crime. The stack of newspapers on his desk were there for that purpose. No Latuna paper was among them. So Mann had sent out for those journals.

WHEN Horace returned fifteen minutes later, he brought four newspapers. Three were copies of the Latuna Gazette, a sizable journal, while the fourth was a thinner sheet called the Latuna Enterprise.

Mann chose the Gazette for a start. He went through each issue carefully, checking on the events of three succeeding days. He found nothing of striking interest.

The Enterprise was a more sensational sheet. Its news value appeared limited, however, until Mann reached the fourth page, where he observed an editorial in large type. As he began to read the column, a smile appeared upon Mann's lips. The editorial bore an apt title; and its language was satirical:

### ONE SPHINX MORE

The city of Latuna is to gain a new art treasure. Even though our uncompleted museum lacks space to exhibit the valuable collections that it owns, the donors appear to be undeterred in their efforts to make Latuna the art center of this state.

Thanks to Strafford Malden, who deeded Latuna the ground upon which the unfinished museum stands, our citizens will soon be able to gaze with awe upon the serene countenance of a genuine Egyptian sphinx.

A relic of the Eighteenth Dynasty, the Blue Sphinx has been pried from its moorings in the Libyan Desert and is now learning the comforts of modern travel aboard a flat car attached to an American fast freight.

We should like to interview the Blue Sphinx upon its arrival in Latuna. We should like to learn its present impressions as they contrast with its four-thousand-year sojourn amid the desert sands. But unfortunately sphinxes are famed for their silence. No sphinx would talk, even if it could.

So the Blue Sphinx will remain silent in Latuna. From its resting place in the great hall of the museum, it will wisely eye our citizenry and keep its impressions to itself. We shall learn nothing from the Blue Sphinx. But perhaps the Blue Sphinx will learn something from us. If it does, it will be happy.

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For it will discover that it is not alone in Latuna. The Blue Sphinx will be pleased when it sees our Mayor Sphinx and our Police Chief Sphinx. Indeed, every day that it rests in the museum, it will be the guest of our Curator Sphinx.

Most of us will be present when the Blue Sphinx is installed. That will be a time for silence on the part of Sphinxes. But afterward, when individuals can visit the museum quietly and alone, we may visualize a Sphinx party, wherein the Silent Ones may gather in secret conclave.

There, perhaps, our Mayor Sphinx may explain why he has not exposed the details of graft that he discovered when he house-cleaned after the demise of the previous administration. Our Police Chief Sphinx again perhaps may state why he still allows characters of criminal caliber to sojourn in our midst. Our Curator Sphinx yes, perhaps may reveal the causes for his delay in completing final plans for the new portions of the museum.

In return, perhaps, the Blue Sphinx may divulge some mighty secrets of the Nile. But we doubt that such revelations would interest its human brethren. After all, the Sphinx party may never be held.

Yet one fact remains apparent. The Blue Sphinx from Libya might be a unique possession for any city other than Latuna. But in our fair town, it will just be one more Sphinx.

When he had finished reading the editorial, Mann referred to the masthead at the top of the column and learned that the owner and editor of the Latuna Enterprise was named Harrison Knode.

Still smiling, the investment broker clipped the editorial and the information above it. He sealed the clipping in another envelope. Then he placed both sealed envelopes in a larger wrapper.

Referring to copies of the Gazette, he found mention of the mayor's name as Quirby Rush. He also learned that the police chief was named Lawrence Grewling.

After a longer search, Mann found an item which mentioned that the Latuna Museum was open from 10 A.M. until 8 P.M. The curator's name was given as Joseph Rubal.

Mann wrote all three names upon a sheet of paper and put it in a little envelope of his own. He added this to those in the large envelope, sealed his packet and placed it in his pocket. Then he left his office.

TWENTY minutes later, Rutledge Mann arrived at an old office building on Twenty-third Street. He entered, passed through a dingy hall and ascended a flight of creaking, tilted stairs. He reached an obscure corridor and stopped in front of an office door. The grimy, cobwebbed panel was of glass. It bore the name:

B. JONAS

Mann dropped the big envelope in a mail slot and departed. His face was quizzical when he reached the street. It was not the thought of that obscure office that made Mann seem puzzled. That office was permanently deserted, from all appearances; yet it served as The Shadow's mail box.

Mann had given up speculation regarding how and when The Shadow entered to receive reports.

What puzzled Mann was the same problem that had troubled Hawkeye. Like the crafty spotter, the investment broker was wondering how his chief would handle Tinker Furriss, yet still have a free hand when he began an investigation in the town of Latuna.

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Hawkeye had supplied word that Tinker planned crime; also, that Latuna was a spot where crime impended. Mann by reference to the Latuna Gazette, had produced tangible evidence that deep waters lay ahead. Latuna must be The Shadow's goal. Would he let Tinker Furriss get away with crime in order to keep Konk Zitz lulled?

Mann decided not. Though The Shadow was a mystery, even to this contact agent, Mann, like all the other aids, knew that The Shadow allowed no spoils to evil-doers. Somehow, The Shadow would thwart Tinker's scheme of crime, yet manage to keep from damaging his Latuna campaign.

How? Rutledge Mann was still wondering when he reached his office, and the only solution he could furnish was a head shake. Like Hawkeye, Mann had reached the conclusion that the problem was beyond all persons but The Shadow.

### CHAPTER III. FROM THE SANCTUM

WHITE hands, agile and long-fingered, beneath the rays of a bluish light. The Shadow was in his sanctum, an unknown abode, secluded somewhere in Manhattan. Upon a polished table lay Mann's messages, together with the clipping from the Latuna Enterprise.

Writing faded. Clipping was thrust aside. Hands stretched across the table and obtained a pair of earphones. A tiny signal bulb glimmered on the wall. A quiet voice came across the wire:

"Burbank speaking."

Mann in his office, during daytime hours; Burbank in an obscure room, at night. These were the contact agents of The Shadow. Where Mann, slow and deliberate, served in the development of preliminary plans, Burbank was ready when action called. Active agents were always ready to receive his relayed orders from The Shadow.

"Instructions to Vincent." The Shadow's voice came in an awesome whisper. "Insert this advertisement in the late edition of the Evening Traveler: 'Wanted, Four Salesmen, preferably those knowing Mid-West conditions convincingly.'"

Burbank's reply was a careful repetition of the words that The Shadow had given him. Then came another order from The Shadow.

"Instructions to Burke," was the whisper from the unseen lips. "Arrange to accompany Cardona on nightly inspection tour of the East Side. Special story for the New York Classic."

"Instructions received," replied Burbank.

"Instructions to Marsland," resumed The Shadow. "Pick up message in Shrevnitz cab one block above Cobalt Club, seven o'clock. Follow orders as given."

"Instructions received."

The earphones clicked against the wall. The bluish light went out with a click. A soft laugh quivered through blackened walls, rose to a startling crescendo, then faded into shuddering echoes.

With the last tones of that dying mockery came a hush amid the Stygian blackness. The Shadow had departed

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by his secret exit. The sanctum had returned to its inky emptiness. Day or night, that strange abode remained a chamber of blackness.

AFTERNOON hours waned. It was half past six when a personage attired in evening clothes entered a cab near Times Square. Tall, calm-faced and silent, this individual carried himself with remarkable composure.

Despite the fact that his keen, hawklike visage was most unusual, this stroller had a way of rendering himself inconspicuous in the crowd. He chose an opportune moment when he entered the cab and stepped aboard so quietly that even the shrewd-eyed driver failed to note his entry.

The first indication that the taximan received of a passenger was when a whispered voice came through the opened window to the front. The driver half started; then nodded. He stared straight ahead when he pulled from the curb.

The taxi driver's name was Moe Shrevnitz. Familiar with Manhattan's many thoroughfares, a capable man in a pinch, Moe had been mustered into The Shadow's service. The Shadow owned the independent cab that Moe drove. The taximan kept close to a chosen point near Times Square, to await The Shadow's call.

The voice from the cab was the whisper of The Shadow. Recognizing it, Moe knew that he was conveying his chief. As he neared his destination, he again caught a statement from The Shadow.

"Wait for Marsland," was the whisper. "Deliver this message to him."

An envelope dropped beside Moe as the driver wheeled toward the curb. Moe picked up the envelope as he stopped. He placed it in his pocket; then turned about. The cab was empty.

In that brief interval after the arrival, The Shadow had stepped to the curb. Though garbed in evening clothes, he had strangely vanished.

Moe settled back to await Cliff's appearance.

The Shadow had chosen a destination close to the exclusive Cobalt Club. He had turned in the direction of the club building after leaving Moe's cab. A few minutes later, the doorman bowed as The Shadow strolled into view.

"Good evening, Mr. Cranston," said the doorman. "Commissioner Barth is expecting you, sir."

"Very good," was the quiet reply. A slight smile showed on thin lips as The Shadow entered to find the police commissioner. In his visits to the Cobalt Club, The Shadow came in the guise of Lamont Cranston, millionaire globe-trotter. It was a most convenient personality, for the real Lamont Cranston was seldom in New York.

In his guise of Cranston, The Shadow had become a close friend of Commissioner Wainwright Barth. He found Barth awaiting him in the lobby. They shook hands and went to the grillroom for dinner.

SEATED at the table, the two formed a marked contrast. The Shadow's guise of Lamont Cranston made him appear as a quiet, lackadaisical individual, despite the keenness of his hawklike countenance.

Barth, on the contrary, was restless. Tall, he thrust his long neck forward from the collar of his evening shirt. His smooth pate gave him the appearance of a bald eagle, while his eyes gleamed through the lenses of his pince-nez spectacles.

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"Prevention of crime," announced Barth, above his soup cup. "That is my watchword, Cranston. Despite the fact that the newspapers sometimes criticize my policies, I am achieving results."

"Ah, yes," responded the pretended Cranston. "Come here, waiter. Get me a final copy of the Evening Traveler."

"Yes, sir," said the waiter.

"The Traveler is a conservative newspaper," commended Barth. "You will find very little sensationalism in its pages. If you wish to see the outrageous crime reports that some journals are printing, I refer you to that yellow sheet, the Classic."

"I am not looking for crime reports," returned The Shadow, in the quiet voice of Cranston. "I am interested in the day's doings at the stock market. Pardon me for a few minutes, commissioner, while I read the Wall Street news."

Barth looked annoyed while he was finishing his soup. Cranston's few minutes were longer than anticipated. He was still studying the stock market pages when the waiter appeared with the next course. Barth glowered indignantly. Then he turned suddenly as a club attendant approached.

"A telephone call for you, commissioner," said the man. "You can take it right here, at the grillroom telephone."

"Very well," stated Barth.

As the commissioner went to the telephone, The Shadow lowered the newspaper slightly. With keen eyes, he noted every expression of Barth's face. From annoyance, Barth showed excitement; then came indignation. Flipping the receiver on the hook, he came stalking back to the table.

"A crank call!" he announced testily. "Some boulder hung up after he had delivered a message. I've had that experience before, Cranston."

"Perhaps the message was important."

"Maybe it was. Jove! I was so incensed by the fellow's action that I almost forgot what he told me. Let me have that newspaper, Cranston! This is a coincidence, your having the very one right here."

"The last edition of the Evening Traveler!"

"Yes. The want-ad section."

"What did you learn about it?"

"The man who called up," explained Barth, as he went through the pages, "was insistent that I look for an advertisement that bears the key-number J-547. He said that he had been reading the want-ads, and that it appeared only in the last edition.

"Calling the Traveler office, he learned that the advertisement had later been recalled. He thinks it must be a hoax of some sort. A message, perhaps, with some unusual purpose.

"Ah, here is the advertisement in question. I see nothing odd about it."

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LEANING over the table, Barth pointed out the ad to his companion. In Cranston's fashion, The Shadow read the words, which were followed by the key-number.

"Rather unusual," was his comment.

"Why so?" demanded Barth.

"Cumbersome, to begin with," stated The Shadow. "Not as illuminating as it might be. To what conditions does the ad refer? And why the word 'convincingly' at the end?"

"Quite peculiar," agreed Barth. "I wonder, Cranston, could it be a code?"

"Read it to me," suggested Cranston, returning the newspaper to the commissioner, "word by word, while I write them down."

Barth complied. He began to nod wisely.

"Certain letters might mean something," he said, looking at the ad. "Let's try the first ones: W F S no, that brings us nowhere. The second letters: A O A that is quite as bad. The third letters –"

"One moment, commissioner," interposed The Shadow. "Maybe you're on the right track, but going the wrong direction."

"How so?"

"You started with first letters; then seconds. Suppose we take the first letter of the first word: the second letter of the second word; and so on. Here I shall arrange the words in column form, marking those letters heavily. It's working –"

Barth seized the paper on which Cranston was writing, the moment that his companion had completed the column. Staring keenly, Barth saw the result:

WANTED

FOUR

SALESMEN

PREFERABLY

THOSE

KNOWING

MID-WEST

CONDITIONS

CONVINCINGLY

## The Blue Sphinx

"Wolfenson!" exclaimed the commissioner. "The name shows up in the acrostic which those letters form. Do you suppose that it refers to Tobias Wolfenson, the chicle king?"

"Possibly," replied The Shadow. "He is the only Wolfenson of prominence. He has a magnificent estate on Long Island. He prefers to live a secluded life, I understand."

"This message," affirmed Barth, nodding wisely as he tapped the newspaper, "appears to be conveying information from one person to another. Probably naming a certain objective. Perhaps one criminal is notifying another where to strike. Cranston, this requires investigation. I shall communicate with Tobias Wolfenson at once."

"His telephone is probably unlisted."

"I shall go directly to his house on Long Island. Accompanied by a squad from headquarters. Can you come with me, Cranston?"

"Hardly. I am entertaining to-night at my home in New Jersey. But why the squad, commissioner? I should think that your ace detective what is his name should be sufficient."

"Joe Cardona? Yes, I was thinking of him, Cranston. Cardona is at present an acting inspector. Making routine trips through the underworld. I shall have him drop that duty to-night. Pardon me, Cranston, while I call headquarters."

BARTH went to the telephone and put in a call. Returning, he applied himself to hasty eating, explaining the speed with which he was finishing his dinner.

"Cardona is joining me here," announced Barth. "I told him to bring three picked men. Inspector Egglestone will take up Cardona's usual duties to-night."

Just as Barth was finishing his dessert, an attendant arrived to inform him that Inspector Cardona had arrived outside. Rising hurriedly, the commissioner shook hands with his friend Cranston and departed.

A thin smile appeared upon the lips that looked like Cranston's. That smile remained until The Shadow arose, a few minutes later, and also strolled from the Cobalt Club. When he had reached the street, this being disguised as Cranston indulged in a soft, whispered laugh.

By subtle measures, The Shadow had set a false trail for the impulsive police commissioner. Intrigued by hope of an unusual crime hunt, Barth was heading for Long Island. With him, he was taking Joe Cardona; the ace detective would be absent from the underworld to-night.

That was the end which The Shadow had sought. The temporary elimination of Joe Cardona fitted with the plan that he had made for to-night. Aided by his agents, The Shadow was ready to complete the steps that would frustrate crime and give him direct approach to the city of Latuna.

## CHAPTER IV. IN THE PAWNSHOP

AT eight o'clock that same evening, Hawkeye entered the obscure doorway of Luke's Joint. Sidling through the room where thugs convened, he found another doorway and peered into a smaller room. He spied Tinker Furris seated at a table. Hawkeye entered.

## The Blue Sphinx

"Hello, Hawkeye," growled Tinker. "Say I thought you was bringing Tapper. What'd you do? Tell him to meet you here."

Hawkeye shook his head. He sat down at the table and spoke in a troubled tone.

"Tapper ain't comin'," he informed. "He can't take no chances, Tinker. I don't blame him."

"Why not?"

"On account of The Shadow."

"The Shadow!"

"Yeah. It looks like he's watchin' Tapper."

A change came over Tinker's pockmarked face. This mention of the underworld's great foe was disconcerting. Tinker laughed; but the tone was not genuine.

"If The Shadow is trailin' Tapper," asserted Hawkeye, leaning across the table, "he may be trailin' me next. It ain't safe for neither of us to make a move. We got to look like we was turnin' goody-goody. See?"

"There ain't nothin' that The Shadow could pin on us; but if he's watchin', there's no chance of pullin' a dodge. I figure Tapper's got the right idea. He says stick in New York. No scrammin' for either of us –"

"Then the deal's off?" broke in Tinker, savagely. "You mean I got to pass up this cinch job at the hock shop until I can dig up some guy that's as good as Tapper?"

"I ain't sayin' that," returned Hawkeye. "I'm tellin' you first that Tapper wants to stay out of it an' I've got to stick by Tapper. Now that that's in your noodle, I'll give you the rest. I got a guy that'll work with you."

"As good as Tapper?"

"Better than Tapper."

Tinker looked incredulous. Hawkeye grinned; then threw a wary look toward the door. No one was in sight. Hawkeye spoke.

"DID you ever hear of a guy who was named Cliff Marsland?" he questioned. "Well" Hawkeye grinned again as he saw Tinker nod "I got hold of Cliff an' he's comin' here to work with you to-night."

Tinker was impressed. He had heard of Cliff's reputation in the underworld. In the bad lands, Cliff was rated as one of the best lieutenants that any big shot could desire. He had a reputation as a killer. But there was one point that came as news to Tinker Furris.

"Cliff Marsland ain't no safe-buster," objected the pock-faced crook. "He's a good guy. If he wants to head for Latuna with me, Konk Zitz can use him there. But this box up at Cobleton's hock shop –"

"Listen, Tinker," broke in Hawkeye. "I'm wisin' you to somethin' that only a couple of guys know. Cliff Marsland can knock off any tin box that you show him an' he don't need no soup for the job, neither."



## The Blue Sphinx

"That's his real racket. That's why he's got the bulls goofy. He don't have to trail around with a crew of gorillas all the time. When things get hot, he loaf. Looks like he's takin' a vacation, see? But he ain't. He's workin' on his own, safe-crackin' —"

"He's coming here to-night?" quizzed Tinker, convinced enough to interrupt.

"Sure!" nodded Hawkeye. "Maybe he's outside now. I told him to wait there. Didn't want to mention your name to him until I could find out if it was O.K."

"It's oke. Lamp those mugs in the outer room and see if he's there."

Hawkeye went to the door and peered craftily. His eyes lighted. He made a beckoning gesture. Backing into the room, Hawkeye made way for a stalwart, broad-shouldered chap. Tinker Furriss caught sight of a firm, chiseled face. He recognized Cliff Marsland.

Introductions were brief. A few minutes later, Tinker and Cliff were engaged in a businesslike discussion as they considered the matter of Cobleton's safe. Tinker made his terms.

"Hawkeye wants to be out of it," he announced. "I was going to offer half the swag to him and Tapper. So I'll make the same proposition to you, Cliff. Fifty-fifty. If Hawkeye thinks he ought to come in for a cut, he gets it from you."

"Count me out," insisted Hawkeye.

"All right," resumed Tinker. "Well, Cliff, that means me and you. We take it on the lam for Latuna afterward. You'll break in with Konk Zitz. You, instead of Tapper."

Cliff nodded his agreement. Hawkeye, seeing that matters were settled, arose and made his exit in his usual wary fashion. Cliff and Tinker completed their plan of action. Then they left Luke's Joint.

COBLETON'S pawnshop was an isolated building despite its East Side location. The low roof of a garage was on one side; a deserted house on the other, with a street of alley proportions running between the hock shop and the empty house.

The lower floor had barred windows; but the second story offered opportunity for attack. The best means of entrance lay at the back of the house, where a high fence was an attraction for second-story workers.

But while Cliff and Tinker were on their way to Cobleton's, another visitor arrived there before them. Gliding past the front of the pawnshop, a phantom figure paused to study the building. Dim, almost invisible as it stood by a shrouding wall, this shape showed the outline of black-cloaked shoulders, with a slouch hat above.

The Shadow had arrived at Cobleton's. He had instructed Cliff Marsland to contact with Hawkeye, through Slade Farrow. Cliff had done so; his introduction to Tinker Furriss had been in pursuance of further instructions from The Shadow. With that settled, The Shadow was timing his own plans.

The far wall of the garage showed a blackened space that was to The Shadow's liking. The tall figure glided across the street and merged with darkness. Then came soft, squidgy sounds. With the aid of rubber suction cups, The Shadow was scaling the wall of the garage. He reached the roof; then proceeded toward the pawnshop.

## The Blue Sphinx

A side window opened toward the garage roof. It was locked; but The Shadow pried the catch by inserting a thin piece of steel between the portions of the sash. He raised the window and entered; then found a stairway that led below.

A metal-sheathed door barred entrance to the front room of the pawnshop. The rays of a tiny flashlight showed other doors that led to storage rooms. The Shadow entered a storeroom where stacks of trunks and crates of theatrical equipment formed a medley that no burglar would attempt to remove.

Threading his way to a far corner, The Shadow discovered a locked door that apparently led to a storage closet. This was a spot that an ordinary prowler would have passed up; the very weakness of the door indicated nothing of consequence beyond.

With a skeleton key, The Shadow unlocked this door. His soft laugh told the wisdom of his move.

Beyond the opened door, the flashlight showed a tiny office. In a corner past a small desk was the front of a heavy safe that took up nearly a quarter of the room space. It was a formidable strong-box, this safe that old Cobleton had installed in an obscure room.

The Shadow approached the safe. His left hand came into the range of his flashlight. A quick gesture, and a black glove slipped from agile fingers. While a resplendent gem the Shadow's girasol was glimmering in changing hues, that deft left hand worked on the combination.

Minutes passed amid stillness. A click. The door of the safe swung open. Studying the interior, The Shadow noted a stack of jewel cases. He did not open them; instead, he closed the safe door.

The left hand took the flashlight. Leaning close to the safe, The Shadow produced a tiny magnifying glass and adjusted it to his right eye. Then he produced an engraving tool. His steady fingers made minute markings upon the combination knob. These gave the semblance of a slight scratch, quite similar to others that were already on the metal knob.

A soft laugh as the light went out. Then a slight swish. After that came silence. The Shadow was lingering in the darkness of the little office. Another step had been completed in the game.

OUTSIDE the building that housed the pawnshop, Cliff Marsland and Tinker Furriss were crouching by the rear fence. A patrolman had just passed. They were ready to proceed. Tinker gave a whispered growl.

"That flatfoot's out of the picture," he informed. "Boost me up this fence. It ain't going to take long for me to jimmy a window."

Cliff complied. Atop the fence, Tinker set to work. Muffled sounds finally ended. Leaning down, Tinker aided Cliff in an upward scramble. They crawled through the window that Tinker had jimmied.

Using a flashlight with caution, Tinker led the way downstairs. He pointed out the storeroom with the trunks.

"It's through here," he growled. "That's what the ham told me when he described the joint. Said there was a door that led into an inside room. Look there it is —"

Tinker broke off as he reached the door. He saw that the lock was simple. Producing a ring of skeleton keys, he found one that did the trick. He and Cliff entered the office. Tinker flashed his torch on the door of the safe.

## The Blue Sphinx

"Can you crack it, Marsland?" he questioned, anxiously. "It looks like a tough baby."

"Leave it to me," returned Cliff.

Moving into the range of light, Cliff leaned in front of the safe. He drew a microscope from his pocket and held it in front of the knob while he motioned Tinker to come closer with the light.

"Say," whispered Tinker, "that's a new wrinkle! What's the idea of the glass, Cliff? It ain't going to give no tip on the combo –"

"I'm looking for finger prints," interposed Cliff, quietly. "A gag of my own, Tinker."

"Finger prints? What for?"

"So I can leave them if they're there. The cops will look for them, won't they? All right let them find them. All they'll have will be old Cobleton's."

"That's neat, Cliff! Most guys would polish up after finishing. You don't, eh?"

"Not by a long shot. Yeah, there's prints here, all right, just on the edge of the center. Cobleton must have smudged it when he closed the safe. All right, I'll leave that for the bulls."

While he was speaking, Cliff was keenly noting the scratch near the center of the knob. Highly magnified, it showed a series of numbers that were barely discernible. Cliff put away his lens. He began to turn the knob.

Faking the job for Tinker's benefit, Cliff took a full five minutes before he utilized the combination that he had learned from The Shadow's markings. At last came the click that Tinker had desired. The door swung open. The flashlight showed the stack of jewel boxes.

"Hold it, Tinker," whispered Cliff. "I'm going back in the storeroom. To pick up one of those suitcases. We can load the swag in it."

"Oke," agreed Tinker. "I'll open up them boxes. Boy they look like they ought to show some sparklers!"

CLIFF moved away while Tinker was speaking. Eagerly, Tinker drew boxes from the safe. He opened the top one and chuckled as he saw the glitter of a turquoise necklace, with diamonds set at intervals.

Holding the flashlight with his left hand, Tinker raised the necklace with his right and let the gems sparkle before his eyes.

Fancying that Cliff had returned, Tinker spoke as he noted a slight sound behind him. He raised the dangling necklace that his companion might see it.

"Look at it, Cliff," he whispered. "How's that for a first grab?"

There was no response. Tinker's forehead furrowed. Puzzled by the lack of a reply, the crook wheeled and turned his flashlight upon the spot where he thought Cliff was standing. It was then that a hoarse gasp came from Tinker's bloated lips.

Cliff Marsland had not returned. Another, however, had entered. The necklace dropped from Tinker's numbed fingers. The flashlight wavered in his trembling hand as its glare revealed the form that Tinker had

encountered.

Looming squarely before Tinker Furriss was a figure cloaked in black. Burning eyes focused their fierce gaze upon the quivering crook. Just below those blazing optics, Tinker saw the huge-mouthed muzzle of a .45 automatic.

No gasp came from Tinker's frozen lips. But the pitiful blink of the crook's eyelids told that he had recognized the intruder who had trapped him. A laugh, barely audible, came from hidden lips. Tinker quailed as he heard that sinister taunt.

For Tinker saw death looming with that gun muzzle. A man of crime, caught in the act, he was faced by the archenemy of evil. Tinker Furriss was trapped by The Shadow!

### CHAPTER V. THE SWIFT SEQUENCE

TO Tinker Furriss, hope was ended. Like others of his ilk, he had bragged that he did not fear The Shadow. But when the crisis had arrived, Tinker, like those same others, found his courage gone.

Through his terrified brain ran a medley of thoughts. Hawkeye's warning of "Tapper's" fears. Tinker wished now that he had heeded them. The merciless gaze of The Shadow told him of his folly.

No chance to pull a gun. No courage even to plead. Such was Tinker's state. On the floor lay the incriminating necklace. The Shadow had him with the goods. Tinker could see no out.

Then came the unexpected break. While Tinker crouched helpless, a beam of light broke suddenly from the door of the room. Meeting the glare of Tinker's shaking torch, it placed The Shadow between two paths of illumination.

Tinker saw The Shadow wheel to meet some new enemy. As the cloaked figure turned, a sharp cry came from the door. It was Cliff Marsland's voice. Cliff's light went out on the instant. Tinker, alone, saw all that followed.

The Shadow's automatic barked as Cliff dived into the room. A bullet whistled through the outer door. An instant later, Cliff, with automatic of his own, delivered a point-blank answer toward the shape that Tinker's light revealed.

The Shadow staggered. Tinker, amazed, came up to his feet and pulled his revolver. He saw The Shadow slumping to the floor; but before his gun was drawn, the automatic blazed again. Wounded, The Shadow was keeping up the fire.

A bullet zipped past Tinker's ear. In response to a cry from Cliff, Tinker sprang toward the outer door. A second shot missed him by inches only. Tinker's light was no longer on The Shadow. Cliff, firing as he backed from the inner room, was following.

As they reached the storeroom, Cliff turned boldly and steadied his light back into the office. Tinker caught a glimpse of The Shadow rising. He saw the black form swing behind the open door of the safe. Then came a fierce, gibing laugh. An automatic boomed; its slug sizzled hot past Cliff Marsland's ear.

Quickly, Cliff extinguished his light and grabbed Tinker. He dragged the crook toward the hall. They were on the stairway before Tinker, stampeded, could object.

## The Blue Sphinx

"The sparklers!" cried Tinker. "Say, Cliff, that swag –"

"Too late!" put in Cliff, tersely. "I clipped him; but he's not through. Listen!"

Again the chilling laugh. Defiant as a wounded tiger in his lair, The Shadow was inviting the enemy to return. Tinker groaned.

"No chance now," he admitted. "Back of that safe door, he's got a bead on us. Say, Cliff, maybe if we waited –"

"What for? The bulls?"

Tinker came to his senses. Instinctively, he started up the stairs. He realized that the fusillade must have been heard. Police were probably already on their way.

Again came The Shadow's laugh. Cliff, following Tinker up the steps; gave a pleased grunt.

"Let him hold the bag," he said. "That's the stunt, Tinker! The bulls, finding The Shadow at the opened safe. Catching him with the goods."

"Oke," agreed Tinker, with a nervous laugh. "Come on! Scram! Here's the window."

The two dropped to the fence and headed down an alleyway just as sounds of police whistles came to their ears. They were making a getaway, with sufficient time to escape the law.

BACK in Cobleton's little office, a soft laugh made an eerie whisper. With tiny flashlight glimmering, The Shadow stepped from behind the opened door of the safe. There was reason for his mirth. Aided by Cliff Marsland, The Shadow had played a deceptive game.

Cliff had come equipped with an automatic that contained blank cartridges. His point-blank shot had brought a faked stagger from The Shadow. Tinker Furriss had been fooled. The crook had given Cliff full credit for clipping The Shadow.

In return, The Shadow had utilized real slugs. He had relied upon master marksmanship, purposely missing his human targets by inches only. Unscathed by Cliff's phony shots, he was ready for the next stage of the game.

The flashlight showed the suitcase that Cliff had dropped by the door. Stooping above it, The Shadow drew the folds of his cloak over his head. Cloak and slouch hat dropped into the suitcase. Extinguishing his flashlight, The Shadow stepped to the wall and pressed a switch.

The office light came on. It revealed a remarkable transformation. Instead of a figure garbed in black, The Shadow had taken on the guise of a thug. He seemed to have lost in stature. Almost chunky, he was attired in dark trousers, jerseylike sweater, and bandanna handkerchief which served as a mask.

The black garments had gone into the suitcase. The Shadow moved swiftly to the safe; there he picked up jewel cases and placed them in the bag. Closing the suitcase, he moved toward the storeroom.

The shrills of whistles had penetrated here. A distant siren came faintly to The Shadow's ears. Men were pounding at the doors of the hock shop, front and back. The Shadow laughed.

## The Blue Sphinx

As he advanced into the hall, The Shadow heard the rear door shatter. Harsh voices called; then two officers came pounding in from the rear. The Shadow stepped back into the darkened storeroom. The policemen swung past as they spied the lighted office.

The cops were holding revolvers. They paused when they arrived at the opened safe. Then they turned as they heard a jeering guffaw. They stared into the muzzle of a glittering revolver, held by the sweated gorilla. The Shadow had followed them into the office.

"Heave dem rods in here!" rasped The Shadow. "No funny stuff, coppers! I'll drill youse guys –"

CAUGHT with revolvers lowered, the officers complied. They flung their weapons toward their captor.

The Shadow kicked the guns into the storeroom. He exhibited the bag.

"De swag's in here," he jeered, in crook fashion. "Tell Joe Cardona dis is where he shoulda come to–night. So long, saps. Dey'll be lettin' youse out soon."

Dropping the suitcase, The Shadow reached out and slammed the door. He locked it from the storeroom side, picked up the bag of swag and headed for the hall. Voices reached his ears. Again, The Shadow paused.

"Be ready with the squad, Townley," some one was saying. "I'll look up the officers who entered."

"Very well, inspector," came the reply.

A grin appeared on The Shadow's disguised face. Inspector Egglestone had arrived. He had passed Detective Townley, who had evidently arrived at the back door to cover after the bluecoats had entered.

Two men went past the door of the storeroom, then paused. A hall light replaced the glimmer of torches. The Shadow saw Inspector Egglestone; close behind him was Clyde Burke, reporter for the Classic.

"Maybe they went in there, inspector."

Clyde offered the suggestion. Egglestone, tall and sour-faced, wheeled toward him.

"I don't need any advice from you, Burke," he announced. "Because Cardona is fool enough to give you leeway is no reason why I should. You're lucky enough to be on this trip, without –"

Egglestone paused. Burke was staring past him, toward the door of the storeroom. Turning, the sour-faced inspector found himself confronted by the sweated figure of The Shadow. He saw the leering lips that showed beneath the bandanna mask.

Egglestone stared at the muzzle of the revolver. Dully, he heard pounding sounds from far within the storeroom. The imprisoned officers were calling for aid.

"Hello, dere, Inspector!" came the harsh tone of The Shadow's disguised voice. "Just youse and a news hound, hey? Dat's soft! I don't need dis gat."

With a contemptuous gesture, the pretended crook thrust the revolver out of sight, beneath his sweater. He gestured with the suitcase.

## The Blue Sphinx

"Old Cobleton will go cuckoo," sneered The Shadow. "Say, dese sparklers I took will fence for thoity grand! Listen to dem mugs poundin' away, inspector. Funny, ain't it —"

EGGLESTONE'S hand was creeping to his coat pocket. With a sudden move, the inspector yanked a stub-nosed revolver and came springing forward upon the sweated foe. Clyde Burke, staring, saw the mobster swing.

A clipping fist took the inspector cleanly on the jaw. Egglestone went backward; his opening fingers lost their hold on the gun. With a raucous laugh, The Shadow kicked the weapon into the storeroom.

"Out o' de way, boob!" he ordered, thrusting Clyde Burke against the wall. "Dis ain't your lookout! Give de inspector me regards when he wakes up."

With a contemptuous leer toward the sprawled form of Egglestone, The Shadow turned toward the stairs.

At that instant, Townley appeared from the rear of the hall. The detective yanked a gun; the fake crook was quicker. Out came the revolver from his sweater. Three rapid-fire shots went zizzing just above Townley's head. The detective ducked to the floor.

Those shots came from above the banister as The Shadow headed toward the second floor. Wheeling at the top, he hurled back words to Clyde Burke.

"De commissioner's a dub," was the jeer, "yankin' Joe Cardona off de job! Put dat in de poipers, bozo!"

Townley had reached the foot of the stairs. He was just in time to see the sweated figure dart away from the top of the steps. Townley fired two wild shots; then drew a police whistle and blew it.

Bluecoats were already heading in from the back entrance. The front door suddenly came open. A withered-faced man old Cobleton entered with a flood of policemen. Inspector Egglestone was coming to his feet, half-dazed. Detective Townley took temporary command.

"Upstairs!" he bellowed. "Follow him! Outside, some of you, to cut him off!"

Cops responded. A trio dashed upstairs. They found an opened window at the rear; this was the exit that Cliff and Tinker had chosen. They shouted the news below. Arriving police formed a spreading cordon. Searchers went to work. But the procedure was too late.

The Shadow had made quick passage across the roof of the adjoining garage. He had scaled the roof of a house beyond; nearly a block away, he had dropped through a skylight to descend within an empty building.

A lone cop spied the sweated figure as it appeared from an alleyway. The officer leveled a gun; then The Shadow, hurtling upon him, sent the weapon flying through the air. The officer sprawled as a quick wrench twisted his forearm. With this display of jujutsu, The Shadow headed away toward safety.

Two blocks away, he spied a waiting cab. Reaching his objective, The Shadow entered the vehicle. A hissed word to the driver.

Moe Shrevnitz grinned behind the wheel. He pulled away from the curb. Police whistles shrilled as officers, coming from another street, spied the moving taxi.

## The Blue Sphinx

Another hiss from The Shadow. Inside the cab, he was removing the bandanna mask and peeling away the sweater. These garments went into the bag at his feet. His twisted smile was gone when he opened the cab window to meet the faces of officers who had brought Moe to a stop.

THE policemen saw the head and shoulders of a placid-faced man attired in evening clothes. They heard a voice that spoke in even, modulated tones as The Shadow inquired the meaning of the excitement.

"This ain't the guy," growled one.

"That's just what I was going to tell you," put in Moe, with a shrewd glance toward his passenger. "This fare's from Brooklyn. I'm taking him up to the Waldorf."

"An important reception, officer," declared The Shadow, briskly. "I am already late."

"All right," agreed the cop. Then, to Moe. "What was the idea stopping down the block?"

"Heard a siren," returned Moe, promptly. "Thought the patrol wagon was coming along. Drew up to the curb. That's all."

"Move ahead. Next time you're coming in from Brooklyn, stick to the avenues. You'll make, better time."

"I'll remember it, officer."

The cab pulled away. Moe nodded at a new command from The Shadow. He swung around the block while The Shadow was busy with the suitcase.

Just beyond the fringe of the beleaguered area, Moe spied a patrolman on a beat. He pulled over to the curb. He saw The Shadow alight. Tall, in evening clothes, there was something pompous in his manner as he approached the officer.

Moe caught snatches of conversation. He saw the patrolman salute. Then The Shadow stepped to the cab, drew out the suitcase and tendered it to the bluecoat. Another salute; The Shadow stepped aboard and Moe drove away.

Bundling garments, The Shadow placed them on the seat beside him and indulged in a soft laugh. Moe nodded as he heard a new destination given.

BACK at the rifled hock shop, Inspector Egglestone was talking to old Cobleton. The owner of the place lived a block away. The excitement had brought him to the scene. In his little office, Cobleton lay slumped in a chair.

"Can you give us any clues?" Egglestone was demanding. "Have any suspicious characters come in here lately?"

"You ask me for clues?" questioned Cobleton. "When you found the man here and let him get away? Why ask me?"

Egglestone scowled. Clyde Burke grinned. The inspector noted the reporter's action. He wheeled.

"Feeling smart, eh?" he questioned, sourly. "Well, it's the last time any news hawk goes the rounds with me! Guess you'll do some panning in that lousy sheet of yours. Just because that crook got a break –"



## The Blue Sphinx

Egglestone stopped. A policeman had entered, carrying a suitcase. Egglestone opened the bag and stared at an assortment of boxes.

Old Cobleton, springing forward with a happy cry, pawed into the suitcase. As he opened boxes, glimmering jewelry came into the light. Cobleton was elated.

"My gems!" he shouted. "My gems! All here!"

"Where did you get them?" questioned Egglestone turning to the cop.

"From Commissioner Barth," returned the officer. "He came up in a taxi and handed me this bag. Told me to bring it here. I moved in off my beat on account of it being the commissioner's order."

"Get that, Burke?" questioned Egglestone, turning to the reporter. "There's your story. Police commissioner recovers the stolen gems. Don't forget; it was my case –"

"How about getting the commissioner's angle?"

"Good!" Egglestone nodded and picked up the telephone. "I'll call headquarters."

Three minutes later, Egglestone laid down the phone with a puzzled air. He turned to the patrolman who had brought in the suitcase.

"Are you sure that was the commissioner?" he questioned. "Did he identify himself?"

"He said he was the commissioner. He was wearing a full-dress suit."

"Do you know the commissioner by sight?"

"No. I did think it was kind of funny, him being in a taxi."

"That wasn't the commissioner," declared Egglestone, with a scowl. "The commissioner just called in from Long Island. He and Cardona went out there on a tip. Expected trouble at the home of Tobias Wolfenson. They found the house closed. Wolfenson is in Florida."

"Say, Burke" Egglestone wheeled suddenly to the reporter "you'd better stick to the fact that the gems were recovered. Get me? That crook knew I had him trapped. Surrendered the swag to a patrolman so he could make a getaway."

He drew Clyde over toward the safe and added a comment that the reporter alone could hear.

"My case," he said. "Remember that. You've got your facts. We have the stuff back inside half an hour. Gems worth fifty thousand."

"About the crook," put in Clyde. "Sweater or evening dress which was he wearing?"

"Either one. Better make it a sweater."

"Why not both?"

"Say what're you trying to do? Stick to the facts. I'll tell you how to write this story."

## The Blue Sphinx

"You don't need to. I've got my story."

With a grin, Clyde Burke turned on his heel and strode from the little office, leaving Inspector Egglestone fuming. Leaving the pawnshop, Clyde waved his way past bluecoats and detectives and reached a cigar store two blocks away. He put in a call to Burbank. His grin increased.

ONE hour later found Clyde at a typewriter in the city room of the New York Classic. He was finishing his usual police column, which covered his investigations in the underworld.

Inside stuff that would pass the desk, the moment that the night editor stepped out. He was leaving now. Clyde grinned and finished the column. He turned it over to an uncritical assistant editor, who gave a glance and sent the pages to the copy desk.

Clyde chuckled as he donned his hat and strolled from the city room. He had scooped the town. To-morrow's column would be verbal dynamite, thanks to The Shadow.

### CHAPTER VI. THE STORM BREAKS

MORNING. Acting Inspector Joe Cardona sat at his desk in headquarters, reading the New York Classic. A grim smile showed on Joe's face as he perused Clyde Burke's column. The account of last night's episodes ran as follows:

The East Side playboys are having their little jest at Commissioner Barth's new methods. Somehow they must have wised to his aptitude for taking up fancy clues that lead nowhere.

Last night our high official spotted a dummy ad in an evening newspaper. That was enough. He yanked Joe Cardona, acting inspector, from the underworld route. Just like a poker player discarding an ace from a royal flush.

With Joe off the beat, the jokers started. It began when they tapped the safe in Cobleton's Pawnshop and picked up a flock of likely-looking gems. Just so Barth's hired hands would know what was up, the raiders whooped a few shots like cowboys on a round-up. That brought Inspector Egglestone in the wake of two policemen.

The inspector arrived after the funmakers had locked the officers in Cobleton's office. But they had left a pal to take care of good old "Egg." Encountering a gorilla, the inspector found himself on the wrong end of a haymaker. While Egglestone slumbered, the crook made off with the swag.

It was all in fun, however. Half an hour later, a patrolman showed up with a suitcase filled with the missing jewels. A gent in evening attire had passed them to him. Said gent had introduced himself as Commissioner Barth.

Egg Egglestone was delighted until he found out it couldn't have been. Headquarters reported the commissioner on Long Island. Out in the lonely night, insisting that Cardona keep watch on a darkened house that later proved to be unoccupied.

Only one slip-up marred the festivities. The suave deceiver who handed over the missing gems failed to wear a pair of pince-nez spectacles. But it didn't matter. The cop on the beat was not in the commissioner's social set. Never having been introduced to Mr. Wainwright Barth, he knew nothing of those famous specs. He just took the suitcase and toted it in to Egglestone. Egg took the credit.

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Clues: A gentleman who cracks safes, fires a gat to make a noise, handles his dukes well, talks the 'oily boid' dialect, wears a sweater and uses a bandanna for a mask.

His pal travels in a Prince Albert, chooses taxis as a mode of riding and tells coppers that he's the police commissioner. Convincing enough to make them believe it, too.

What one takes, the other gives back. That's their idea of fun. Inspector Egglestone seemed to like it. Too bad the commissioner didn't take him out to Long Island, instead of snatching Joe Cardona off the job. Maybe he'll remember to do that next time.

If he does, the law will have more to show than the recovery of swag that was handed back to them. Cardona has a habit of rounding up funmakers for a joy-ride in the wagon. An art at which Commissioner Barth and Inspector Egglestone seem lacking.

As he finished reading, Joe Cardona looked up to see Detective Sergeant Markham enter. Joe pointed to the newspaper. Markham grinned and nodded.

"Just read it, Joe," he said. "Coming in to tell you about it. Looks like Burke's gone nuts, don't it?"

"Yeah," commented Joe. "Well" he paused, thinking of last night's futile trip to Long Island "you can't blame him. Somebody was due to cut loose with a razz on the commissioner. It's too bad for Burke, though."

"Why?"

"The commissioner will have his scalp. Wait and see."

"On account of the panning Burke handed Egg?"

"Sure. The commissioner rates Egglestone pretty high."

JOE CARDONA had made his comment in a tone of prediction. One hour after the prophecy, Clyde Burke entered the city room of the Classic. He was greeted by shaking heads.

"The old man wants to see you," remarked a reporter. "He's in his office."

Clyde entered a door marked "Managing Editor." He found the "old man" seated at his desk. The M.E. motioned for Clyde to close the door. Clyde complied.

"Burke," began the old man, "since when has your column called for editorial comment?"

Clyde grinned sheepishly. The M.E. remained severe.

"Commissioner Barth called me this morning," he declared. "He was highly indignant. He termed the Classic a yellow sheet. He said that it defied all the ethics of journalism."

"He's said that before, boss."

"Yes. But this time he is justified. I'm firing you, Burke."

"Just on account of –"

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"Yes. On account of the way you wrote that column. It was poor business, Burke. Particularly from a reportorial standpoint. That type of tripe belongs in a small-town journal.

"I don't mind violent criticism. But I do object to having the Classic carry stuff that reads like the lead article in the Punkville Weekly Bugle. You're through, Burke. Two weeks' salary waiting downstairs."

Clyde nodded. He turned and walked slowly toward the door.

The managing editor looked up; then rose and reached the door ahead of him. He clapped his hand on Clyde's shoulder. His eyes carried a kindly twinkle as he spoke.

"I had to fire you, Burke," he remarked. "Now that the job's over, I don't mind telling you that you're a valuable man. You will find a berth somewhere; when you do, refer to me for recommendation.

"That column simply bore the marks of misplaced talent. Get it out of your system. Try a job in the sticks for six months until you're rid of this small-town complex. Then come back here. You'll find a new job waiting.

"I had to make an example of you to appease Barth. It will cool him when he learns that you were promptly removed from our staff. Either he will have forgotten all about you within six months, or —"

"There may be a new commissioner by that time," completed Clyde.

"Exactly!" chuckled the managing editor. "Good—by, Burke. By the way, did I say you would find two weeks' salary downstairs?"

Clyde nodded.

"I meant four," corrected the M.E., returning to his desk.

HALF an hour afterward, Clyde Burke entered the office of Rutledge Mann. He found the investment broker seated at his desk, with clippings of Clyde's column in front of him. Mann looked up in solemn fashion. His face was slightly quizzical.

"Sacked," announced Clyde, pointing his thumb toward the clippings. "On account of that."

Mann smiled slightly. He picked up the clippings and tucked them in an envelope, which he passed to Clyde.

The reporter was a bit puzzled. He knew that he was due for some mission in behalf of The Shadow; what the clippings had to do with it was something he did not understand.

"Your recommendations," said Mann. "To a new job. They should serve you well."

"The old man promised me a recommendation of his own if I needed it for a newspaper job."

"Good! Call on him if necessary. But I think your own ability as evidenced by to-day's article will gain you a job with the Latuna Enterprise."

"The Latuna Enterprise?"

"Yes. Here is a sample of the editorials that appear in that journal. Read it. I think that you and Mr. Harrison Knode have much in common."

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Clyde nodded, chuckling, as he read the editorial that concerned the Blue Sphinx. When he looked up, Mann was politely tendering him a railroad ticket along with a green slip Pullman reservation.

"Pennsylvania Station, four thirty-five," announced Mann, in a businesslike tone. "Ticket and lower berth to Latuna. And added instructions" he picked up a sealed envelope and handed it to Clyde – "are to be read on the train."

At five o'clock that afternoon, Clyde Burke was seated in a corner of a club car, reading the message that Mann had given him. Coded words faded. Clyde crumpled the blank sheet and tossed it in a wastebasket beneath the writing desk opposite.

He had memorized brief added instructions from The Shadow.

AT that same hour, a slower through train was pulling out from the Union Station in Washington. Alone in the smoking compartment of a sleeper were two men who had come aboard at the last minute. Cliff Marsland and Tinker Furriss formed the pair.

Cliff was reading a New York evening newspaper, in which he found brief mention of a foiled burglary in Cobleton's Pawnshop. He pointed it out to Tinker. A few minutes later, the pock-faced crook called Cliff's attention to a copy of the New York Classic.

"Say, look at this!" whispered Tinker, hoarsely. "Here's a guy has some funny dope on that job of ours. Some mug got away with the sparklers and another guy returned them!"

"The Shadow, probably," nodded Cliff, as he read the column. "Sure enough. That holds together."

"Whadda you mean?"

"Well, the bulls were coming in, weren't they?"

"Yeah."

"And The Shadow had to scam. So he slugged Egglestone and made a getaway."

"Why'd he run off with the swag?"

"Guess he didn't know who Egglestone was."

"I begin to get it. Then he handed the stuff over to some flatfoot. But it says here that there was a fellow in a sweater."

"That was probably what Egglestone thought. The Shadow must have handed him a quick haymaker."

"Yeah. And the cops must have been woozy when he cooped 'em in that office."

"They would have said the same as Egglestone."

Tinker nodded. Then his ugly countenance denoted perplexity. Cliff watched him closely. He knew what was coming.

"What gets me," confided Tinker, "is how The Shadow got out of it at all. You clipped him, Cliff."

## The Blue Sphinx

"Probably grazed him with my first shot."

"You done better. You must have plugged him twice, anyway. He staggered that first time. I thought he was done."

"Looks like nobody can kill The Shadow."

"Maybe not. But I can't figure how he snapped out of it so quick. To do all he did afterward. Say it's got me sort of jittery, Cliff."

"Why should it?" Cliff laughed as he saw a chance to swing the dangerous subject. "The more The Shadow did, the better for us."

"Why?"

"Because it kept him too busy to pick up our trail. We're sitting pretty, Tinker. Come on it's time for chow. Let's see if this rattler has a diner."

Tinker said nothing more, and Cliff decided that the topic was ended. That was a good sign. For the fight with The Shadow had put Cliff in right with Tinker. As sworn pals, they were heading for Latuna to join up with Konk Zitz.

Uppermost in Cliff's mind was the fact that he must keep the true facts of that fight completely away from Tinker's mind. Any inkling that the battle had been framed would prove disastrous.

For where Cliff was going, any suspicion that he was an agent of The Shadow would ruin the coming campaign against crime. More than that, a discovery of the truth could spell prompt death for Cliff Marsland.

### CHAPTER VII. IN THE MUSEUM

WHILE two trains were bringing new visitors to Latuna, that prosperous little city lay glittering beneath the darkened evening sky. Well-lighted streets were prevalent in Latuna; but they ended abruptly on the border of the business district. Beyond were blackened, vacant subdivisions that had ceased development with the sudden termination of a real-estate boom.

On a hill well out from the town stood a lonely marble building that looked like a vast mausoleum. This was the central portion of the unfinished Latuna Museum. It had been erected on the hill so that it might overlook the town.

Subdivisions as yet unbuilt; intervening trees that had not been cut down these isolated the museum from the city. Instead of dominating a suburban district, the new building was actually in a rural area.

Viewed from the outside, the museum was a square-shaped building with broad steps leading up to four mammoth stone pillars. Modeled after the Parthenon in Athens, the structure was topped by a low, broad dome.

The marble front had large windows, guarded with heavy metal shutters; but the sides and back were windowless. Moreover, they lacked the marble surface of the front. These other walls were entirely of brick.

The reason lay in the fact that the museum was uncompleted. The final plans called for the addition of two

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wings and a rear extension which would be deeper than the rest of the structure; for the ground sloped downward at the back of the museum.

Entering the building, one found exhibit rooms in both front corners. Smaller rooms were situated along the side walls. From the center of the building back to the rear wall was a special exhibit room, directly beneath the broad dome. One entered this through a commodious anteroom. Heavy Florentine doors formed the first barrier; lighter doors were beyond, at the inner portion of the anteroom.

A main hall ran along the front of the building, just in back of the lobby and the corner exhibit rooms. Small corridors ran along the sides, between the blank walls of the central exhibit room and the small chambers at the sides of the building.

An incomplete arrangement. Many persons had predicted difficulties in the new extensions. On this particular evening, one man seemed deeply concerned with that problem. Joseph Rubal, curator of the museum, was seated in his office, which was reached by the last door on the right-hand corridor.

RUBAL was a tall, dry-faced man. His forehead showed deep furrows; his expression was perpetually solemn. He had a habit of running his long fingers through the sparse hair of his partly bald head. He was following this procedure as he studied a set of plans that lay upon his desk.

Eight o'clock. Rubal noted the time by his desk clock. He frowned as he looked toward the door; then his expression changed as he heard footsteps in the hall. The door opened and a uniformed attendant entered.

"Ah, Hollis," expressed Rubal, as he eyed the stocky, square-jawed arrival. "Have the other attendants left?"

"Yes, sir."

"You have locked up for the night?"

"Yes, sir. Until the watchmen arrive at nine."

"Remain here. I shall make sure."

Hollis watched Rubal leave the office. He shrugged his shoulders. As chief attendant, he never failed in his duty of closing the museum, yet the curator invariably insisted upon a personal check-up.

Five minutes later, Rubal returned to find Hollis standing stolidly in the spot where he had left him. Rubal gave an approving nod, a token that he had found the front door barred on the inside. Hollis started to leave the office.

"No inspection is necessary, Hollis," remarked Rubal, dryly. "Remain here. I wish to talk to you. Did you notice these plans for the new extensions?"

"No, sir. Are they completed?"

"Not quite. It is a problem, Hollis." The attendant nodded; then advanced as Rubal beckoned him to the desk. On view lay a floor plan of the museum as it now stood, with dotted lines to indicate the additions.

"As chief attendant, Hollis," declared the curator, "you are quite familiar with the present plan of this museum. Therefore, I think that my difficulties will interest you."

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"They will, sir. Particularly because of the –"

"Well?" queried Rubal, as Hollis paused.

"On account of the criticism, sir," admitted Hollis. "In the Enterprise, I mean –"

"I understand. That muckraker, Harrison Knode, has objected to my delay. He thinks that I should have submitted the complete plans before this."

"He is a trouble–maker, sir."

"I know it. Meanwhile I am handicapped." Rubal's voice rose as he pounded the desk. "Look, Hollis. See my problems! This building was designed wrong in the beginning!"

"Whose fault was that, sir?"

"No one's. You see, Hollis, old Barnaby Soyer promised the city his entire collection of priceless art treasures provided that a museum would be built within one year after his death. That was a large order."

Hollis nodded.

"A collection worth more than a million dollars," resumed Rubal. "It would have been lost to Latuna, but for the timely aid of Strafford Malden. He denoted the ground and urged citizens to contribute preliminary funds. Construction began at once.

"It was obvious that the Soyer collection could not be placed on exhibit until the entire building was completed. Many suggestions were made as to housing the treasures temporarily. Finally, we hit upon the best one, thanks to the rearward slope of the ground.

"A vault was created directly beneath the central room that stands under the dome. Barnaby Soyer's treasures were brought in through the back of that vault. Gems, golden vessels, statuettes of precious metals none of these would suffer by long storage. So the back of the vault was sealed with solid brick, not to be opened until the completion of the wings."

Again, Hollis nodded. Very little of this was new to him. He wondered why the curator was going to such detailed explanation.

"Save for the front," stated Rubal, still talking loudly, "this museum is windowless. Doorways will be cut through brick walls to make the entrances to new corridors in the wings and back extension."

"The present corridors end abruptly, sir."

"Yes. Because they will be continued through. But there lies a problem. Shall we have a joining corridor in the rear extension?"

"In back of the Sphinx Room, sir?" Rubal chuckled.

"An excellent term, Hollis," he commended. "I shall remember it to–morrow, when the Blue Sphinx arrives. The Sphinx Room. Very good, Hollis."



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"It just popped out, sir. It will look fine in that room, the Blue Sphinx will. The bare pedestal, with its wooden covering, is hardly artistic, sir."

"It is not meant to be," declared Rubal, unsmiling. "The wooden platform merely protects the stone pedestal."

"I understand, sir. When do you intend to remove the platform?"

"Not until the Sphinx is actually ready to go in its place. I shall superintend the work, Hollis."

"Very good, sir."

There was a pause. Before Rubal could speak, Hollis raised his hand warningly.

"Did you hear that, sir?"

"What?" inquired Rubal, nervously.

"A muffled sound, sir! Like something dropping!"

"Imagination, Hollis."

"There it is again, Mr. Rubal!"

"I hear nothing. Come, Hollis. Let me show you these plans."

"But I was sure, sir, that the noise could have come from the Sphinx Room!"

"I inspected that room, Hollis. The doors are closed. Come, come, man! You are making me nervous! Concentrate upon these plans. I want your opinion."

THE chamber which Hollis had so aptly termed the Sphinx Room lay directly beneath the large dome of the museum. Glass sections in the circular roof admitted pale moonlight. Beneath those whitened rays, a strange scene was taking place while Rubal talked with Hollis in the office.

The chief attendant's supposition had not been false. Beneath that dull light, shrouded figures were in motion. Like hunchbacked ghosts, they were creeping across the tiled floor, away from the wooden-platformed pedestal that was to form the resting place of the Blue Sphinx.

Doors lay open through the anteroom. Those had been unbarred from the outside. That explained why Hollis had heard some sound. The noise had carried through the corridors.

Creeping forms had completed some insidious mission, for they were moving together toward the outer door. One figure stopped on the fringe of the moonlight and carefully closed the doors that led from anteroom to Sphinx Room. Moonlight alone remained in the empty compartment that was to house the Blue Sphinx.

More whispers in the darkened anteroom. A flashlight glimmered as its bearer moved into the corridor. Doors from corridor to anteroom went shut. Locks turned in place. Prowlers continued toward the big front door. That barrier swung open. When it closed, the silence and gloom remained.

Five minutes. Then a bell tingled with a short, abrupt br-r-r. After that came new silence. Like a signal, that final touch had marked the passage of the unknown prowlers.

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IN the office, Hollis looked up suddenly. His square face was troubled. Hollis stepped away from the desk and started to the door that led into the corridor.

"Hold on, Hollis," ordered Rubal. "What is the trouble now?"

"The bell, sir," explained the chief attendant. "I am sure that I heard it."

"At ten minutes of nine?" quizzed the curator, pointing to the clock. "Impossible! Those watchmen never arrive ahead of time. Besides, they ring incessantly."

"That is the trouble, sir. I heard just the slightest tingle."

"I warned you to curb your imagination, Hollis. Here, sit down at my desk. Try one of these Puerto Rican cigars. Imagine yourself to be the curator, if you must indulge in fanciful notions. I shall investigate."

Waving the attendant to the chair, the curator went out into the corridor and turned on a light. He continued to the big front hall, turning on more lights.

As he neared the front entrance, Rubal paused. He threw an anxious glance over his shoulder. Satisfied that Hollis was not following, he went to the door of the anteroom and found it tight.

Methodically, Rubal continued to the front door of the museum. The huge bar was raised from its place; but the curator did not seem perturbed. Carefully, he put the bar back in place. Moping his forehead with a silk handkerchief, he went back along the corridors, extinguishing lights behind him.

Hollis was puffing a perfecto when Rubal reentered the office. The curator shook his head to signify that he had found nothing. He motioned to Hollis to keep the chair. Taking a cigar for himself, Rubal paced back and forth across the little office.

"What do you think of the plans, Hollis?" he questioned.

"I can suggest no improvement, sir," replied the attendant. "I consider them quite good."

"They do not suit me, Hollis. Perhaps I shall finish them. Perhaps not."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"I mean that I may resign as curator, in deference to public opinion."

"That would be a mistake, sir. Really –"

A long bell ring interrupted. It was repeated. Rubal waved his hand toward the door.

"The watchmen," he said, bluntly. "Admit them, Hollis. You may leave without returning here. I shall need you no more to-night."

"Very well, sir."

As Hollis left, Joseph Rubal again mopped his glistening forehead. His ordeal was ended. Hollis had barred the big front door to-night; Hollis would find it still barred when he admitted the watchmen.

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The chief attendant would never realize that the curator had unbarred that door during his check-up just after eight o'clock. Hollis would forget the noises that he had heard, never realizing that the curator, himself, had allowed skulking prowlers to enter.

That short ring had been a signal to Rubal. The curator had kept Hollis occupied while the interlopers had been busy. Departing, those associates had briskly informed Rubal that they were finished with their work.

Donning hat and coat, Rubal walked from his office. Hollis had already gone when the curator reached the front hall. A watchman blinked a torch; then unbarred the front door. Joseph Rubal stepped out into the night. The big door clanged behind him.

Like the chief attendant, the watchmen were in ignorance of the visitors who had come and gone. Of all entrusted with the guardianship of the Latuna Museum, the curator alone had knowledge of the strange treachery which he himself had perpetrated.

### CHAPTER VIII. STRANGERS ARRIVE

AT ten o'clock the next morning, Clyde Burke entered the office of the Latuna Enterprise. He found it located above the press room that occupied the ground floor of a small building. Clyde tendered a Classic business card to a freckled office boy, who went through a door marked "Editor." Returning, the boy nudged a thumb over his shoulder.

Clyde entered the inner office. A rangy, big-fisted man was seated at a battered desk. Long-faced, unshaven, this worthy was displaying shirt sleeves and half-buttoned vest. He wore a green celluloid visor upon his forehead and he was busily engaged in scrawling notations upon the top sheet of a sheaf of copy paper.

"Well?"

Harrison Knode put the question briskly, without looking up from his work. Clyde strolled over to the desk.

"I'm after a job," he informed.

"From New York, aren't you?" quizzed Knode.

"Yes, sir," replied Clyde.

"Too bad," drawled Knode, still working. "Big-city ideas don't go in a small town."

The editor of the Enterprise seemed to think that the matter was settled. Clyde, however, stood by the desk. He paraphrased Knode's statement.

"Small-town ideas," stated Clyde, "don't go in a big city."

"That wasn't what I said," retorted Knode, looking up to study his visitor. "I said that big-city ideas don't go in a small town. But you're right, just the same, young fellow. Small-town ideas don't go in a big city, either."

"I know it," chuckled Clyde. "That's why I'm here."

Knode looked interested. Clyde produced the envelope that Mann had given him. He brought out one of his

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column clippings and passed it to the editor of the Enterprise. Knode put on a pair of tortoise-shell spectacles and read the story. No flicker showed on his face; but when he had finished, he put the clipping in a drawer and studied Clyde narrowly.

"How much was the Classic paying you?" he questioned.

"Sixty a week," returned Clyde.

"That would mean about thirty per, here in Latuna," decided Knode. "I'll make it thirty-five, Burke."

"Where's the hatrack, boss?"

"In the outer room. Go out there and holler for Bart Drury. Bring him back with you."

Clyde went out and bellowed the name. A tall, pale-faced, young man turned in from a window, where he had been staring at passers on the street. He moved a dangling cigarette from his pasty lips and inquired:

"Yeah? Who wants me?"

Clyde caught the fellow's eye and nudged toward Knode's office. As Drury approached, Clyde preceded him. Knode, resting back in his swivel chair, made a terse introduction. Clyde shook hands with Drury.

"Read this, Bart," suggested the editor, handing over Clyde's clipping.

Drury complied. He chuckled; then handed the clipping back to Knode, who put it in the drawer.

"Reads like some of your stuff, boss," was Drury's comment. "Did Burke here write it?"

"Yes," returned Knode, "and he's on our staff. Your running-mate from now on, Bart. It will take two good men to cover this town. Team together. No jealousy."

"All right, boss."

"And for a starter, just so Burke can get a rough idea of this village, I'd suggest that you take him up to that museum shindig. Let him take a look at that Blue Sphinx that came in this morning. And point out a few of the local celebrities while you're about it."

AN hour later, Clyde and Drury strolled in through the open portals of the Latuna Museum. Planking had been laid up the steps. A squad of workmen were coming out from the anteroom beyond the front hall.

"Guess they've rolled the old blockhead into the main exhibit room," decided Drury, in a casual tone. "It came in on a flat car early this morning. Over the siding that leads to the old quarry back of the hill. Well, Burke, let's walk in and take a look at the Blue Sphinx."

Clyde nodded and followed Drury toward the anteroom. Passage was suddenly blocked by a khaki-clad policeman who had been standing in the hall.

"Nobody goes in," growled the cop. "Not until they hold the dedication. Chief's orders."

Another policeman appeared along the hall. Looking about, Drury noticed six in all. They were standing about the corridors, waiting for orders.

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"Well, well!" jested Drury. "What's this? A quarantine? Afraid somebody's going to walk off with that five-ton sphinx? Say, you fellows I'm a reporter for the Enterprise –"

"Which makes no difference," put in the first cop. "Chief Grewling gave us orders to keep everybody out except the workmen and those connected with the museum."

"A good idea," returned Drury, sarcastically. "I'll have to give the chief a write-up. He should have credit for this amazing foresight. I wonder if he'll be kind enough to give me an interview –"

"Whenever you want one," came a gruff interruption. "What's on your mind, Drury?"

Turning, Clyde Burke saw Bart Drury wheel about to face a stocky, red-faced man who was attired in khaki uniform. Gold braid on shoulders and cap visor marked him as the police chief. Lawrence Grewling had entered while they were talking to the cops.

"Hello, chief!" grinned Drury. "You're just the man I wanted to see. Tell these cowboys of yours to unbar the gates. Star reporter of the Enterprise wants an interview with the Blue Sphinx."

"Yes?" quizzed Grewling, narrowly. "Maybe you mean that interview that your editor yapped about a few days ago. Is that it?"

"I don't write the editorials, chief."

"But you work on Knode's sheet. Now you're asking me for favors. Listen, Drury. If I had my say, I'd bounce you out of this museum. I don't like you or anybody that works for Harrison Knode."

"Meet another enemy, then, Clyde Burke, just in from New York. My teammate on the Enterprise."

Chief Grewling gave Clyde a curt nod. It signified that as yet he had no personal grudge against the new reporter. Clyde nodded in return. Then Drury spoke again.

"All right, chief," he said. "Bounce me out. Make a story for me."

"I'm not having my way about it, Drury," retorted Grewling.

"But you're keeping me from seeing the Blue Sphinx, aren't you?" quizzed Drury. "That's having your way, isn't it?"

"I'm taking orders from Mayor Rush," stated Grewling. "I asked him about you, specifically. He said to let you or any other reporter have a free look in at this dedication. But he also said to keep everybody out of the Sphinx Room until he arrived. Everybody except the curator and the workmen. They have business in there."

"The Sphinx Room, eh?" questioned Drury, in a meditative tone. "Say – that's a tricky name. Who thought it up? Rubal?"

"I don't know," returned Grewling. He turned to the cops. "Keep this man out of the Sphinx Room until it is opened to the public."

With that, Grewling turned on his heel and strode from the museum.

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DRURY shrugged his shoulders. He beckoned to Clyde; they followed to the door and saw the police chief join another squad of officers.

"Half the force is here," stated Drury. "They must expect a big crowd. But nobody's showing up yet. Say! There's an idea for Knode. Wait'll I tell him."

"What's the angle?" questioned Clyde.

"You'll get it later," laughed Drury. "Well, the shindig won't begin for a while yet. Come on I'll show you the rest of the museum. The chief didn't say we couldn't go in the other exhibit rooms."

He led the way to the left. They came to the doorway of the large exhibit room in the left front corner. Drury waved his hand to indicate an array of statuary that was displayed on pedestals of uniform height. Replicas of Greek and Roman statues, these massive figures filled the room so completely that narrow aisles alone remained as a means of walking in and out.

"Old home week on Mount Olympus," chuckled Drury. "Say there's more Greeks here than they packed in the wooden horse at Troy. Look at Kid Neptune over there, with his pitchfork. Mercury, bringing a message of the Laocoon group. They won't have time to read it while they're fighting that big snake."

"What do they call this layout?" asked Clyde.

"The Antiquity Room," replied Drury. "Well-meaning citizens chipped in to donate that swell lot of plaster of Paris. Come on, Burke, I'll show you some more of the madhouse."

He led Clyde along the corridor at the left side of the museum, pointing out small exhibit rooms where paintings, vases and Oriental curios were on display.

"Some of this stuff is pretty good," admitted Drury, "but most of it's junk. A rather nondescript bunch of collectors were responsible for purchases and donations. Not so bad, though. But say!" he turned about near the end of the corridor "come back while I show you the Medieval Room."

They walked back to the front hallway of the museum and kept on until they reached the corridor on the right. Drury waved his hand toward the rooms on that side of the building.

"More paintings, some Chinese screens and idols," he said. "That's all you'll find down there, except the curator's office. But take a look at this place, Burke" he beckoned Clyde toward the room at the front right "and you'll see some items that are worth looking at."

They entered the Medieval Room. Clyde immediately caught Drury's enthusiasm. This room, too, was well stocked; but instead of imitation statuary it was filled with genuine relics of the Middle Ages and early modern times.

"A genuine Moorish cannon," affirmed Drury, pointing to a wide-mouthed mortar that stood in one corner. "Captured from Mediterranean pirates. Look at that suit of armor. Genuine Crusader mail. Here's an Iron Maiden spikes and all that they used to execute prisoners."

CLYDE paused to look at the last named curio. It was a gruesome object, with its spike-studded door opened as if to receive an expected victim. Shaped to a huge resemblance of a human form, the torture device was monstrous.

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"Here's a better-looking gal," chuckled Drury, pointing out a massive wooden carving that apparently represented a mermaid. "Supposed to be a figurehead from one of the ships in the Spanish Armada. Over here is a slave block. See the chains on it?"

Clyde nodded. Then his attention was attracted to the most distant corner, where a cleverlike blade glistened at the top of a heavy wooden framework.

"A genuine guillotine," informed Drury. "Ready for business. Actually used during the French Revolution."

"So I thought," nodded Clyde.

"And over here" Drury stepped to the wall near the door "is a nice display of cutthroat weapons. Daggers, dirks, poniards, bolos, stilettos, machetes name them and take your pick. Nothing lacking but razors. They're too modern."

"Over by that wall: Swords, cutlasses, sabers, scimitars, battle-axes, halberds and other heavy cutting tools. Yonder we have first-class firearms from the age of the blunderbuss to the period of the fusil and the musket."

"A valuable collection," decided Clyde.

"Some of it," agreed Drury. "But the real stuff is packed away until this edifice is finally completed. There's going to be a Modern Room at the back. That will have some fair stuff. But the real bet will be the wings. They will house the Barnaby Soyer collection.

"It's worth a million, Burke. I've seen some of the items. Statuettes of silver and gold. Beautiful sets of carved cameos and gems. Golden vessels, objects of jade –"

"Where is all this at present?"

"Down below. In a sealed vault underneath the Sphinx Room. That's squarely beneath the dome. No one can get in there because they bricked up the rear of the vault. It won't be opened until after the museum is completed. Which may be a long time from now, the way Rubal is stalling with the plans."

"Rubal is the curator?"

"Yes. He ought to be a good one, too. Got a sour face that would look good on an Egyptian mummy. About as human as a jellyfish –"

"That's enough, Mr. Drury," came a protesting voice. "I wish that you would say nothing more of that sort."

"Oh, hello, Hollis!" Drury smiled sheepishly as he saw the stolid, square-faced man who had entered unnoticed. "No harm meant. I was just kidding about your boss. Meet Mr. Burke." Then, turning to Clyde, Drury added. "This is Hollis, the chief attendant."

Clyde shook hands with the man. Then Hollis announced the reason for his arrival.

"I saw you gentlemen come in here," he said. "I wanted to let you know that the dedication is about to begin. But before you go out, Mr. Drury, I should like to speak to you."

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"All right, Hollis," agreed Drury, clapping the fellow on the back. "We'll meet you in here after the shindig. Come on, Burke. We'll get our first look at the Blue Sphinx."

WAITING policemen made no objection when Clyde and Drury made their reappearance. There were officers in the big front hall; others could be seen outside the building. In the anteroom, the reporters found two more. Four cops were in the Sphinx Room.

But by that time, neither man was thinking of the police. Both were studying the Blue Sphinx which rested on a long pedestal in the center of the high domed room. Snugly nestled, the crouched figure measured some twenty feet in length, with width and height proportionate.

"They must have just about squeezed it through the doorways," observed Drury, to Clyde. "Say it looks pretty nifty. Limestone, I guess, with a bluish tinge –"

He broke off as a pompous man stepped up from a small group that was viewing the Blue Sphinx. This individual was attired in a frock coat. As he began to speak, Clyde decided that he was the mayor, Quirby Rush.

In oratorical fashion, the mayor waved his hand toward the solemn, staring face of the Blue Sphinx and began a brief address. He termed the Sphinx "a proud creature from an age long past" and added that its acquisition was "a boon to the enterprising city of Latuna." Finally, he wound up with a reference to "the esteemed donor" who had contributed the Sphinx.

"Our fellow citizen," announced Rush, "Mr. Strafford Malden!"

Eyes turned to a quiet-looking man who was standing near the mayor. Strafford Malden appeared slightly past middle age. He was smiling as he leaned upon a cane. He bowed a head that was partly gray-haired, as he acknowledged the mayor's salutation.

Hand-clapping came from the dozen persons who composed the audience. Strafford Malden delivered another bow. The mayor spoke to him; Malden nodded and they walked forth together.

Police Chief Grewling waited until the tiny throng had departed; then he marshalled his forces and followed.

Clyde noted a dry-faced, long-browed man who also left the Sphinx Room. He nudged Drury, who was looking at the Blue Sphinx, tapping his knuckles against the weather-beaten stone sides of the statue.

"Is that the curator?" asked Clyde.

"Yes," replied Drury. "I'm going to get a chance to talk to him, I think. Come along, Burke."

Heading toward the Medieval Room, they encountered Hollis. Drury drew the chief attendant aside and talked with him in quiet fashion. Hollis became voluble in a whisper that Clyde could not catch. At last Drury nodded; then rejoined Clyde.

"Come on," said Drury. "We're going to see Rubal."

"Remember," warned Hollis, "don't tell him that I spoke to you. Remember that, Mr. Drury."

"I'll remember."



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DRURY and Clyde reached the curator's office. As they stepped in, unannounced, Joseph Rubal looked up from his desk. His face seemed haggard. He started to protest the intrusion. Drury waved him to be quiet.

"Listen, Rubal," he said. "I hear you're thinking about resigning. Is that right?"

"Why why" the curator stammered "you weren't around when I said –"

"Never mind where I was. Let's get to facts. You want to quit this job, don't you?"

"Yes," admitted Rubal. "But I didn't expect –"

"That's all right." Drury spoke soothingly. "I know how you feel. We've panned you pretty heavy, haven't we? I mean Knode has, in his editorials."

"Yes. His criticism was quite severe."

"And you feel you can't stand the gaff."

"That is close to the truth."

Drury eyed the curator and delivered a disarming grin. He came over beside the desk and parked himself on the edge. He spoke in a confidential tone.

"Don't be too quick about it, Rubal," he suggested. "If you'd acted human about the matter, Knode wouldn't have kept on chucking the harpoon. He'll give you a break. Knode's a real guy."

"He has been quite unfriendly," objected Rubal. "My impression of him is –"

"You don't know him," interposed Drury. "Say how late do you stay here at the museum?"

"Usually until nine o'clock," responded Rubal.

"Knode will be here at eight," assured Drury. "I'll arrange that. Hold your decision until you talk with him. He'll be friendly. Is that a bargain?"

Rubal considered. His forehead wrinkled; he clenched his hands nervously. At last he nodded.

Drury dropped from his perch on the desk, waved good-bye and drew Clyde along with him. They left the curator's office.

DRURY and Clyde headed straight for the Enterprise. There they barged into the old man's office and Clyde sat by while Harrison Knode listened to Drury's account of the Blue Sphinx dedication. By the time Drury was finished, Knode was scrawling notations on copy paper.

"Just one thing more, boss," added Drury. "Rubal is going to resign his job as curator."

"What?" inquired the editor, suddenly, looking up from his scrawling. "When?"

"Pronto!" replied Drury. "I got the dope from Hollis, the chief attendant. Then I blew in on Rubal. Told him to hold off until you saw him."

"What did he say to that?"

"Said he'd be in his office at eight o'clock to-night. He'll talk to you if you come there."

"All right."

Knode waved his hand as dismissal. Drury beckoned Clyde from the office. The star reporter chuckled as the door closed behind them.

"Wait'll you see to-night's paper," promised Drury. "The old man's started his editorial. I didn't have to tell him the slant I had on that dedication. He got it himself. Come on. It's time for lunch."

## CHAPTER IX. MURDER AT EIGHT

THE Latuna Enterprise was a true afternoon newspaper. It carried only one edition; and it did not appear upon the street until half past four. Thus there was ample time for Harrison Knode to pen his editorial.

Shortly before eight o'clock that evening, Joseph Rubal was seated in his office at the Latuna Museum, reading the virulent editor's latest effort. Though Rubal's face was solemn, his forehead showed no wrinkles. Though the editorial concerned the Blue Sphinx, the museum curator was omitted from the criticism.

This was the account that Rubal read:

### POLICE EFFICIENCY

Police Chief Grewling is to be complimented on his latest efforts to offset crime. To-day, he and the shock troops of his force performed an outstanding service in the cause of public safety.

Marshalled in full array, the police chief and his cohorts arrived at the Latuna museum to protect the Blue Sphinx during the dedication ceremonies. They thronged about the five-ton rock and kept a vigilant eye upon all comers.

Did it matter to Grewling that none but law-abiding citizens were present? Was he undeterred because the total crowd of curious persons numbered less than the officers he had on duty?

No! Bravely, our high commander stood at his post, ready to foil any plot to steal the ten-thousand-pound statue. He made sure that none of our citizenry had brought derricks in hopes of removing the Blue Sphinx from its new resting place.

Though this noble duty was performed by our police chief in person, Grewling was modest enough to admit that credit for the plan belonged to Mayor Rush. His Honor was responsible for the manifesto that brought the big police turnout. It was a fine exhibition of cooperation.

In fact, this display on the part of the law has answered a most troublesome question. For the past month, the Phoenix Hotel in this city has been the gathering place for thugs and gunmen who are not native to the city of Latuna. Those rogues have been allowed to dwell unmolested in our midst. We have wondered why they were free from police surveillance. In response to our questionings, mayor and police chief have given the same answer. "When we see trouble coming, we'll be ready for it."

Crafty upholders of the law, they at last saw their opportunity. They threw a cordon about the Latuna Museum and protected the Blue Sphinx from attack. Their duty accomplished, they can now return to

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slumber.

Let us suggest that Mayor Rush and Police Chief Grewling be presented with a testimonial of esteem and thanks by the citizens of Latuna. It will be easy enough to find a committee to deliver it. The thugs now dwelling in the Phoenix Hotel would gladly accept the appointment.

Perhaps if they call en masse at the city hall, to deliver the people's vote of thanks, Rush and Grewling will come to the realization that there are persons in Latuna who do not belong here.

THE desk clock showed eight as the curator finished reading. There was a knock at the door. Rubal spoke; Hollis entered. The chief attendant noted the newspaper on the curator's desk.

"Yes, Hollis," remarked Rubal, "I have read the editorial."

"I'm glad, sir," said the attendant, "that you were not criticized."

"Small matter," observed Rubal. "I intend to resign my curatorship, Hollis. To-night."

Hollis looked troubled.

"I am expecting a visitor," explained Rubal. "Show him in, Hollis. I want to talk matters over with him."

"Yes, sir. Of course I would admit Mayor Rush at any time –"

"This will not be Mayor Rush."

"I understand, sir." Hollis looked relieved. "I think you are very wise, Mr. Rubal."

"How do you mean?"

"To discuss your resignation with Mr. Malden."

"I said nothing about Strafford Malden."

"But who else could be coming here, sir?"

"Harrison Knode is the man."

Hollis looked startled.

"A surprise to you, Hollis?" inquired Rubal, calmly. "Well, I suppose it should be. Knode has lampooned me constantly in this sheet he calls a newspaper. But his star reporter talked to me to-day. I made an appointment with Knode, at Drury's suggestion. Knode, himself, called me later to confirm it.

"By the way, Hollis, I saw you talking to Drury in the Medieval Room, just before I went in to the dedication ceremonies. Did you happen to mention to him that I intended to resign?"

"Not exactly, sir –"

"That explains it. You must have given him the idea. Drury bluffed me. I thought that he had overheard me talking to the mayor, in the Sphinx Room. I told Rush that I intended to resign."

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"What did the mayor say, sir?"

"He intimated that he would accept the resignation. He acted as though he would be glad to get it."

Rubal said no more. Hollis stood uneasily by the door. While the curator was busy with papers, the chief attendant ventured a suggestion.

"The mayor has been criticized, sir," said Hollis. "That is why he would like to see you resign. When do you intend to see him?"

"To-night. After I have talked with Knode."

"You are making a double mistake, sir. There is one man who would understand; one who could help you –"

"Strafford Malden?"

"Yes, sir."

Rubal shook his head and allowed a dry smile to appear upon his usually expressionless lips.

"Strafford Malden is not concerned with politics," declared the curator. "He stands completely apart. The fight lies between Harrison Knode, who wants scandal exposed; and Quirby Rush, who is trying to be a conservative mayor. In between, lies Police Chief Grewling. He might help, for he has been criticized like myself. I might talk to Grewling, if he came here."

"But if you would only speak to Mr. Malden, sir."

"I shall not seek that opportunity, Hollis. That settles the matter. Go to your post at the front door. Be ready to answer the bell."

Hollis shifted and started to resume his insistence. Angrily, Rubal pointed to the door. Hollis stepped from view. Rubal caught a last glimpse of the attendant's troubled face. Then the curator began to study the papers on his desk.

FIRST, Rubal picked out a typewritten sheet. This was his formal resignation as curator of the Latuna Museum. Rubal signed the paper. The action seemed to relieve him. Laying the resignation aside, Rubal began to select other documents.

One was a floor plan of the museum. On this, Rubal made penciled notations. He picked out some bills and receipts. He added memos to these. On a blank sheet, he began to write in the halting fashion of a man making a confession.

There was a day calendar on Rubal's desk. It was the type in which old dates are tilted over, not torn off. In the course of his writing, Rubal paused to turn these day sheets down. He was going back to the first of the year, checking up on the written statements he was making.

When he had reached January first, Rubal arose from his desk. He walked across the office and stepped into a small room beyond. He turned on a light, to show a large filing cabinet in the corner. The curator opened a cabinet drawer. He began to search for papers that would give him information prior to the current year.

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Rubal paused in this work as he heard the muffled ring of a distant bell. Coming from the inner room, he noticed the time on his desk clock. It was not long after eight. Time had gone slowly since Hollis had left the office.

Rubal went to the outer door of the office. He opened it and noted that the corridor lights were on. Having arranged for his visitor's entrance, the curator went back to the inner room of the office suite and hurriedly turned to the filing cabinet. He drew out a sheaf of letters.

Footsteps sounded at the office door. Rubal heard them; from his place in the inner room, he called to the arrival:

"Sit down, Mr. Knode! I shall be with you in a moment!"

With a last glance at the letters, Rubal drew several from the sheet and replaced the rest in the filing cabinet. He heard the sound of a closing door—the one to the corridor. Then came a click. Rubal turned.

The visitor had switched off the light in the outer office. Disturbed, Rubal stepped toward the office itself. The only light that remained was that from the little filing room, where Rubal was standing.

In the doorway, with right hand against the door frame and left holding the letters from the cabinet, Rubal peered anxiously into the office. He saw his visitor over beyond the desk, a lurking figure in the darkness.

"Knode!" exclaimed Rubal. "What does this mean? Why have you turned out the light?"

Something glimmered. A horrified exclamation came from the curator's lips as his eyes caught the flash of a revolver barrel. Desperately, Rubal stepped back from the doorway. He was too late.

Framed against the light from the filing room, Joseph Rubal made a perfect target for the murderous marksman. Flame forked from the gun, accompanied by a fizzing sound, like that of a squibby firecracker.

Joseph Rubal staggered. He delivered a wild, sighing cry, dropped the letters and pressed his hands against his body. He staggered forward, step by step; past the desk, almost to the outer door of the office.

Then, suddenly, the curator collapsed. Sprawled upon the floor, he lay moaning between hopeless gasps. Joseph Rubal was dying, while his assassin, indifferent to the curator's plight, moved through the darkness of the office.

## CHAPTER X. THE MAN WHO KNEW

BACK at the outer door of the museum, Hollis was seated at his table. The chief attendant was restless. Hollis glanced at his watch. Twenty minutes past eight.

Hollis had bolted the outer door, his usual procedure after admitting a visitor. It was his duty to remain here until the watchmen arrived, unless otherwise ordered by Rubal. There had been no summons from the curator.

Yet Hollis was sure that something was amiss. He had an impression that he had heard an odd, sighing cry from a distant spot of the museum. He knew that the door of the curator's office was not soundproof. Noise carried strangely through the long corridors of the museum. Could that cry have come from Rubal's office?

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Hollis ended his indecision. He glanced toward the outer door. Any one seeking admittance there would have to ring. The bell could be heard from Rubal's office. Hollis decided that it would be a good idea to visit the curator. He glanced at his watch, then nodded. He had found a satisfactory excuse.

Pocketing his watch, Hollis plodded past the Medieval Room and took to the long corridor that led to Rubal's office. Reaching his objective; the chief attendant stopped and listened intently. He heard some one moving within the office. That sound faded. Then Hollis fancied that he caught a moan. "Mr. Rubal!"

Hollis knocked as he gave the call. He listened. There was no response. "Mr. Rubal!"

A dull click, like some one pressing a light switch. That was all that Hollis heard.

Perplexed, the chief attendant opened the door of the office. The barrier swung inward; something stopped its course. Hollis pushed harder; he heard a moan as the door swung clear past an obstruction that shifted on the floor. Then Hollis stood astounded.

The office light was out. So was the light of the little filing room. The click that Hollis had heard was the explanation of the inner light being gone. But Hollis was not concerned with that matter. He was staring toward the floor of the curator's office.

By the light of the corridor, Hollis could see the prone form of Joseph Rubal. The curator's face showed pallid and distorted. Gasping lips and pleading eyes registered themselves to the chief attendant's gaze. Hollis stooped beside the dying curator.

"Mr. Rubal!" blurted the attendant. "Tell me what has happened –"

"Knode!" gasped the curator weakly. "Harrison Knode! He he shot me; I'm dying –"

"Knode?" questioned Hollis. "Knode shot you? But but where where did he –"

HOLLIS paused abruptly. He caught a sound from straight ahead. The attendant looked up, then came slowly to his feet. He was looking toward the door of the filing room, where he could detect a slight motion.

Whirling impressions swept through the attendant's brain. Finding Joseph Rubal on the floor, Hollis had first thought the curator stricken by a heart attack. Rubal's words had astounded him; then had come this interruption.

Motionless, Hollis stared at that door. He realized that the murderer stood there; that the slayer had chosen the filing room as a lurking spot. Hollis did not picture what had happened. He did not know that Rubal, stepping from the filing room, had been a perfect target against a background of light.

Nor did he realize that he had stepped into a similar situation. With the light of the corridor behind him, Hollis was another target. His first cognizance of that fact came when he saw what Rubal had seen: the glimmer of a revolver.

Hollis uttered a hoarse cry. He started forward, hopelessly. Flame tongued through the darkened office; with it, the fierce sigh of the silencer-fitted gun. The second shot proved better than the first. Hollis doubled crazily and tottered.

Joseph Rubal delivered a last croaking gasp from the floor. Then Hollis came tumbling squarely on his body. The chief attendant gave a final writhe and rolled from the curator's dead form. Side by side, Rubal and

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Hollis lay dead.

THE murderer did not turn on the light. Instead, he prowled about the room with a flashlight. He picked up the letters that Rubal had dropped upon the floor. He found the resignation and added it to the letters. He gathered up Rubal's notations, including the marked plan of the museum. Then he extinguished his flash.

Stepping past the dead bodies, the killer sidled to the door. But he did not move into the corridor; wary, he wanted to avoid its revealing light, despite the fact that he had become the only living man remaining in the Latuna Museum.

An arm came into the corridor, reaching around the corner from the office door. A hand found a light switch that controlled the corridor lights. Three clicks. The pathway from office to the big front door was a mass of blackness.

Unaided even by his flashlight, the killer moved out of Rubal's office and made his way along the corridor to the front of the museum. He reached the steps by the big front door and felt his way to the barrier. Groping, he found the bar and raised it. He swung the huge door inward, stepped out into the night and closed the door behind him.

A clouded sky had brought pitch-blackness to the ground. Even the whitened front of the museum was barely visible. The building looked a dim, ghostly sepulchre in the darkness. Its deathlike appearance was appropriate; for it had become the tomb for two murdered victims.

The killer gave a low, evil laugh as he stalked away from the museum of death. Treading hard clay soil, he left no footprints behind him. He found a hard-beaten path in the darkness and descended the hill in back of the museum until he arrived at an old road near the quarry siding.

Tiny lights were flickering half a mile away. The killer watched them bob and scatter. Then he kept on moving through the dark. They were doing night blasting at the isolated quarry. A hundred yards along the road, the murderer paused while a muffled boom resounded and the earth gave a slight shudder.

Then, as clattering rocks came tumbling down the neighboring hillside, the unseen killer turned from the road and stepped amid a thick cluster of trees. He flicked his flashlight on the stony surface of an abandoned road. The glimmer showed an old coupe, parked in readiness. The killer extinguished his torch.

Entering the car, this man of murder turned on the dim lights and started the motor. He drove bounding along the old road, curving off through trees, away from both the museum and the quarry. He reached a highway and began a curving course in the direction of Latuna.

Double death had struck to-night. With evil aforethought, a murderer had spelled finish to the affairs of Joseph Rubal. Then, as a final touch, the killer had lurked to deliver death to the only man who might have served as witness for the law.

He had slain Hollis, the man who knew. With the chief attendant dead beside the slain curator, it would take the efforts of a master sleuth to pin crime on the fiend who had committed it.

## CHAPTER XI. AT THE PHOENIX HOTEL

SHORTLY after murder had been enacted at the Latuna Museum, a stranger entered the lobby of the Wilkin Hotel, Latuna's most pretentious hostelry. There was something about the arrival's bearing that was oddly

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reminiscent of Lamont Cranston.

The stranger in Latuna was tall, like Cranston; his face was hawklike and immobile; yet his whole visage was squarer and heavier than that of the New York millionaire. Moreover, his complexion was darker than Cranston's.

The new guest at the Wilkin registered under the name of Henry Arnaud; his address: Cleveland, Ohio. He was given a room on the sixth floor front. Arrived there, Arnaud seemed satisfied. He dismissed the bell hop with a tip.

Moving his heavy suitcases from the luggage rack by the window, Henry Arnaud gazed out toward the town's main street. Half a block away was the Phoenix Hotel. Watching the front of that building, Arnaud spied two men entering the hotel. One was Bart Drury; the other Clyde Burke. Arnaud's eyes gleamed as he recognized the latter.

A soft laugh came from immobile lips as the new guest withdrew from the window. As Henry Arnaud, The Shadow had come unannounced to Latuna. His first purpose had been to learn how Clyde Burke was faring. Already, The Shadow had spied his agent.

Leaving his room, The Shadow descended to the lobby of the Wilkin. In the methodical fashion of Henry Arnaud, he strolled out to the street. He crossed the main thoroughfare and entered the Phoenix Hotel.

The Shadow discovered a large, glittering lobby that was cluttered with various slot machines. These devices were of a non-gambling type and had evidently passed police inspection. For to-night, two khaki-clad policemen were on duty; and they seemed mildly interested in watching the players at the game boards.

Bart Drury was seated in a corner chair, smoking a fat cigar. He had a complete view of the lobby and the small taproom that adjoined it. Near Bart was Clyde Burke, also on the watch.

Both were so concerned, however, with their more distant watching that they failed to notice the stranger who took a chair just past a potted palm tree to Drury's right. In fact, neither man saw the inconspicuous figure of Henry Arnaud.

Listening, The Shadow overheard the conversation between Drury and Burke.

"Grewling's got two cops on the job to-night," laughed Bart. "Guess the old man got results with that editorial."

"Are any of the riffraff around?" questioned Clyde.

"Sure," returned Bart. "There's a couple by the cigar stand. The rest are in the taproom."

"I don't see any cops in there."

"Two detectives." Bart paused to puff at his cigar. "Look through there to the corner table. See that guy with the funny-looking face? He's one of Grewling's dicks. Mushroom, we call him."

A pause. Bart's stogy began to curl. He chucked it in an ash-stand. As he started to fumble in his pocket for a fresh cigar, Bart suddenly poked Clyde in the shoulder.

"Here comes the big shot," he whispered. "Guy named Konk Zitz. See? From the taproom?"



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CLYDE nodded as he saw a short, sallow-faced rogue come into the lobby. Konk Zitz was attired in tuxedo. He was chewing a cigar and looking about with beady, ratlike eyes. He spied Bart Drury, and a sour grin appeared upon his face.

"Hello, there!" greeted the newcomer, approaching the reporter. "Boy! What smoke! Did you chuck a pineapple in that ash-stand?"

"Just a cigar," returned Drury.

"Who gave it to you?" chuckled Konk. "The police chief? Trying to gas you?"

"I bought it," retorted Drury. "For a nickel."

"Well, here's a fifteen center," offered Konk. "One for your pal, too." He looked at Clyde and added a question. "New reporter on your paper?"

"Yes," replied Drury. "Name's Burke."

Konk shook hands with Clyde. Then he took a chair near the two reporters and nudged his thumb toward the lobby.

"Looks like your boss woke Grewling up," observed the crook leader. "Two flatfeet here in the lobby. Couple more out back. Couple of dicks in the taproom."

"Watching your bunch?" quizzed Drury.

"Watching everybody," corrected Konk. "I've got no outfit, Drury. Get that out of your noodle."

"You've got a lot of friends."

"Sure! Pals who have the same idea I have. We all think Latuna is a good spot for a vacation."

"Two more blew in to-day, didn't they?"

"Yeah. Couple of friends of mine. I mailed them a folder about Latuna. You know the one. Chamber of Commerce puts it out. Well, they fell for the idea this city was a beauty spot and they dropped off."

"From a freight?"

"Came in by the Northeast Express," replied Konk Zitz, ignoring Drury's sarcasm. "Say I don't get this stuff of calling me and my friends undesirables. Latuna is a vacation city, ain't it?"

"So they say."

"Well, we spend U. S. dough, like anybody else. What's more, we spend more of it than most people."

"All right, Konk. I'm not arguing. It's Knode's idea to razz you fellows; not mine. Say who came in to-day?"

"A fellow named Tinker Furriss; and a pal of his, Cliff Marsland. Both have a clean bill of health."

"Where are they?"

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"In the taproom. You can't see them from here; but Grewling's gumshoes are watching them."

THE SHADOW had heard every iota of this conversation. Yet not even Konk Zitz had noticed the placid stranger beyond the potted palm. Watching across the lobby, The Shadow spied an approaching bell boy. He observed that the attendant was coming to speak to Konk Zitz.

"Telephone, Mr. Zitz."

Konk arose at the bell hop's statement. The Shadow watched the sallow-faced cigar smoker go to a telephone booth, while Bart and Clyde resumed their conversation. Though Konk was turned so that The Shadow could not eye the motions of his lips, the keen-eyed watcher knew that this telephone call was an important one.

When Konk came out of the booth, he wore a poker-faced expression. He started toward the taproom; as an afterthought, he swung back and approached Clyde and Bart.

"Fine mess your boss made of things!" Konk told Drury. "With Grewling's gumshoes on the job, none of us can go out of here to-night. I had to bust a date with a swell blonde who just called me up."

"Too bad," observed Drury.

"I'll say it is!" growled Konk. "If I took her out in my coupe, I'd have a couple of these wise dicks traveling along in the rumble seat. When you see that boss of yours, Knode, tell him I don't like him! Get that?"

Konk turned and went into the taproom. His bluff had been effective with the reporters.

Not so with The Shadow. The listener who wore the countenance of Henry Arnaud knew well that Konk Zitz had deliberately tried to cover up a business call.

"Let's go up to the old man's house," suggested Bart. "Maybe he's been up to the museum, to see Rubal. We'll walk over to Knode's. It's only a couple of blocks."

As the two sauntered from the lobby, The Shadow arose and strolled to the taproom. Just inside, he paused; as before, his guise of Arnaud was an inconspicuous one. The Shadow saw Konk Zitz with a group at a table. Cliff Marsland was there, seated beside Tinker Furriss. The Shadow recognized the latter's pock-marked face.

"All O.K.," came Konk's low growl. "Nobody needed to-night. Sit tight. It's great, with these dicks watching us. We want them to know that none of us moved out of here after seven P.M."

The Shadow strolled from the taproom. He knew the source of that information which Konk Zitz had passed to the band. It was an aftermath of the telephone call that Konk had received. As he left the Phoenix Hotel, The Shadow glanced at his watch. The time was five minutes before nine.

There was no need for The Shadow to remain here longer. Konk and his pals was staying in the Phoenix Hotel; Cliff Marsland, established with the outfit, would report any new developments.

The Shadow's thoughts reverted to Clyde Burke and Bart Drury. His fixed lips formed the semblance of a smile as he entered the lobby of his own hotel and took the elevator to the sixth.

IN his room, The Shadow consulted a telephone book and learned Knode's address. He extinguished the light in the room; then opened a suitcase. Black garments clicked. From that moment, Henry Arnaud was a name only; his personality had ended. The cloaked figure of The Shadow had replaced him.

## The Blue Sphinx

Gliding phantomlike through the hallway, The Shadow arrived at a firetower exit and descended to a vacant lot beside the hotel. This was used as a parking space; The Shadow threaded his way among the standing cars.

His course became swift and undiscernible as he moved along silent, dimly lighted streets. The Shadow's speed showed that he had familiarized himself with a street map of Latuna. He knew the shortcuts; his pace was rapid. It brought him to the front of a small, old-fashioned house that stood on a secluded street.

The Shadow passed through a little gate; then merged with the blackness at the side of a porch as he heard footsteps coming from the corner.

Clyde Burke and Bart Drury entered the gate. This house was Harrison Knode's. The Shadow's swift course had beaten their strolling pace and roundabout choice of route. The Shadow watched from darkness as Drury rang the doorbell. An elderly housekeeper answered.

"Hello, Bridget!" greeted Bart. "Where's Mr. Knode?"

"He went out, Mr. Drury," replied the woman.

"When did he say he'd be back?" inquired the reporter.

"He didn't tell me that," answered Bridget. "He just told me he was going out before eight o'clock. That was right after dinner –"

"Who says I went out?" The irritable voice was Harrison Knode's. The editor was coming from a stairway. "I haven't been out at all!"

The Shadow saw Knode's figure at the doorway. The man was in shirt sleeves. His necktie was missing. He acted in a half-sleepy manner.

"I told you to call me, Bridget," snapped Knode, "so I could go out at eight! I went upstairs to take a nap. I overslept."

"I was sure, sir," protested the woman, "that you had gone out. When I saw you just now, I thought you'd come in by the back door."

"Enough, Bridget! You may go!" Knode shooed the housekeeper with an angry wave of his hands. Then to Clyde and Bart. "Come in, you fellows. We'll have a smoke."

The door closed after Clyde and Bart entered.

The Shadow lingered; then edged forward from the darkness beside the porch. He reached the door and found it unlatched. Softly, he entered to a hallway.

Beyond curtains, The Shadow saw lights that indicated Knode's parlor. He peered into an old-fashioned room. He saw the editor offering cigars to the reporters.

"IT'S too late to go to the museum," stated Knode, as he lighted his cigar. "Rubal will be gone. Well, I'll see him to-morrow. If he's got anything worth while to say, I'll hear it in time for the edition."

He paused; then inquired sharply. "Where've you fellows been this evening?"

## The Blue Sphinx

"Down at the Phoenix Hotel," replied Drury. "Talking with Konk Zitz. Couple of new pals blew in to join him.

"Was Grewling there?"

"No. Some of his men were, though."

"Humph! I wonder why Grewling wasn't there. I thought he'd be keeping tabs himself, to-night. Well, I guess he'll be there later."

Knode walked restlessly across the room; then sat down in a chair.

"It irks me," he asserted, "this fact that I overslept. I should have seen Rubal to-night. Instead, I didn't get a chance to leave the house. I was caught napping, literally."

With that statement, Harrison Knode dropped the subject and settled down to a casual chat with his reporters. But Clyde Burke could not dispel a lurking suspicion that Bridget had been correct when she had stated that Knode had gone out at eight o'clock.

Whether or not Knode had told the truth was a matter that continued to perplex Clyde. It was something that he intended to put in his report to The Shadow. Clyde wondered what his chief's finding would be. The Shadow had a way of divining the false from the true; even when he worked on information from others.

Clyde Burke would have been amazed had he known that The Shadow had already studied the merits of Knode's statements. Listening from the hall, that cloaked watcher had heard all that the editor had said. Moreover, he had noted Knode's expression when the man had talked.

The Shadow had dropped Konk Zitz, knowing that Cliff Marsland could watch that fellow. Right now, he was dropping Harrison Knode, leaving further observation of the editor to Clyde Burke. A new, uncovered lead was the one that The Shadow intended to follow.

Knode's front door closed softly as The Shadow stole out into darkness. Swiftly, stealthily, the cloaked phantom headed townward.

A soft whisper drifted through the darkness. The Shadow had yet to learn of murder at the museum. Yet he had already gained important impressions concerning two persons in Latuna namely, Konk Zitz and Harrison Knode.

## CHAPTER XII. MORE MEN MOVE

TEN minutes after The Shadow had left Harrison Knode's, a figure strode from the Phoenix Hotel. It was Police Chief Grewling. The official had paid a brief visit to the hotel in order to hear reports from his men.

A coupe was parked just past the lighted front of the hotel. The car was Grewling's; in businesslike fashion, the official entered the coupe and took the wheel. He started the motor and shifted the gear.

Gleaming eyes from darkness. They had watched the police chief's exit from the hotel. The Shadow, arriving, had stopped at sight of Grewling's gold-braided uniform. The police chief's love of tinsel trappings made him easily recognizable.

## The Blue Sphinx

As the coupe started, blackness swept forward. With long, swift stride, The Shadow gained the rear of the moving car. His shape blended with the curve of its body. Invisible above the rear light, The Shadow was accompanying the police chief to some destination.

For The Shadow had done more than recognize the police chief. He had analyzed Grewling's stride; he had divined that the official was bound on some important mission. Grewling, like Zitz and Knode, was a factor in the odd medley of counterpurposes that existed in Latuna. The Shadow saw opportunity to gain an inkling of the police chief's ways.

Grewling drove rapidly through secluded streets, totally unaware of the mysterious rider perched at the rear of his car. After half a dozen minutes, he pulled up in front of a large stone house. The door was open; a servant was standing there. Grewling called out to learn if Mayor Rush happened to be at home.

"I expect him any minute, sir," informed the menial. "He said something about an appointment here, at nine o'clock."

"It's after nine now."

Lights swung from the corner in front of the coupe. Grewling, using his prerogative as police chief, had parked on the left. The arriving car, a sedan, stopped on the right, its lights glaring into those of Grewling's coupe.

It was the mayor's car. Rush alighted and came pompously to the door of Grewling's coupe. He nodded to the police chief and beckoned to the servant, who came from the house door. The Shadow made no move from his perch at the rear of the coupe.

He could see a uniformed policeman who had alighted from the mayor's car. He knew that this must be an officer whom Grewling had detailed as Rush's chauffeur, the mayor's car being an official one. From his absolute concealment, The Shadow could hear Rush speaking. The mayor was addressing the servant who had come from the house:

"Any callers, Adams?"

"No, sir. Mr. Malden telephoned, though, a short while ago."

"I see. Let's go up to Malden's, Grewling. We can ride in your car. I told Malden I might be up to see him along about nine o'clock." Then, to the servant. "I'll leave my sedan here; if Mr. Rubal calls, Adams, tell him that my chauffeur will bring him up to Mr. Malden's."

"Very well, sir."

THE SHADOW made no motion while Rush was entering the coupe. Grewling started the machine; it shot rapidly from the curb and skirted Rush's sedan so swiftly that neither Adams nor the chauffeur spied the figure clinging to the rear of the coupe.

As the car swung the corner, The Shadow performed a difficult maneuver. He came head-first over the fender at the right rear of the coupe. Flattened there, his shoulders were just in back of the opened window beside Mayor Rush. As the coupe rolled through darkness, The Shadow could overhear all that passed between mayor and police chief. "I lost track of time at the office," explained Rush. "I shall have that wall clock fixed some day. It stopped around eight. I did not know how late it was. Where were you this evening, Grewling?"

## The Blue Sphinx

"Checking on the Phoenix Hotel. Knode ought to be satisfied. I had eight men watching the lobby. None of those crooks went out of the place."

"It is within your authority to watch the hotel, Grewling; but remember: I did not order it. I think you made a mistake."

"Why?"

"Knode will lampoon anything you do. Mark my words on that, Grewling. The best policy with Knode is to ignore him."

"But, to-day, his paper said –"

"I know. Just a wedge for more muckraking. I thought there might be a large crowd at the dedication exercises. That is why I ordered a large detail. The men were available; there was no reason why you could not have supplied them."

"Certainly. They were mostly traffic officers who had no duty until afternoon."

"But Knode saw a chance for empty talk. Well, Grewling, I took it up with Dunham, of the Gazette. His journal will run a suitable story to-morrow, with photographs of the museum and the Blue Sphinx."

The mayor cleared his throat; then added:

"Forget Knode for a while, Grewling. Watch the Phoenix Hotel for a few days longer at the most. Remember, Grewling, if I took Knode too seriously, you would not be holding your job to-day."

The Shadow, peering through the edge of the coupe window, saw Grewling shift uneasily. The police chief darted a glance at the mayor, then looked toward the road and slowed the coupe in order to turn into a driveway just ahead.

"Like Rubal, you are an official from the last administration," explained Rush, as the car stopped in front of a massive stone mansion, well in from the road. "Ever since Darfield, our ex-mayor, disappeared from town, Knode has demanded that I air the faults of the last administration.

"I have refused to do so. I kept you and Rubal because I believed both of you, to be honest. I can give good government to Latuna without discharging capable men. My policy is to ignore dead scandals. I refuse to start a new one about those men at the Phoenix Hotel. They may look like crooks; yet they have not branded themselves as such. Men must be regarded as innocent until proven guilty."

THE SHADOW shifted backward as Rush opened the door. This house was Malden's. Its blackened foreground offered opportunity to The Shadow. He edged into darkness and reached the house while Rush and Grewling were ascending steps between two stone griffons.

The Shadow saw lighted windows at the side of the house; they indicated a conservatory. He glided in that direction.

At the front door, Mayor Rush banged pompously upon a brass knocker. The large door opened; a Japanese servant bowed the visitors into a lavishly furnished hallway.

"Mr. Malden is in the conservatory," announced the Jap. "He awaits you, Honorable Mayor."

## The Blue Sphinx

Toya led the way to the conservatory. Entering, the visitors found Strafford Malden rising to greet them. The donor of the Blue Sphinx was attired in a dark dressing gown that accentuated the gray streaks in his hair.

"You are late, Quirby," he told the mayor, with a smile. "I thought that perhaps you did not have your official car to-night. I was ready to send my limousine to your house."

"The car is down there," replied Rush. "Waiting for Joseph Rubal."

"He is coming to see you?"

"Yes. I told the police chauffeur to bring him up here."

"I have Singler waiting here," remarked Malden, indicating a uniformed chauffeur who was seated in the corner. "If you wish to send your man off duty, Singler can take the limousine –"

"Not necessary, Mr. Malden."

"Very well. You may go, Singler." Malden smiled. "You may resume your narrative at some later date."

"All right, Mr. Malden," laughed the chauffeur.

"Interesting chap," observed Malden, after Singler had departed. "He served for seven years in the French Foreign Legion. I started him talking after I had finished dinner and he held me spellbound until your arrival. One adventure after another. Interesting to have a chauffeur who is also a raconteur."

"Well, gentlemen" Malden waved his guests to chairs "I am pleased that you are here. I have been rather anxious to learn why you wanted me to see Rubal, Quirby."

"It's on account of his resignation, Malden."

"Has Rubal resigned as curator? This is unbelievable!"

"He intends to resign to-night. That is why he is coming to see me. I mentioned the matter to you after we left the museum to-day."

"You stated that Rubal had said that he did not intend to go on. I thought that you meant in regard to the plans for the museum extension."

Quirby Rush shook his head.

"Rubal is through," he declared. "Completely prepared to quit. I am bringing him here in hope that he will reconsider his decision."

"He must do so," agreed Malden. "He is the proper man for the post of curator."

"I'm thinking of myself as much as Rubal," admitted the mayor. "Harrison Knode has been after Rubal's scalp. If Rubal quits, it will appear that Knode has accomplished something in spite of me."

"I see," nodded Malden. "I can appreciate your concern, Quirby. However, I can register no sentiment politically. My interest lies in the welfare of art. So far as Latuna is concerned, Joseph Rubal is the proper man as curator of the museum. Perhaps his resignation is on account of trouble with the plans. We aided him

## The Blue Sphinx

previously. Perhaps –"

Toya interrupted by appearing.

"Honorable Police Chief," declared the Jap. "He is wanted to speak on the telephone."

Grewling arose and followed Toya. Malden and Rush gazed after the police chief. Their eyes, however, were not the only ones that observed Grewling's temporary departure. From outside an opened window, keen orbs were staring in from darkness.

THE conservatory was built on a slope that descended from this side of the house. Hence its windows were high above the ground. The Shadow, however, had scaled the masonry. From the outer darkness, he had listened in on every word of the passing conversation.

And with Toya's interruption, The Shadow had peered above the sill. He watched Rush and Malden as they began to resume their conversation. Then he saw Grewling returning; the police chief's face was purple with excitement.

"A call from headquarters!" exclaimed Grewling. "Report on a murder! Discovered shortly after nine o'clock."

"Murder?" queried Quirby Rush. "Where?"

"At the museum!"

"Not not Rubal –"

"Yes. And Hollis, the chief attendant!"

The Shadow saw Mayor Rush and Strafford Malden exchange horrified stares. The police chief waved them to their feet.

"Call your chauffeur, Mr. Malden," he urged. "We're going to the museum."

Malden nodded. He called Toya, telling the Japanese to get clothes ready so that he could dress hurriedly. He also ordered Toya to call Singler and have him bring the limousine.

Ten minutes later, the big car rolled from Malden's front drive on its way to the Latuna Museum. From the heavy darkness at the front of the mansion, the eyes of The Shadow watched the departure of Grewling, Rush and Malden.

A grim laugh whispered from the gloom. The Shadow, though he had come to Latuna, had arrived too late to prevent the stroke of crime. He had planned a later visit to the museum. Such a trip would be useless to-night.

Death had already occurred. Two men were murdered; the law was investigating. The Shadow's only course would be to wait for better opportunity to view the scene of crime.



## CHAPTER XIII. WORD TO THE SHADOW

WHEN Malden's limousine pulled up in front of the Latuna Museum, the building showed light from its open front doorway. Two policemen arrived with flashlights; they recognized their chief as soon as Grewling stepped from Malden's car.

"We've got the watchmen inside, chief," informed one of the cops. "They're the fellows who found the bodies."

"Was the place lighted up like this?" inquired Grewling.

"It was when we got here," said another policeman. "But one of the watchmen said he switched on the lights."

"Let's go inside," suggested Grewling, turning abruptly to Rush and Malden.

The trio entered the museum. They followed the corridor on the right and came to the office. There they found a policeman outside the door, while, at the end of the corridor, stood two solemn-looking men. They were the watchmen.

The police chief stepped into the office. He saw the bodies lying on the floor. Joseph Rubal's upturned face was distorted from the dying agony that the curator had suffered. Hollis looked grim in death.

Strafford Malden and Quirby Rush viewed the bodies from the doorway. They stepped back as Grewling came from the room. They waited while the police chief quizzed the watchmen. The story that the two men told was simple and straightforward.

They had arrived at the accustomed hour of nine. When Hollis did not answer their prolonged ring, one of them had the inspiration of trying the door. It was found to be unlocked. The watchmen had naturally gone to the curator's office.

They had turned on lights all along the line. After discovering the dead bodies of the curator and the chief attendant, they had called police headquarters from the curator's telephone.

"There's not much mystery about the killing," announced Grewling, turning to Rush and Malden. "The museum closes up at eight. Somebody must have rung the bell; after that, Hollis let him in and he killed Rubal."

"What about the other attendants?" inquired Rush.

"They go out at eight o'clock, don't they?" retorted Grewling.

"I know that," replied Rush. "But it is possible that one of them could have been responsible for this crime."

"That's possible!" exclaimed Grewling. "Here, Toxter" he turned to a policeman "dig down to town and look up those other attendants. Bring them out here."

THE order given, Grewling paused to eye a stout man with a bag who was coming down the corridor. He recognized a local physician, who had arrived in response to a call from headquarters. He told the doctor to examine the bodies. While the physician was busy, the police chief resorted to his first theory.

## The Blue Sphinx

"Somebody could have come in here," he declared. "Some special visitor, between eight o'clock and nine."

"Just whom would Hollis have admitted?" questioned Malden.

"Any one who might know the curator," replied the police chief. "That's a good lead, Mr. Malden. If some ordinary thug had showed up here, Hollis wouldn't have let him in."

"He might have forced his way in," observed Rush.

"He'd have had Hollis to deal with first," returned Grewling. "No, the thing's plain, mayor. Somebody got by the door and came in here. Hollis must have heard the shot and come in to get his dose of lead."

"Odd that he walked into the trap so easily," said Malden.

"Not if he knew the man who was calling," declared Grewling. "He might have thought the shot was accidental."

New footsteps in the corridor. It was Singler, Malden's chauffeur. The man had come in to inquire if he might be needed. Malden told him to remain.

"Well, doc?" questioned Grewling, as the physician finished his examination. "Anything unusual?"

"I'm not exactly sure," declared the physician, in a doubtful tone. "Death may not have been instantaneous in the case of Rubal; but it was with Hollis. In both cases, however, the wounds show tendency to enlargement. I am not an expert on bullet wounds; but I would say —"

"May I take a look at them?" inquired Singler, the chauffeur.

"What for?" snapped the police chief.

"I've seen some pretty mean wounds," replied Singler. "Seven years with the Foreign Legion. I've seen what ricochet shots can do. As for dumdums well, the Arabs never minded using them. As for the Tuaregs —"

"Let him take a look, doc," broke in Grewling.

Singler joined the physician and noted the doctor's comments. When he arose from beside the body, the chauffeur was nodding. He had apparently made a discovery.

"I'll bet ten to one on it," declared Singler.

"On what?" inquired Mayor Rush.

"That there was a silencer on the gun that got those fellows," said the chauffeur.

"Did they use silencers in the Foreign Legion?" quizzed Police Chief Grewling, in a scoffing tone.

"No," replied Singler, soberly, "but there were plenty of lowlifes — Apaches and what not who had used them in the past. I've seen and heard about plenty of guns; and a silencer particularly a poor one will put aquiver to a bullet. Like this."

## The Blue Sphinx

Singler paused to make a wiggling motion with his right hand, as an exaggerated idea of the course that a bullet might have followed.

"Turn it over to a bullet expert," suggested the chauffeur. "Get those slugs, chief, and they'll tell their own story."

"This coincides with your theory, Grewling," observed Mayor Rush. "Hollis might have come back in here not knowing that anything had happened to the curator."

"We'll have the bullets extracted," declared the police chief, grimly. "You seem to know what you're talking about, Singler. Thanks for the information."

The chauffeur nodded, and Strafford Malden gave him an approving smile.

At that moment, there was a stir from the front end of the corridor. Voices carried down the passageway as a group of men put in their appearance. Two policemen were arguing with the newcomers.

"Harrison Knode!" exclaimed the mayor. "With a couple of his reporters. They must have heard the news."

"Keep them out!" bellowed the police chief, to the cops.

"No, no," rebuked the mayor. "Let them come here. Don't be annoyed, Grewling. Remember what I told you to-night."

"All right, men," called the chief. "Let them by."

Knode arrived with Burke and Drury. While his reporters stood in the background, the long-faced editor nodded to mayor and police chief. He smiled sourly as they failed to return his greeting. Knode turned and shook hands with Strafford Malden.

Two policemen appeared with the museum attendants. They had found the men in town. There were two; and Grewling quizzed them briefly. Both stated that they had left as usual, at eight o'clock. Hollis had bolted the door behind them.

The frankness of the attendants was convincing. The police chief, already moving along a solid theory, accepted what they said. But he quizzed the two men definitely on one point: the possibility of some one having remained in the museum after closing time.

Both men stated that they had inspected with Hollis, after the museum was closed, and that Rubal could have had no lurker in his office.

Another newcomer arrived at the finish of the quiz. This was Howard Dunham, tall, cadaverous-looking editor of the Latuna Gazette. Dunham covered big stories in person; and his arrival pleased the police chief, for it gave Grewling a chance to bait Knode.

Stepping into the curator's office, Grewling invited Dunham to accompany him. While the editor stood by the desk, the police chief made a careful inspection. The room had been lighted by one of the watchmen; the same man who had peered into the little filing room. Grewling inspected both portions of the suite.

"Sit down," he said to Dunham, motioning the Gazette man to the chair behind the curator's desk. "I'm going to give you my theory, Mr. Dunham. That will give you a chance to run a story before the coroner holds his

inquest."

Grewling shot a glance at the doorway where Knode was looking on with Rush and Malden. He was willing that Knode should listen in. The Gazette being a morning paper, it would beat the Enterprise with the news.

"JOSEPH RUBAL was murdered," declared the police chief, "by some visitor who came here after eight o'clock. That unknown party had a firearm that was equipped with a silencer. He shot and killed Joseph Rubal.

"The same murderer was forced to slay Hollis in order that the chief attendant would not reveal his identity. We shall have an examination made of the bullets. Through them we may be able to trace the gun and the killer himself."

Grewling paused and began to pace the room.

Dunham, pausing in his note taking, chanced to notice the calendar on the desk. Idly, the editor of the Gazette lifted the pages until he came to the current date.

"Look at this!" he exclaimed. "Two notations! The first says: 'Eight P.M., appointment, office.' The second says 'Nine P.M., appointment. Mayor.' These refer to to-night!"

The police chief came to take a look at the date pad. Mayor Rush crowded through the doorway and also examined it. Grewling spoke to the mayor.

"You see?" said the chief. "Some one was due here at eight o'clock. Unless Rubal intended to go to your office."

"It says nine o'clock for me," objected Rush. "That was the time he expected to come to my home."

"He couldn't have been going to see you, Mr. Malden," said Grewling, turning toward the door. "You have no office. I was not expecting Rubal so office means here. The question is who was due here at eight o'clock?"

"I suppose you'll be suggesting that I had an appointment here with Rubal," jeered Harrison Knode, thrusting his head through the doorway. "There's a theory for you, Grewling. Fancy that my calling to see Rubal."

"Is that notation in Rubal's handwriting?" demanded Grewling, suddenly turning to the mayor.

Rush nodded.

"That's a break for you, Knode," stormed Grewling, turning to the door. "You and Rubal were anything but friends. It's lucky that Rubal marked this appointment himself. It shows you weren't the person he expected. It leaves you out."

"Very good," chuckled Knode. "That suits me. Good-by, chief. I'll read the details in the Gazette tomorrow morning."

ACCOMPANIED by Burke and Drury, Knode left the museum. The trio rode to the editor's home. There they entered and Knode spoke privately with Drury for a few minutes. Then the editor shook hands with both men. They left together.

Drury took Clyde to a lunch wagon. He picked a spot at the far end of the counter.

## The Blue Sphinx

"The old man asked me to speak to you," confided Drury, in a low tone. "You heard him fox Grewling. Pulled it clever on the chief, didn't he?"

Clyde nodded, as he lowered a cup of coffee.

"He wants us to keep mum about that appointment he had with Rubal," added Drury. "After all, Knode didn't keep it. So it means nothing. But if anybody knew about it, Grewling would be on Knode's neck. The old man wouldn't be able to cut loose in the sheet. Get the idea?"

Again Clyde nodded.

"So we're saying nothing," decided Drury. "Shake on it."

Clyde shook hands. Then he made a suggestion.

"I'd like to shoot this story to the Classic," he said. "They don't belong to the Interstate Press. If they could beat the other New York sheets, it would put me in right back there."

"Go ahead," agreed Drury. "You can beat the wired service by a couple of hours anyway. Dunham will be slow sending it over the Interstate Press. He'll stay late at the museum, getting his story."

"Where's the telegraph office?"

"I'll show you."

At the telegraph office, Clyde prepared a press-rate telegram. He let Drury read it.

"It says here," commented Drury, "that they're to use 'Jory by-line.' What's the gag, Burke?"

"I used to write stuff under the name of Kirt Jory," explained Clyde. "It will do instead of my own. They wouldn't use my own name, since they've fired me. The police commissioner would be sore."

"I get it," laughed Drury. "A good stunt, Burke!"

Clyde smiled. The ruse had passed. For that by-line, "Kirt Jory," to indicate the author of the wired story, would do more than establish the story as Clyde Burke's.

The Shadow had provided for just such an emergency as this; the possibility that Clyde could best report to him through a story in the New York Classic. The Shadow, alone, would recognize the message in the words "By Kirt Jory."

That, to The Shadow, would mean more than the simple fact that murder had occurred in Latuna. It would signify that cross-purposes were at work; that the deaths of Joseph Rubal and Hollis might be but the beginning of other strange events.

To The Shadow, Clyde Burke's chosen by-line would carry the single message. "Come!"

Clyde Burke smiled to himself as he walked from the telegraph office with Bart Drury. Outside, they passed a strolling stranger. Clyde did not even notice the hawk-like visage and the keen eyes that stared in his direction.

Once more in the guise of Henry Arnaud, The Shadow was abroad in Latuna. He knew that his agent had dispatched a prearranged signal that was intended to bring him here. He had allowed Clyde to do so, unknowing that his chief was already in town.

For The Shadow's plans would begin to-morrow, after nightfall. Then would he survey the spot that Clyde had already seen. With reports received, The Shadow would fare forth to visit the Latuna Museum.

### CHAPTER XIV. WITHIN CLOSED WALLS

TWENTY-FOUR hours had elapsed since the murders in the Latuna Museum. The Shadow, guised as Henry Arnaud, was seated at a writing desk in his room in the Wilkin Hotel. Across the street, he could see two khaki-clad policemen on duty near the Hotel Phoenix.

The Shadow extinguished the main light. His hands appeared long-fingered and white, beneath the glow of the desk lamp as they opened two sealed envelopes. The Shadow read reports from Clyde Burke and Cliff Marsland. The agents had left them in Henry Arnaud's box.

That had been in accord with an outlined plan. The two aids, however, did not know that their chief had checked in before to-night.

Meanwhile, another agent had arrived. Harry Vincent, a most competent worker, had seen Clyde's story in New York and had come to Latuna. He, too, had acted on instructions previously given by The Shadow.

Clyde's report laid emphasis upon his visit to Harrison Knode's. It described his trip to the museum and stressed Bart Drury's private interview with Knode, particularly Bart's warning that Knode's appointment with Rubal was not to be made public.

Cliff's report emphasized that all of Konk Zitz's pals had been at the Phoenix Hotel. None of them could have possibly visited the isolated Latuna Museum.

Finished with this report, The Shadow moved from the writing desk. He clicked on the main light; again he appeared as Arnaud.

Seating himself in an easy chair, The Shadow picked up the Latuna newspapers. The Gazette carried the big story. Dunham had printed Grewling's statement; also the testimony of attendants and watchmen. Theories showed that the law had struck close to the possible details of the crime.

The stumbling block was the clue that Dunham had himself uncovered. Some one had had an appointment with Joseph Rubal at eight o'clock the night before. Speculation was rife as to the identity of that person.

The Enterprise carried a resume of the story in the Gazette. A few added details of the coroner's inquest failed to add spice.

Harrison Knode had been forced to leave out an announcement that would have staggered Howard Dunham. He could have made a scoop by printing the name of the man who had the eight o'clock appointment with Rubal. He had omitted that name because it was his own.

A SOFT laugh came from the lips of Henry Arnaud. The Shadow was considering the oddity of the case. Then he noted an item stating that the museum had been closed to the public, pending solution of the murders. Instead of ordinary watchmen, nine picked policemen were on duty, working in three shifts, each of

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three men.

Reverting to the morning newspaper, The Shadow picked out a statement by the police chief. It stood apart from the murder story. It referred to the lack of criminal activity in Latuna; and stated that the police had been watching all suspected crooks who happened to be in town. This statement, The Shadow knew, was for the benefit of Harrison Knode.

Police Chief Grewling had spiked the crusading editor's verbal cannon. Grewling's action of putting watchers at the Phoenix Hotel, stood as proof that the police were vigilant. Neither Knode nor any one else could say that the murders in the museum were caused by the police ignoring the criminal element in Latuna.

Some lone wolf had performed the murders. Timing his deed to the hour when the museum offered the best chance for entry, this crafty killer had played a one-man game. His motive had been to rifle Rubal's files. He had succeeded in his game, at a time when the curator was on the verge of resigning his post.

Harrison Knode had made no editorial comment. But The Shadow could foresee the editor's future action. Once the excitement of the murder had died down, Knode would have his opportunity to link up the past with the present. Now was no time to drag the dead curator's name through the mire. That would come later.

A laugh was The Shadow's soft recognition of the policy that he could foresee. Rising, he extinguished the light.

He donned his black garb and descended to the parking space; there he entered a black coupe. The car was one that Harry Vincent had hired and left there after arriving in Latuna. Harry had later registered at the Wilkin Hotel.

THE coupe rolled from the parking space. It came to a highway that curved out of town and kept along until it neared the hill where the museum stood. The Shadow parked his car in a field and alighted.

The boom of a quarry blast came through the night air as The Shadow glided close to the museum. Barred doors and windows at the front; brick walls at sides and rear. These did not deter The Shadow.

From his cloak he drew forth suction cups of rubber, which he attached to hands and feet. He began a precipitous ascent up the side wall of the museum, accompanied by the soft, squidgy noise that he had never been able to eliminate from these concave disks without impairing their necessary efficiency.

Moonlight, trickling through rifted clouds, showed the spectral shape as it reached the roof. The Shadow had arrived at a flat ledge that led to the low, rounded dome above the Sphinx Room. Heavy frames containing frosted-glass, formed the sections of the broad dome.

Scraping sounds came from the spot where The Shadow rested as a shapeless blotch. Then a soft laugh as the slight noise ceased. A glass section moved free in the fashion of a skylight.

The Shadow had found the weak spot of this building which others regarded as impregnable. To him, the dome had offered a mode of access. Sheer walls had been regarded as an insurmountable hazard. Conquering those walls, The Shadow had found access easy.

The Shadow's task, however, was not ended. As he lowered himself into the museum, The Shadow hung above a forty-foot space. He was poised above the floor of the central room that housed the Blue Sphinx.

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Lowering his body in precarious fashion, The Shadow tilted his head and spied the wall close by. Coming in at the edge of the dome, he was close to an ornamental ledge that lined the Sphinx Room.

Clinging by one hand, The Shadow swayed his body like a pendulum. His free hand caught the ledge. He released his upper hand and swung against the wall. Both hands then gripped the ledge. The Shadow began a swinging, sidewise course along the wall.

He reached a space between two half pillars that came up from the floor. Smooth-surfaced, these afforded no grip. But they served The Shadow as a mode of descent. Swinging his body between the block-shaped pillars, The Shadow wedged himself in place as he released his hold upon the ledge.

Braking his descent, he slid straight downward to the floor. Doubling himself for the final jar, he broke the force of the arrival as skillfully as a parachute jumper ending a long drop.

Rising, The Shadow found himself beside the massive shape of the Blue Sphinx.

WITH a soft laugh, the weird intruder turned and went to the doors that led into the anteroom. He found them locked. With tiny flashlight glimmering, he used a blackened pick and gained results. Opening the doors, The Shadow stepped into the anteroom.

More formidable doors lay ahead. The Shadow worked on them with greater care. He knew that patrolling watchers were beyond. He muffled the sounds of his probing pick, until the clicks were almost inaudible.

When the doors opened, The Shadow peered carefully into the front hallway of the museum. The place was dimly lighted. No watcher was in sight. Softly, The Shadow emerged from the anteroom and closed the doors behind him.

Footsteps were clicking from a far corridor. They were coming from the turn beyond the Antiquity Room. The Shadow moved swiftly in the opposite direction. As he neared the Medieval Room, he heard new footsteps coming along the corridor from the curator's office.

The Shadow swung swiftly into the Medieval Room, which offered a darkened, ghostly harbor. Stealthily, he moved among the huge oddities that furnished this chamber. A bulky object loomed beside him. It was the Iron Maiden.

A flashlight at the door. One policeman was coming in to make a routine inspection. The Shadow swung swiftly behind the opened door of the Maiden and stood between its hiding surface and the wall. The officer made his round and went to the door. The Shadow heard him pause to speak to a second patroller.

"What took you so long, Steve?" came a question. "I finished my side of this morgue five minutes ago."

"Yeah?" questioned the cop who had just inspected the Medieval Room. "Well, you've got a cinch compared to me. I've got to look careful through all this junk collection."

"I've got the room with all the statues. I had to look through there."

"Yeah? Well, who's going to be hiding in that joint? Nobody could duck out of sight in that gymnasium. This place is different. Say a guy could even hide in that iron coffin over there, if he wanted to pull the door shut after him."



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"Fat chance anybody would," scoffed the first cop, turning a flashlight toward the opened interior of the Iron Maiden. "How'd a guy close the door on himself, with all those spikes ready to run him through. Say, Steve where's Jerry?"

"In the office, Bill. He'll join us in the front hall. We can chew the fat for half an hour, then make another round."

The policemen left. The Shadow emerged and glided toward the door of the room. He waited there until he heard new footsteps coming along the corridor from the curator's office. Bill passed and went along to join his companions inside the entrance of the museum.

With the way clear, The Shadow strode noiselessly along the deserted corridor and reached the curator's office. Entering, The Shadow closed the door behind him and turned on the light. He was here to study the scene of crime.

OFTEN, The Shadow, on excursions of this sort, could uncover clues that upset the finest police theories. Tonight, he observed nothing that conflicted with existing conjectures. The Shadow, between the accounts that he had read and the reports that he had received from his agents, was in conformity with the existing opinions.

As he spied the inner filing room, however, The Shadow gained a mental picture that others had failed to view. He turned on the light in that little room. He went to the curator's desk; arose and strode to the filing room; then across to the outer door. He looked at the spot where the bodies had been found.

A soft laugh. The Shadow was visualizing exactly what had occurred. The murderer had found the curator in the filing room and had shot him down from the outer door. From the filing room, the same killer had clipped Hollis.

There was no day calendar on the desk. It had been removed as evidence. Yet The Shadow knew the details of that memo; how Howard Dunham had chanced to notice it. He also knew that certain papers had been taken from this office.

Obviously, the murderer had overlooked the desk calendar. Its pages closed as Dunham had first seen them the killer had not noticed the memo made by the curator. But The Shadow saw a link between that calendar and the murderer's purpose here.

Joseph Rubal had been going over past dates. He had been looking up documents in the filing room. These papers must certainly have concerned the museum itself. Rubal, long silent and long stalling, had been gathering data that might have caused some one trouble.

Searching the files, The Shadow came upon various papers that referred to the museum. Studying them swiftly in the light of the filing room, he noticed certain gaps. One notation referred to a temporary delay during a period of inspection. There was no paper, however, that told of the inspection itself.

This date was prior to the completion of the museum as it now stood; before the final day when the lower vault was bricked and the museum completed in its temporary form, for visits by the public.

The Shadow also found reference to three sets of plans. Referring to another folder, he discovered only two sets that showed the details of the museum. Where was the third? Had it been taken at the time of the murder? If so, why?

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The Shadow studied the list of collections that had been donated to the museum. Barnaby Soyer's treasures were in a separate file. The ones that concerned The Shadow were the gifts now on display in the exhibition rooms.

Most of these had been promised prior to the completion of the museum. The various exhibit rooms had been arranged for their reception. The curios in the Medieval Room had been presented by a group of private collectors.

The statues in the Antiquity Room had been gained by a civic appropriation which Mayor Quirby Rush had arranged as the first act of his administration. There had already been an incomplete fund raised by private citizens; the city funds had completed it.

STRAFFORD MALDEN had promised the Blue Sphinx at the time when the plans of the museum were under consideration. Importation had been arranged with the Egyptian authorities; and the pedestal had been built to the proper dimensions. Correspondence between Joseph Rubal and agents in Cairo showed that red tape had caused delay in the shipment of the sphinx.

The small exhibit rooms appeared supplementary to the carefully arranged plans. Their nondescript collections had been gathered while the construction was under way.

Studying the plans, The Shadow could readily see why the addition of wings and the proposed Modern Room offered problems. No exact provision had been made for their construction. Harrison Knode's criticism of Rubal's delay in completing plans for additions did not appear justified.

The Shadow's study of existing documents came to a sudden finish. Replacing folders, closing drawers, The Shadow prepared to leave. He turned out the lights and departed. Advancing rapidly along the corridor, he reached the Medieval Room and entered it just in time.

Footsteps told that the patrolling watchers were going to the far ends of the museum to begin another inspection. The Shadow waited until footfalls had died. He headed for the Sphinx Room. Entering the anteroom, he locked the doors behind him; he came into the Sphinx Room itself and clicked the inner doors.

The policemen had not attempted to inspect the Sphinx Room. Its doors presumably locked were guarantee that no one could be lurking there. But should an officer happen to try those doors, he would now find them locked.

Looking about the moonlit room, The Shadow picked the spot between the pillars as the proper place for ascent by means of his suction disks. The smooth surface offered some difficulty, so far as proper adhesion was concerned. But a momentary failure of the suction disks would create no hazard. Between the pillars, The Shadow could brake himself as he had before.

That settled, The Shadow turned to the center of the room. Above the level of his eyes loomed the face of the Blue Sphinx. Solemn, unsmiling, with strangely carved eyes, that ancient monolith seemed lost in meditation. The eyes, by a freak of the moonlight, looked as if staring downward. Squarely into those carven optics burned the gaze of The Shadow. The Sphinx, famed in fable as a propounder of unanswerable riddles, was faced by the master of all sleuths.

The Blue Sphinx! From the correspondence in the curator's office, The Shadow had learned the history of this stone monster. A relic of the Eighteenth Dynasty, this statue was but one of many sphinxes that studded the broad expanses of the Libyan Desert.

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In Libya, lesser sphinxes of this sort were common enough among the desert sands. It required removal to give them the dignity for which they were reputed. Here, in Latuna; this lone Blue Sphinx was regarded as unique.

Crouched on the pedestal that formed part of the tiled floor, anchored immovable by virtue of its five-ton bulk, the Blue Sphinx seemed stately enough to be the keeper of some important secret.

The thought brought a soft, mirthless laugh from the hidden lips of The Shadow. Double murder had struck in this museum. He knew that those killings were but a part of crime. Evil had preceded death. Now evil was slated to follow.

The cloaked form turned toward the wall, as The Shadow prepared for his departure. Again the whispered laugh, significant in its sardonic tones. The Shadow had divined the riddle of the Blue Sphinx.

### CHAPTER XV. THE LULL ENDS

"WHAT do you think of it, Burke?"

"It's a wow, Drury!"

"I told you the old man would rip loose."

"He's done it, all right!"

Clyde Burke and Bart Drury were seated in the "local" room of the Latuna Enterprise, reading the latest copy of the newspaper, just off the press. One week had passed since the murder of Rubal and Hollis. During that period, Harrison Knode had remained calm. At last, however, the belligerent editor had broken loose with an article that was calculated to raise hob.

"Let's go in and see the old man," suggested Drury to Clyde. "He always feels chesty after he pounds out a broadside like this one. Come along; follow my cue."

The two reporters knocked at Knode's door. Summoned to come in, they entered. Harrison Knode, in shirt sleeves and vest, looked up beneath his green celluloid visor. He laid pencil and copy paper aside.

"Well?" he questioned.

Drury swaggered to the desk, leaned across and thrust out his hand. Knode shook it. Clyde stepped up and also clasped hands with the editor. Knode looked pleased.

"You sure cracked the ice, boss," complimented Drury. "Say I knew you were cooking up something big. I was itching to ask you what the slant would be. But I managed to hold in until it came out in the sheet."

"It was great, boss," added Clyde.

"I thought it would click," declared Knode, leaning back in his swivel chair and tucking his thumbs in the armholes of his vest. "I figured that our good mayor and his red-faced police chief would be due for another slam. But the problem was to give it the right twist."

"So you reversed the field," chuckled Drury.

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"That describes it," nodded Knode. He laid his forefinger upon the opened page of a newspaper that was on his desk. "Now that I've run the editorial, I'll let you fellows in on the way I came around to it. Would you like to hear it?"

"Sure thing," responded Drury.

Clyde nodded.

"WELL," explained Knode, "I used to slam Rubal when he was still alive. I had to lay off that after he was murdered. What's more, Grewling had spiked me by putting men on watch at the Phoenix Hotel. I couldn't land on him while the murder was still hot news. And I had to lay off Rush, too.

"Grewling had scored one on me. He was watching that bunch of crooks at the Phoenix on the night of Rubal's murder. So he had proved that they were not concerned in the crime. He had me stopped. But I gave him time. He did just what I thought he would do. He kept watching those rowdies at the Phoenix and he's still got the best part of the force on that job.

"So to-day, I had my inspiration. I wrote that editorial and entitled it 'The Wrong Stable.' I started with the old adage of watching the stable after the horse is stolen. That referred, of course, to the Latuna Museum.

"Then I added these thoughts" peering toward the ceiling, Knode began to paraphrase the editorial that lay on his desk "about looking for the horse stealers while you watch the stable too. We do not criticize our mayor and police chief for keeping a regular guard in the Latuna Museum. But we do find fault with their efforts elsewhere.

"What have they done to find the murderer of the curator and the chief attendant? Very little. Why? Because they do not have available men for duty. Why not? Because they are still keeping watchers on duty at the Phoenix Hotel.

"Mayor Quirby Rush asserts that no effort will be spared to trace the murderer. Police Chief Grewling has taken pride in the fact that he was watching the Phoenix Hotel on the night of the killings at the museum.

"Both know and we all agree that none of those crooks at the Phoenix could have aided in the killing of Joseph Rubal. Those suspicious characters were worth while watching before crime struck. But when murder came and the Phoenix habitués were free from implication it became time to forget them and put all hands to work on the solution of Rubal's death.

"Before his death, we defined Joseph Rubal as a man of silence. He was one who knew much but said little. When he died, he told nothing. No effort has been made to bring his affairs to light.

"Some one in Latuna is anxious to suppress all comment concerning Rubal and his murderer. Mayor and police chief are bearing down upon the Phoenix Hotel, making great stir about the watch that they are keeping there. They are casting dust into the eyes of our citizens. Pretending to be active, our officials are concealing the fact that the Rubal case is going into the discard.

"One lone crook is behind this game. He is native to Latuna, and he holds the key to crime while he poses as a man of consequence. In all probability, he is deceiving his closest associates. We doubt that both the mayor and the police chief could reveal that man's identity. But perhaps one of them could, now that Joseph Rubal no longer lives to tell his story."

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KNODE paused and looked at his reporters. He had phrased his comments almost from memory, a habit which Knode acquired when he wrote his editorials.

"You've pinned it on one or the other, boss," chuckled Drury. "That was where you were foxy. If you had said that the two were in cahoots, they'd both land on you. As it is, one will pass the buck."

Knode began to nod. Then, chancing to glance toward Clyde Burke, he caught the new reporter's steady eye. Swinging up to his desk, the editor shook his head.

"I've pinned nothing on any one," he declared. "It's all a mystery to me, Drury. That editorial goes pretty strong, I'll admit. But its purpose is to stir up action. That's all. I threw a rock at random; I merely jabbed Rush and Grewling because they are the men who can move the law to action."

Comment ended for the moment. From outside the building came the hawking cries of newsboys, selling the Latuna Enterprise. Bart Drury laughed.

"It won't take long for that news to travel," he told Knode. "You're unique, boss. First editor I've ever heard of who could make his editorials sell the papers."

"Why don't you make a front-page column," queried Clyde, also speaking to Knode, "commenting editorially on the news of the day; only confine it to Latuna?"

"It wouldn't go, Burke," returned Knode. "I know the psychology of this town. They like a small sheet and they read it through. If I ran a regular front-page column, it would become stale stuff."

"Drury has the right slant. I can sell the Enterprise on the strength of its editorials. But that's because I hold them back until they are ripe. I'm not the muckraker that the Gazette says I am; but I would be one if I turned the Enterprise into a daily scandal sheet."

"But you could be conservative as a steady rule, until occasion called for stronger pronouncement."

"It would be a shifting policy. I prefer to say nothing when there is nothing to be said. But when the time comes, well" Knode eyed Burke carefully "you can see now, Burke, why I wanted nothing said about my appointment with Rubal, the night that he was murdered."

"Burke understands," put in Drury, promptly. "Don't worry about him, boss. We're keeping it quiet that you were the chap who had that appointment with Rubal. Grewling will never –"

The door was opening as Drury spoke. Knode's hand came up in quick warning. Drury turned; so did Clyde.

On the threshold, purple-faced and challenging, stood Police Chief Lawrence Grewling.

"WHAT was that?" demanded Grewling. "What were you saying, Drury?"

"He was talking about you," put in Knode, rising from behind the desk. "He said that we would be due to have some action on your part, regarding the Rubal case. On account of my editorial."

"Sure, chief," added Drury. "That's what I was saying. Say you must be one of the early buyers of the Enterprise. What did you do? Pick up one of the copies when it came out the back door of the press room?"

"Your dirty sheet's been on the street half an hour!" retorted Grewling. "I didn't read it until I was told to."

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"By whom?" questioned Knode.

"The mayor," returned Grewling. Drury chuckled. Grewling clenched his fists and looked ready to clout the reporter. Curbing himself, the police chief used his brawny fists to pound the desk while he shouted at Knode.

"Plenty has happened in half an hour!" stormed Grewling. "I'm telling you all about it, because the Gazette will have the news for to-morrow morning! So you'll be licked in printing it like you were when Rubal was murdered!"

"Mayor Rush read your editorial. He passed the buck to me. Told me I was a sap to have played into your hands. I was all right. I put those men on duty at the Phoenix Hotel and I kept them there. So I'm the goat.

"Rush asked for my resignation. What do you think of that, Knode? Wanted it right away. That's the kind of a pickle you put me in! I'm through, if he has his way."

"I take it," put in Knode, calmly, "that you refused to resign?"

"That's right. I refused."

"And what did Rush say?"

"What could he say? He can't fire me until he calls a committee to hear my case. That's in the Latuna town charter. He wanted my resignation so he could get out of calling the committee. I didn't let him get away with it."

"So you're still the police chief. De facto, I take it."

"If that means my authority is crippled, you're right. I'm just the biggest cop on the force from now on. The mayor is going to run the works."

"Quite a comedown, Grewling."

"It suits me. Rush is the one guy you can pan after this. Told me I was a sap. Well he's going to be one, too!"

"How so?"

"Because he's making the same mistake I did. Playing into your hands. He ordered me to yank the boys off that duty at the Phoenix Hotel. That's one reason why I came here, Knode. To put you wise before I did it. Those men are going off the job by the mayor's orders. Not mine."

"I understand."

"You'd better. Because any poke you take at me is going to put you in Dutch. I'm just a copper. See? Just a cop, without a beat."

With a final glare, Grewling turned, growled at Drury and stalked from the office. With a bland smile, Drury walked over and closed the door.

"HOPE he doesn't remember what he heard me saying," observed Drury. "I thought he was wise when he came in. But he was too het up to be thinking of anything but his job."

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"Yes," agreed Knode. "But be cautious in the future, Drury. Well, we've heard the news. Now for our new campaign. I have an idea already."

"What's that, boss?" inquired Drury.

"I'll have to concentrate on Rush," replied Knode. "So, since the mayor has ordered hands off at the Phoenix, that's the place to work. Those toughs are a bad lot. They actually should be watched.

"The police are quitting. So it's your turn. With Burke on hand if needed. You don't rate so badly, do you, with that head guy? What did you say his name was?"

"Konk Zitz."

"All right. Make friends with him. But be discreet. Don't get too close with him."

"Konk was sore at me."

"On account of my previous editorial. But, after all, it cleared his crew from blame in the Rubal case. He should be well disposed. And with this present editorial, taking the police off the job would –"

"You're right, chief. Say Konk will treat me like a pal."

"I don't want that, Drury. Just form sufficient contact to gain his confidence. That's all."

Drury nodded. He strolled from the office and Clyde Burke followed. Drury arranged for Clyde to meet him later at the lunch wagon near the Phoenix Hotel. Clyde agreed. Drury went out. Clyde sat down at a desk and used a fountain pen to inscribe a brief, coded note.

The streets of Latuna were aglow beneath the evening darkness when Clyde Burke stopped at the Wilkin Hotel and left an envelope for Room 623.

A few minutes after Clyde's departure; a quiet-looking young man came in and inquired for the key to that room. It was Harry Vincent. With the key, The Shadow's agent received Clyde's note.

On the sixth floor, Harry slipped the sealed envelope under the door of Room 640. That was the room occupied by the guest known as Henry Arnaud. Thus did word of new developments come to the hands of The Shadow.

## CHAPTER XVI. CLIFF SENDS WORD

TWO days later. Again, evening was settling upon Latuna. Lights were aglow in the living room of a suite at the Phoenix Hotel. Konk Zitz was enjoying an early dinner that a waiter had brought to his room.

Two other men were present: Tinker Furriss and Cliff Marsland.

"What's the matter, Tinker?" growled Konk, dropping a chicken leg that he had been gnawing. "All afternoon you've been sitting around like you had something worrying you. Spill it!"

"I'm wondering about the blow-off," retorted Tinker. "Maybe it ain't none of my business. I'm wondering, just the same."

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"So that's it?" questioned Konk, turning his attention to a chicken wing. "Well, it's coming. To-morrow night."

Cliff Marsland sat silent, without making a move. This was the word for which he had been waiting. Tinker, however, showed no signs of pleasure.

"It ought to be to-night," he said. "Should have been last night."

"What do you know about it?" snarled Konk.

"Well," admitted Tinker, "maybe I don't know much –"

"You're right you don't! Listen, mug, while I tell you a few things. You've asked for them, so I'm talking. Marsland can listen in.

"The whole crowd knows there's going to be a blow-off. They've figured it, even though they don't know what it's all about. But the blow-off couldn't come until the police chief yanked his coppers off this beat of theirs. That's simple, ain't it?"

Tinker nodded his understanding.

"There was no hurry for the blow-off," went on Konk. "It could come next week maybe next month. Sooner the better, of course, but no big hurry so long as we all played goody."

"I get that, Konk."

"Glad you do. Well, Grewling yanks the bulls. Two nights ago. But it came kind of sudden. It wouldn't have been good stuff to move right off. So I began figuring things out. I got word I got ideas, I mean – that tomorrow night would be best."

"Why?"

"I'll tell you why. To-night there's a bunch of stuffed shirts meeting by request of the mayor. Going to give Police Chief Grewling a hearing. Up at that wealthy guy's house. Strafford Malden that's his name."

"The mayor's going to be there, ain't he?"

"Sure. And both the newspaper editors. Big Mouth Knode and Saphead Dunham. How do you like those monikers, Tinker?"

"They sound all right. But it makes me think to-night would be the time to pull the blow-off."

"Yeah," admitted Konk, "it would, in a pinch. But there ain't going to be any pinch. I sort of figure to-morrow night would be better."

"Well, your word goes."

"THAT'S the way to look at it, Tinker. You see, I want to make these mugs look like a bunch of palookas. Hit them when they think they're all settled. I'd sort of like to see what happens up there to-night."

"You mean with Grewling?"



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"Yeah. It won't hurt us either way. Suppose Grewling gets the bounce. The mayor will make some dub police chief. He won't watch here, because the mayor called that quits. So we can move tomorrow night. Boy, won't we make that new chief look like a goof!"

"That ain't bad, Konk," affirmed Tinker, with a grin. "But what if Grewling keeps his job?"

"Well," explained Konk, "he'll have to shake hands with the mayor. They'll compromise. Promise to work together. This hotel was their sore point. They won't talk about it. If they do decide to put men back on the job, it'll be a couple of days before they do."

"That sounds likely enough."

"So we'll move to-morrow night anyway. And if Grewling is back on the job, we'll show him up. The skids will be under him proper when we pull the blow-off."

"It works great both ways, Konk."

"You're right it does! Don't get me wrong, though. The blow-off is what really counts. I just figured it would be real ripe to-morrow."

Zitz attacked the remnants of his dinner. Several minutes passed; then Tinker brought up another subject.

"Say, Konk," he remarked, "I was thinking about something else. This guy Drury. He dropped in to see you last night. He was here the night before. You said something about him coming up late to-night."

"That's right. He is."

"Well, it ain't such a good idea, is it, to be pals with a news hawk like him?"

Konk chuckled as he pushed his plate aside.

"I'm horsing the mug," he declared. "Kidding him along while I pump him dry. Listen. He's spilled some good stuff, without knowing it. He's let me in on what Knode's going to do next."

"What's that?"

"Pan the mayor."

"He's been doing that all along."

"Sure. But it's going to be on account of us."

"How?"

"Well, Drury's looking for a story. He's admitted it. Some funny business to be pulled by this outfit. So Knode can throw the harpoon into Rush. That's a laugh, eh?"

"You're going to give Drury a story?"

"So I've been telling him. But that's a stall. I'm keeping him eagerlike. So he won't wise up that the blow-off is due. He'll get his story to-morrow night."

## The Blue Sphinx

"Great stuff, Konk."

Zitz made no reply. Instead, he rose from the table, tossed his napkin aside and lighted a cigarette. He strolled about for a few minutes, then nudged his thumb toward the door.

"So long, mugs," he said. "Tell the boys downstairs I want to see them in about ten minutes. Then go on out and eat. Come back inside an hour. We'll stage a poker game. Tell the waiter to come up for this table no, never mind. I'll call him."

KONK was stepping toward the telephone when Cliff and Tinker went out. To Cliff, the action was suspicious. He wondered if Konk had made the statement to cover the fact that he was about to make an outside call.

This impression increased when they reached the lobby. While Tinker went in the taproom to speak to other crooks, Cliff watched the dining room and saw no sign of a waiter coming to the elevator. Service was unusually prompt at the Phoenix. Cliff doubted that Konk had called the dining room.

That, however, was a secondary matter. Cliff had learned the vital news that The Shadow had been awaiting; the night when Konk Zitz and his crew were to strike. Cliff had a hunch that somehow The Shadow had divined the purpose of these men in Latuna. He believed that The Shadow intended to beat them to some game.

Yet Cliff, himself, had gained no inkling of what Konk Zitz was planning. Except for reference to a coming "blow-off," the crook leader had been close-mouthed.

While Tinker was talking to the bunch in the taproom, Cliff strolled to a writing desk. He sat down, took a sheet of hotel stationery, and began to write a succession of figures, which he crossed out with lines and x marks. He blotted this sheet and was studying the figures when Tinker arrived from the taproom.

"What's the gag?" quizzed Tinker; looking at the paper.

"Remember that roulette system I was telling Dopey about?" returned Cliff. "Well, this is it. Some of the figures are wrong, though. Wait – I'll do it over."

He crumpled the paper and tossed it in a wastebasket. Tinker offered an objection as Cliff took a fresh piece of paper from the rack.

"It don't interest me," he growled. "Show it to Dopey when you see him. Come on, let's head for the beanery. Konk wants us back for the poker game."

Cliff arose and went with Tinker. The pock-faced ruffian continued to growl as they reached the street. Cliff had paused there to light a cigarette. His first match went out.

"Mushmug was in the taproom," Tinker informed. "You know the guy. That funny-looking gumshoe that Grewling had watching us."

"I thought Grewling had called off his bloodhounds," returned Cliff, as he finally managed to get a light.

"He did," said Tinker, as they started for the beanery. "Mushmug ain't here on duty. It's his night off."

"Just hanging around the taproom, eh?"

## The Blue Sphinx

"Yeah. Looks like he's trying to stand in right with Grewling. Figures the police chief will come out on top. Then he can report that he was watching us. I told the gang to mention it to Konk."

"He'll take care of it, Tinker."

"Yeah. Mushmug's just a dumb dick."

ACROSS the street, a young man had watched Cliff and Tinker come from the Phoenix Hotel. It was Harry Vincent; and this agent of The Shadow had noted Cliff's difficulties with the match.

Crossing the street, Harry strolled into the Phoenix lobby. He bought three picture post cards and went to the table where Cliff had been figuring his roulette system.

Harry wrote messages and addressed the post cards. He picked up the blotter that Cliff had used. On its surface, Harry noted the imprint of the blotted figures. They formed a coded message.

The numerical code was one that The Shadow's agents used frequently. They were trained in reading it in looking-glass fashion. Briefly, the marks on the blotter told Harry Vincent the all-important news: Konk Zitz had set tomorrow night.

Harry blotted his post cards, thus obliterating traces of Cliff's penmanship. He walked across the lobby, posted the cards and strolled from the Phoenix Hotel.

A few minutes later, he entered his own hotel and rode up to the sixth floor. In his room he inscribed a brief message to The Shadow, thrust it under the door of Room 640 and went out.

WITHIN that room, a quiet-looking personage noted the arrival of the note. As Henry Arnaud, The Shadow arose and extinguished the big light. By the writing table lamp, he opened and read the message. He laughed softly as he clicked off the lamp.

A short interval; then faint swishes announced his departure in the attire of The Shadow.

Half an hour later, a beetlelike form scaled the side wall of the Latuna Museum. The Shadow entered the dome and swung to the ledge. Here, he performed an action which proved that he had made more than one previous visit to the museum. Clinging to the ledge, he found a wire and carried it down with him during his descent.

On the moonlit floor beside the Blue Sphinx, The Shadow drew upon this wire. It was affixed to a bar in the dome; as The Shadow pulled carefully, the stout strand tightened. A box swung from the ledge, up toward the dome. It descended as The Shadow carefully paid out the wire. The box settled to the floor.

The Shadow had brought this to the museum on some previous visit. He had planted it upon the ledge. It was to serve him in some fashion to-night. This was the time for which The Shadow had been waiting. He had needed surety that crooks were ready to move.

The box was a foot square. From its interior, The Shadow removed an object that looked like a drill. He paused suddenly as the museum trembled slightly in response to a muffled blast from the neighboring quarry. Then he closed the box and set it between the huge front paws of the stone sphinx.

The pedestal on which the statue rested was made in sections, which were mortared together. Picking one of these vulnerable spots, The Shadow set to work with the drill. The strength with which he handled the

## The Blue Sphinx

implement brought immediate results. Mortar crackled and fell with slight clicks.

The noise was not great enough to be heard outside the Sphinx Room. The Shadow never desisted from his work. The drill penetrated further.

Ending his work, The Shadow moved along the pedestal and attacked another mortared crevice.

Gauged by the time that he had taken with the first drilling, this hidden worker would have a few hours of work ahead, if he intended to drill holes all along the pedestal. Whatever his purpose, The Shadow showed no great haste.

To-night, he had gained Cliff's definite report that crime was not slated until the morrow. To-night belonged to The Shadow. He was using these hours to anticipate some scheme which he knew was in the making.

Time moved slowly by while The Shadow continued his steady, methodical drilling. Moonlight, filtering through the glass dome, showed that untiring figure as a blotch of swaying blackness, close beside the time-scarred surface of the great Blue Sphinx.

### CHAPTER XVII. THE BAD BREAK

"SO you were talking to Mushmug, eh?"

Cliff Marsland heard Konk Zitz put the question to the gorilla called "Dopey." Cliff and Tinker had just returned from dinner, to find Konk holding court with a couple of his thugs.

"Sure, Konk," said Dopey, taking a cigarette from his pasty lips. "He started to talk to me; so I talked to him."

"What did he have to say?"

"Nothin' much. Kinda soundin' me out about the crew. I told him we was just vacationin' here. Liked the climate that's what I said."

"What else?"

"Nothin' else. I dodged one question that he handed me."

"What was that?"

"About this guy Drury."

Konk became interested. Cliff saw a gleam in the big shot's ratlike eyes, as Konk rasped the question:

"What did he ask about Drury?"

"Wanted to know why the guy was gettin' so chummy with birds like you an' me," returned Dopey, promptly. "I told him I didn't know nothin' about Drury. Said I hadn't noticed him much aroun' here."

"What did Mushmug say to that?"

"Nothin', because I didn't give him no chance. I walked out on him. Told him I'd be back later."

## The Blue Sphinx

Konk arose from his chair. He turned to Tinker Furriss and put a question.

"Is Mushmug the only gumshoe hanging around here?" asked the crook leader.

"All I've seen," returned Tinker.

"Same here," affirmed Cliff.

"All right," decided Konk. "I've got an idea just to figure if the guy's a plant. We're going out to-night. You two" he pointed to Tinker and Cliff "and myself. We'll use the back route, by the freight elevator. I've got it fixed.

"The rest of you stick here, all except Dopey. I'll let him go down and stall Mushmug. Some phony talk about Drury. Tinker, you and Marsland go out by the back and make sure it's clear. You other fellows go downstairs a while, until I've finished talking with Dopey. When he shows up, it means I'm out and you're to come back here. Start your poker game. I won't be gone long."

The men nodded and strolled from the room. Cliff and Tinker followed, leaving Dopey alone with Konk Zitz. Tinker led the way to the freight elevator. A wise-looking operator took them aboard. Konk had fixed this hotel employee.

OUT in the darkness of an alleyway behind the Phoenix Hotel, Cliff and Tinker waited for a full fifteen minutes before Konk Zitz joined them. He beckoned them off to a parking lot. They entered a sedan. Konk took the wheel and drove without comment.

Reaching an isolated part of town, Konk told the pair to wait. They saw him stroll down a side street and stop by a coupe that was obscured beyond a hedge. When Konk returned, he was carrying a suitcase. Cliff and Tinker were in the back seat of the sedan, so Konk dropped the bag beside him in the front.

He drove a few blocks and pulled up by a deserted house. Alighting with the suitcase, he whispered to the others to follow him. They went past the empty house and came to the back door of another home where a dim light showed from an upstairs window. Konk tried a key in the back door. He found no difficulty in entering.

Using a flashlight, Konk found a room near the center of the ground floor. He brought the others in with him and ordered them to lower the blinds. This done, Konk flashed his light upon a safe in the corner. With a chuckle, he ordered Tinker to close the door.

Konk turned on a light and revealed a desk close by the safe. He placed the suitcase there.

"Do you know whose house this is?" he questioned, in a low tone.

Headshakes from Cliff and Tinker. They had stayed close to the Phoenix Hotel since their arrival in Latuna.

"This," chuckled Konk, "is where the smart aleck editor lives. You know the mug I mean. Harrison Knode."

Cliff and Tinker were genuinely surprised.

"Knode is up at that hearing," resumed Konk. "There's a housekeeper here; but she's upstairs and won't hear us if we're quiet. Listen, now, while I tell you the lay.

## The Blue Sphinx

"Maybe Knode's got something on us." Cliff detected a peculiar wariness in Konk's tone. "Maybe that's why he's had Drury hanging around the Phoenix. Whatever Knode's got, will be in this safe. So I'm going to take a look in it."

"Why the suitcase, Konk?" questioned Tinker.

"Well," replied the leader. "I wanted to make sure, that's all. Maybe I won't be able to tap this box. If I fail, I'll use drills. They're in that bag. I didn't want to have them around the hotel. I had a guy plant them in a car near here."

As Konk paused, Cliff felt positive that he was holding back something. That, however, was a habit of Konk's. Of one thing, Cliff was sure. This visit to Knode's was not the blow-off. That was still set for to-morrow night.

"I brought you fellows," stated Konk, "so you could keep an eye on the doors. It may take me some time, to do this job. I don't want to use the drills if I can help it. Say, Tinker, it's too bad you didn't bring that bird Tapper along to Latuna."

"To open that box for you, Konk?"

"Sure. I could have used a guy like him."

"What about Cliff here?"

"Can he crack a safe?"

"Better than Tapper."

"Say what've you been holding back?"

Tinker shifted uneasily as he caught Konk's beady glare. Then the pock-faced fellow gave a weak grin.

"IT was this way, Konk," he explained. "When I couldn't get Tapper, I heard about Cliff. I wanted to see if he had the goods. So he and I slid into an old hock shop I knew about and he took a hand at the box. That's right, ain't it, Cliff?"

Cliff nodded. He knew that Tinker did not want to admit planning a job of his own without Konk's knowledge. It was best to stick with Tinker, Cliff decided.

"Yeah?" quizzed Konk. "Well how'd you make out?"

"Cliff opened the box," explained Tinker, slowly. "But then The Shadow showed up."

"The Shadow?"

"Yeah. Nearly rubbed me out, too! Only Cliff plugged him and we made a getaway."

"Wait a minute. Marsland here plugged The Shadow?"

"I just clipped him," put in Cliff. "We had to scam without the swag."

## The Blue Sphinx

"It wasn't worth much," added Tinker. "We was just practicing on that box."

"So you came to Latuna," growled Konk, "when you had The Shadow on your trail!"

"He wasn't on our trail," said Tinker, quickly. "Honest, Konk. He had to duck the bulls himself. He ain't been around here, The Shadow hasn't."

"No telling where that guy may be."

"Well, anyway" Tinker sought to change the subject "Cliff here can tap that box in no time. If you let him crack it, Konk, you'll have more time to go through the safe while Cliff and I are watching the doors."

Konk Zitz nodded. He eyed Cliff carefully, then pointed to the safe.

"Go to it, Marsland," he ordered. "Let's see you work."

"Got the microscope, Cliff?" quizzed Tinker.

Cliff shook his head as he stepped toward the safe. He heard Zitz speak to Tinker.

"A microscope?" Konk was asking. "What for?"

"To look for finger prints," replied Tinker. "If he finds them, he leaves them, instead of polishing the knob. Great gag, ain't it, Konk?"

"Get going, Marsland," said Konk, to Cliff.

COLD sweat crept to Cliff's forehead as The Shadow's agent crouched in front of the safe. Luck alone could save him now. Cliff had some knowledge of cracksmanship; if the safe proved easy, he would appear to be living up to Tinker's claims. If not The thought of consequences was one that Cliff tried to forget.

Under other circumstances, Cliff could have taken sudden action. He could hear Tinker buzzing a whisper to Konk Zitz, adding new details of that episode in Cobleton's hock shop. It would be a cinch, Cliff knew, to pull his automatic and cover these two rogues.

That, however, would ruin The Shadow's plans. It would mean a fight, a break-up of Konk Zitz's crew. Behind this little crook was some supercrook whom The Shadow sought. That crime dealer could be trapped only if his plans were allowed to reach their climax. Cliff's only course was to bluff Konk Zitz.

Steadily, despite his tenseness, Cliff worked on the combination. He recognized that this safe was not a difficult one for a cracksmen; but it was beyond his ability to open it. Cliff had no microscopic instructions awaiting him to-night.

Minutes passed; still Cliff toiled. He could hear Konk buzzing to Tinker. The tone was ominous. Cliff decided that the time had arrived for verbal bluff.

"It ought to be a cinch, Konk," he said, in a low, steady voice. "It isn't, though. One of these tricky boxes that looks easy but gets tougher the longer you work on it."

"I know," responded Konk, in an assuring tone. "Let me take a stab at it, Marsland."

## The Blue Sphinx

Cliff arose and turned about. He thought that his bluff was working until he faced his companions. Then Cliff became rigid, his arms half extended, his hands and fingers motionless.

The Shadow's agent was staring into the muzzles of two revolvers.

Konk Zitz had drawn his .38. He had buzzed an order to Tinker to do the same. Konk's eyes were venomous as they stared through narrow slitted lids. Tinker's pock-marked face was ugly in its evil leer.

"A SAFE cracker, eh?" snarled Konk. "Say a punk could open that box! I've been listening to Tinker's spiel. You pulled a fast one on him, Marsland, but it don't get by with me!

"You clipped The Shadow, eh? Put him out of the fight; but didn't cripple him enough to keep him from making a getaway. That don't wash! Well, I'm wise to your game! That stunt of yours was framed.

"Plenty of guys know that The Shadow has mugs working for him. They never figured who his stoolies were. But we've spotted one of them. You're the bird! It don't take a mind reader to figure that. The way you flopped on this safe proves it.

"You were working with The Shadow in New York. He fixed that safe in the hock shop. Put the fritz on Tinker's game and let you look like a hot-shot so that Tinker would bring you down here to crimp me."

Cliff made no response. He met Konk's vicious stare. The crook snarled a low laugh.

"Maybe you tipped The Shadow already," suggested Zitz. "Maybe he's going to show up here to stop the blow-off to-morrow night. Well we'll fox that bimbo. We'll pull the blow-off to-night!

"You'll go along with us, Marsland. And remember, it won't do you no good to try a break. I could blot you right here; or in the car; or anywhere along the line. I'm just going to keep you for a while because it'll work that way.

"If you get funny, it means a bump for you. And you won't gain nothing, because a few shots and your dead corpse aren't going to queer the blow-off. We can pull it anyhow, even if you do try to start trouble."

Turning to Tinker, Konk gave a nod. Tinker stepped past Cliff and shoved his revolver against the prisoner's ribs. With Konk close in back of him, Tinker marched Cliff out through the back door and past the empty house.

"Climb in," growled Konk, as they reached the sedan. As he spoke, the big shot found Cliff's automatic and yanked it from Cliff's pocket.

Cliff entered the sedan. Tinker jostled in beside him and kept his gat against Cliff's ribs. Konk whispered an order to his pock-faced henchman:

"Hold him here, Tinker," said the crook leader. "I'm going back and crack that box. If Marsland makes trouble, plug him and I'll join you in a hurry. We can scam and dump him somewhere."

Konk departed. Cliff sat tight, indifferent to Tinker's sullen glare. Cliff knew that this was no time for a break. Konk's threat had been no bluff.

Death loomed in the offing. Cliff's only bet was to prolong the interval. Konk would prefer to hold the matter of his execution until after the blow-off, whatever it might be. The leader would have to make new plans. By



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sitting tight, Cliff could learn them.

No chance to reach The Shadow. Cliff knew that he would have to make the break for himself. But he decided definitely to hold it until the final opportunity. Then, if luck enabled him to make an escape, he would know more about Konk Zitz's game.

Yet Cliff harbored little hope for safety. This situation was one that he had long anticipated. It was the worst jam that he had ever encountered in The Shadow's service. At the same time, Cliff could not forget the miraculous ability of The Shadow. Time and again, that master fighter had intervened to save his aids from the brink of doom.

FIFTEEN minutes passed. Then Konk appeared from the darkness, carrying the suitcase which he had left at Knode's. He laughed gruffly as he climbed behind the wheel and laid the bag beside him.

"Didn't have to use the drills," he informed Tinker. "That box wasn't tough. Knode's got nothing on us. Keep your gat steady, Tinker."

Konk drove the car by a circuitous course until he neared the Phoenix Hotel. He parked the car in a space between an empty garage and a dilapidated wooden building. He alighted, and growled another order for Tinker to watch Cliff.

Konk strolled away and headed for the hotel. He was snarling to himself as he walked along; and he acted in pleased fashion. He had left the car far enough from the hotel. If Cliff tried a break, Tinker could give him the works without bringing coppers to the scene.

The crook leader entered the Phoenix Hotel by the rear entrance. He strolled into the lobby, looked about and nodded as he spied Bart Drury. The reporter had arrived for his chat. Konk strolled up to Bart.

"Have a cigar, Drury," he offered. "Been waiting long?"

Drury shook his head.

"Slide up to the room," suggested Konk. "The boys are having a poker game. They know you're coming. I'll be up."

Drury arose and went to the elevator. Konk lighted a cigar of his own. As he did, he delivered a sidelong glance toward the taproom. He saw Dopey standing with the detective, "Mushmug." They had heard the words which Konk had spoken to Drury.

Konk strolled into the taproom. He stopped in feigned surprise, as he saw his henchman talking with the dick. A frown showed on Konk's face; then he grinned.

"Thought you were upstairs, Dopey," said Konk. "That's where I'm going. The poker game ought to be running high right now. How about you?" this was to Mushmug "Ever play any poker?"

The dick shook his head.

"Too bad," observed Konk. "I was going to invite you up. Well, I'll see you later. You'll be dropping up later, Dopey?"

"In about half an hour, Konk."

Konk turned and went back into the lobby. His lips formed a sour leer as he neared the elevator. He had talked with Dopey before. The underling knew what to do. He was to stall Mushmug while Konk and the crew departed by the rear exit of the hotel.

After that, Dopey would shake the detective and make his own departure to join one lone, waiting crook. Thus Konk Zitz's outfit would be complete, ready for the blow-off which Konk had set twenty-four hours ahead of schedule.

## CHAPTER XVIII. THE NIGHT ATTACK

"SOMEBODY on the phone for you, Mr. Burke."

Clyde arose from his typewriter. He was in the local room of the Enterprise, rewriting stories for the morrow. The night copy boy had brought the message.

"Hello... Burke..." It was Drury's voice that Clyde heard over the wire. "Listen. I had somebody else ask for you. Don't let the copy boy know I was calling..."

"All right," agreed Clyde. "Something hot..." Drury's tone was strangely interrupted as it continued. "Want you with me... Slide out quietly..."

"Where to?"

"Cooper's cigar store. Parking lot just the other side of it. Green sedan with a Maryland license..."

Clyde finished the call, went back to the typewriter and pulled his half-written page from the carriage. He told the copy boy he was going out for a cup of coffee. Strolling from the office, he headed toward the parking space that Drury had mentioned.

There, Clyde found the green sedan. It was empty and it stood in an obscure corner. No attendant was on duty, for the lot closed at eight o'clock and it was now half past nine. Clyde approached the car.

Two men arose suddenly from the darkness. Guns jabbed Clyde's ribs. A third man appeared; the first two shoved Clyde into the back seat of the sedan while the third man took the wheel.

Covered by the revolvers, Clyde kept grimly silent. He knew these captors to be pals of Konk Zitz's. Though Clyde had wondered at Drury's peculiar speech across the wire, he had never believed that a trap was awaiting him. Drury was not with this trio. Clyde wondered what had happened to the star reporter of the Enterprise.

The thugs offered no explanations. They kept sullen silence while the driver piloted the machine through secluded streets until he reached an open road. Then came a stretch of a broad highway. They turned into a dirt road.

A boom through the night. The muffled blast brought quivers to the air. Clyde knew that they were nearing the old quarry on the outskirts. Then, peering from the side of the car, he saw the outline of the Latuna Museum, off through some trees.

The sedan stopped.

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"Come along, mug," growled a tough. "Keep your trap shut!"

Clyde noticed other cars parked among the trees. He heard growled whispers. He realized that Konk Zitz had assembled his entire bunch at this spot. At least a dozen perhaps more.

Clyde, however, was concerned with one captor. This fellow was urging him from the car and up a slope toward the side elevation of the museum.

By the moonlight, Clyde made out stealthy figures moving toward the building. He saw four men reach the front of the museum and crouch there. Then one made a motion as if pushing the bell button.

Clyde recalled that the police shifts at the museum had been irregular. He realized that one of the officers would respond to this call, supposing it to be a relief. Remaining silent because of the gun against his ribs. Clyde saw the big door swing open.

Crouching figures arose. They made hurling motions as they sprang forward. Against the white front of the museum, Clyde saw a grotesque profile as one ruffian turned and waved his arms. The others were entering the door.

Tear gas! The fellow who had waved was wearing a gas mask. Gorillas had hurled bombs upon the unsuspecting police. By strategy, they had gained entrance to the museum without firing a single shot.

NEW figures were advancing. They paused on the threshold. Clyde's captor made a motion with the gun and ordered the reporter forward. When they neared the museum, unmasked men were entering while others stood by on guard. The tear gas had evidently spread. Masks were not necessary.

The front hallway of the museum was lighted. There, Clyde came face to face with Konk Zitz. Zitz was sending stealthy raiders into the end corridors. He laughed when he saw Clyde. His tone was ugly.

"Want to see something, Burke?" questioned the crook. "All right. Come along."

He took Clyde along the corridor toward the curator's office. All the while, the other crook followed with a gat poked in Clyde's back. They found a raider outside the door of the curator's office. At Konk's orders, the fellow nodded and opened the door, to deliver a snarl to persons within:

"Konk's here."

After a moment, the peering thug swung the door open. Konk motioned Clyde to the threshold. The reporter stared with amazement into the lighted room.

On the floor were the three policemen, bound and gagged. They were coughing in muffled fashion; their eyes were blinking with the light. Evidently they had received only a brief whiff of the gas. Enough to prevent their resistance; but not sufficient to stop quick recovery.

Two gorillas were standing by with guns in readiness. But the person who caught Clyde's amazed gaze was the one who occupied the center of the room. It was Bart Drury. Revolver in hand, the star reporter was glaring fiercely at the prone forms on the floor.

"All right, Bart," chuckled Konk. "Here's Burke. You wanted him." Bart turned. A twisted smile showed on his usually loose lips. He eyed Clyde contemptuously; then spoke in a sarcastic tone.

## The Blue Sphinx

"So you fell for it," sneered Drury. "I thought maybe you were going to be tough. A wise guy from New York. Never figured who was running this outfit, did you? Well, you know now. I am!"

CLYDE was too flabbergasted to offer a response.

"What'll I do with him, Bart?" questioned Konk. "Take him out by the front door and keep him there until you come?"

"Sure," responded Drury. "Remember how we arranged it, Konk? Hold him until we're ready to blow."

Drury turned to stare at the captured cops. Konk motioned Clyde back into the corridor. While the gorilla paced beside them, Konk growled in Clyde's ear.

"You've only seen part of it, Burke," he told Clyde. "I guess you know what we're after. That swag that's in the vault. Drury's going after it. He's got a truck out back.

"When he comes out of the office, he's going to take a couple of soup men and blow that brick wall for a loop! He and his crew will yank the swag and roll it away. You're coming with my part of the crew. Out by the front."

They reached the front hall. They stopped near the door of the Medieval Room, where Konk motioned Clyde against the wall. Clyde made no protest. He lounged at the spot designated while the gorilla kept him covered. Konk strolled back toward the corridor to the office.

Footsteps. Konk appeared in company with Bart Drury. They were holding a confab. Clyde saw Drury scowl. Then the reporter came in his direction.

"I'm leaving you with Konk," sneered Drury. "Maybe I'll give you a break, Burke. If you don't act smart, you'll be all right. But if you try anything, you'll know what's coming."

With that, Drury raised his revolver and leveled it squarely between Clyde's eyes. Unconsciously, Clyde flinched. Then, suddenly, as he stared into the leveled revolver, he began to blink. Drury chuckled contemptuously.

"Understand, Burke?" he snarled. Clyde nodded, staring straight into Drury's eyes. The man lowered his gun and stepped away. Three gorillas those from the office were prompt to join him. They went out by the front door.

Konk Zitz watched them go. Then he spoke to the gorilla who was covering Clyde. The man nodded and went out. Konk alone remained. His ready gun was a sufficient threat to keep Clyde from making a move.

"Listen, Burke." Konk's voice was an odd whisper. "Drury's giving you no break. But I am. I'll tell you why. I don't put nobody but double crossers on the spot. Here's the lay. Drury's pulled a boner; that's why I'm going to let you out.

"Drury don't want to bump the coppers. But like a sap, he let them get a look at him. They're going to squeal on him anyway. So it won't matter if you talk, too. That's simple enough, ain't it?"

Clyde nodded.

## The Blue Sphinx

"But Drury's bull-headed," went on Konk. "Before the cops lamped him, he had his mind set on rubbing you out. Wants me to take you along for the ride, hand you the works and drop you somewhere. Figures that the police chief will think you were working with him. In on the game. See?"

Again, Clyde nodded.

"You and Drury were pals," added Konk. "You didn't pull nothing phony. You can't spill any more than the cops can. So here's the gag. I'll turn you over to a couple of gorillas. They'll ride you out in a coupe. When they give the word, you make a break. They won't stop you. I'll alibi it with Drury."

THE big shot's word had gained the ring of sincerity. Clyde knew that he intended to keep it. Neither Konk nor Drury could possibly suspect that Clyde was an agent of The Shadow.

"Thanks, Konk," said Clyde.

Two gorillas entered from the outside door. Konk spoke to them; Clyde could overhear his instructions. The gorillas nodded when they heard the orders that Konk had promised Clyde.

A muffled blast from the quarry on the hillside. While the dull reverberations were dying, two new gorillas entered, lugging a man who was bound hand and foot. Clyde Burke stared.

The prisoner was Cliff Marsland!

"A double crosser," informed Konk, turning to Clyde. "You can remember that, Burke. Tell the bulls that this guy was one of the crew. After the bulls find him."

With that, Konk motioned Cliff's captors into the Medieval Room. Leaving Clyde with the first pair of gorillas, Konk followed those who had dragged Cliff from view. He returned two minutes later.

"Curtains for that mug," chuckled Konk. "He'll look pretty when they find him. I'm leaving this to the gorillas who held Clyde so it's time you bozos were heading for the coupe. Follow along. Don't worry about Dopey and Duke. They'll join me after they've finished Marsland."

Konk turned and strode toward the outer door. Clyde's captors nudged him with their gats as soon as Konk had gone. It was the signal for Clyde to march out to the coupe. Nodding, the reporter obeyed. But as he started along between the gorillas, Clyde clenched his fists in readiness for a sudden break.

Though it might mean death; despite the odds against him, Clyde Burke was preparing to put up a desperate fight in the hope of rescuing Cliff Marsland.

## CHAPTER XIX. THE BREAK ARRIVES

MOONLIGHT had revealed the stealthy attack on the Latuna Museum. It had shown men of crime moving in and out. And all the while, that shimmering illumination had bathed the interior of the Sphinx Room, where a blackened form was still drilling at the base of the built-in pedestal.

Barred by two sets of doors, the Sphinx Room was totally detached from the rest of the museum. That was why The Shadow had no need to muffle the work that he was doing. It also explained why The Shadow had not heard the entrance of the invaders.

## The Blue Sphinx

He had caught the faint sound of the bell that the crooks had rung. But The Shadow, like the watching policemen, had supposed that the tinkle indicated the arrival of another shift. Had a single shot been fired during the invasion, The Shadow might have had an inkling of trouble. But shots had proven unnecessary.

The distant blast from the quarry had been the only new sound that had reached The Shadow. But now, as the cloaked worker paused in his drilling, his keen ears caught an unexpected noise.

It sounded like an echo of The Shadow's own drilling. It came from the rear of the Sphinx Room, below the floor.

Swiftly, The Shadow arose and moved to the solid wall at the back of the room. Grotesque in the moonlight, he became a listening shape, as silent as an ebony statue.

A soft laugh. The Shadow knew what was taking place. Men outside were chiseling into the bricked barrier that backed the sealed vault underneath this very room. They were trying to carve through to the spot that housed the museum's treasures.

Cliff Marsland had reported that the blow-off would not come until tomorrow night. It was possible that this was preliminary work on the part of an advance squad. But The Shadow, thinking of the police who served as watchmen, knew instantly that the risk would be too great. Something must have happened within the museum before Konk Zitz would order work outside.

SWIFTLY, The Shadow headed for the front of the Sphinx Room. The huge Blue Sphinx looked on with placid eyes as the cloaked master inserted a pick in the lock of the doors. The barriers yielded promptly. The Shadow stepped into the anteroom.

As cautiously as on his first trip to the museum, The Shadow probed the outer lock. A muffled click announced success. Slowly, The Shadow drew one half of the double door inward, while his keen eyes peered into the front hall. He heard the click of footsteps.

Clyde Burke and the two gorillas had neared the outer door. The crooks were nudging their captive with their ready guns. They were to watch this fellow until later. Such had been Konk Zitz's order. But, as they made the turn, one fellow sidled a pace ahead.

Clyde saw his chance. Twisting suddenly, he swung away from the man beside him and launched a hard punch for the fellow's jaw. The gorilla staggered. With a mad dive, Clyde sprang for the corner that they had just passed, hoping to reach it before his other guard could respond.

The gorilla was too quick. Swinging as he heard the scuffle, he leveled his revolver at the darting form of Clyde. Finger on trigger, he snarled viciously as he prepared to press.

Clyde heard the snarl. He also heard the roaring shot that followed it. Yet he found himself dashing on, unscathed.

Behind him, the gorilla was crumpling. The crook's revolver dropped clattering to the stone floor, unfired. The would-be killer had never pressed the trigger. The shot that Clyde had heard had blazed from the entrance to the anteroom.

Firing on the draw, The Shadow had loosed the thunder of an automatic to drop the aiming gorilla.

## The Blue Sphinx

Though wiry, Clyde lacked power behind a punch. The man whom he had slugged was still on his feet. That fellow, half turned, saw the burst of flame that came from the anteroom. He did not wait to see the second gorilla fall.

Savagely, the remaining ruffian aimed his ready gat for the blackness where the enemy lurked. He fired a quick shot that clanged through the brass facing of the door, into the woodwork beneath. As he completed aim, he was ready with another trigger squeeze. It never came.

A half second was the interval. The Shadow dealt in finer fractions. The automatic roared its echoing message from the confines of the anteroom. It stopped the gorilla's second attempt. With masterful aim, The Shadow sent his adversary sprawling.

While the crook was still on the fall, the door of the anteroom swung open. Into the lighted hall came the cloaked shape of The Shadow.

CLYDE BURKE had reached the Medieval Room. It was dimly lighted; and off in the further corner, Clyde saw a terrible scene. On the instant, he realized why Konk Zitz had come out chuckling.

Cliff Marsland, bound, was lying face downward with his head forced in the trough of the guillotine. Clamped in place, he could not move. One crook was standing in the foreground, while the other was preparing to loose the cleaverlike ax that had chopped off aristocratic heads in the era of the French Revolution.

Both men stopped short as Clyde came hurtling into the room. As he rounded the corner by the Iron Maiden, they thought that he must be one of their band, coming with some new order from Konk Zitz. Dimly lighted, the exhibit room did not supply sufficient glow for prompt recognition.

"Duke," the nearer man, suddenly realized what had happened. Yanking a gun, he aimed point blank at Clyde, while he cried to Dopey, at the guillotine:

"It's the mug reporter –"

Clyde's swinging arm struck Duke's wrist as the fellow fired. The shot went wide. As they locked in a struggle, Duke managed a glancing stroke with his gun. Clyde's hold loosened.

"Get Marsland!" ordered Duke. "I've got this mug –"

Dopey, one hand on the release, had drawn a revolver with the other. His head turned as he heard a sound at the far door. With staring eyes, Dopey saw The Shadow. He caught the sound of a taunting laugh. Dopey aimed. He never fired.

The Shadow's automatic spoke. Sizzling through between the bars of a Chinese torture cage, the bullet found its mark! The cage occupied the center of the exhibit room. To reach the far corner, The Shadow had been forced to risk deflecting bars.

That necessity had prevented him from dealing instant death to Dopey. The vicious thug sagged and dropped his gun. But with his other hand, he tried to release the ax blade. His left fist was tight. Then came another withering blast from the automatic.

Aiming higher, The Shadow shattered the dying killer's wrist. Dopey's fingers relaxed. His body slumped to the floor beside the guillotine. Cliff Marsland's life was saved.

## The Blue Sphinx

DUKE, rolling Clyde Burke to the floor, had heard the shots. Coming to his knees, Duke forgot the reporter and aimed straight for The Shadow. He had the bead he wanted. He pressed the trigger while The Shadow was swinging toward him.

But as Duke launched his seemingly certain shot, a quick hand caught his wrist. Clyde, half groggy, had seen the menace. His thrust was just in time. His yanking hand spoiled the aim. Duke's shot whistled inches away from The Shadow's wheeling form.

Snarling, Duke yanked clear and aimed again. As he fired a quick, wide shot, The Shadow's automatic spoke in unison. Duke slumped forward to the floor. The snarl ended in a dying cough.

Clyde Burke was coming to his feet. The Shadow, by the doorway, hissed an order. Clyde turned toward the guillotine. He could hear distant cries; he knew that The Shadow must go out to repel invaders. It was Clyde's job to release Cliff.

Reaching into an opened exhibit case, The Shadow seized a poniard and sent the weapon sizzling through the air. The knife landed squarely in a broad post of the guillotine and quivered there, flashing in the dim light.

Clyde, breaking loose the clamp that held Cliff's head, looked up as he heard the whirring blade. Dragging Cliff from beneath the guillotine's menacing ax, Clyde reached for the poniard and wrenched it from the wooden post. He used the blade as a knife to cut Cliff's bonds.

Cliff came to his feet. He grabbed Duke's revolver, and Clyde snatched up Dopey's. Together, they dashed out into the hall, where they could hear the sounds of shots. They saw The Shadow, by the front corner of the hall, firing out through the opened doorway. Returning gorillas were dropping back from his fusillade.

Wheeling suddenly, The Shadow pointed his agents to the opened door of the anteroom. Shots came from outside as they took to the designated cover. Roars resounded from a second automatic that The Shadow had drawn. A hoarse cry of a wounded raider came from beyond the outer door.

Then, with a swift whirl, The Shadow came swinging across the floor. His automatics he was wielding one with each hand sent blazing flames in the direction of the attackers. No shots responded as The Shadow swung into the anteroom where Clyde and Cliff were waiting.

Both agents expected to see The Shadow keep up the fight through a partly opened doorway. Instead, The Shadow swung the door shut. As he clicked the lock, Clyde suddenly realized the reason for that action.

Something thudded against the outside of the closed doors. Balked in a revolver fusillade, Konk Zitz had brought up a different method of attack. The Shadow, scenting a faint odor in the outer hall, had expected it.

Tear gas bombs. The same weapons that had enabled the invaders to overpower the police were now being used against The Shadow and his agents. The Shadow had closed the doors of the anteroom just in time.

He could not open the door to meet those incoming gorillas. Konk's rallied forces would come equipped with gas masks. The Shadow and his rescued aids had only one avenue of retreat. That lay into the Sphinx Room.

Windowless, with walls that only The Shadow could scale, that inner chamber seemed no better than a hopeless trap, so far as Clyde and Cliff were concerned. Men were already pounding at the doors of the anteroom; trying to break through the metal facing.



## The Blue Sphinx

Then, at this moment that offered nothing but despair, a dull blast came from the back of the museum. The building gave a quiver. Pounding from the hallway was resumed.

Standing in the darkness of the anteroom, The Shadow laughed.

### CHAPTER XX. THE ESCAPE

THE SHADOW'S laugh brought shuddering quivers to the darkened anteroom. The tones seemed ominous, even to Clyde Burke and Cliff Marsland. Yet those agents of The Shadow knew that the weird mirth promised some prompt development.

Swishing through darkness, The Shadow opened the doors into the Sphinx Room. Staring into the moonlit vault, his agents saw him approach the huge Blue Sphinx. Serene upon its pedestal, the stone figure seemed to stare into the blackened room where the agents waited.

The Shadow was working swiftly. He was stooping at the sides of the pedestal which supported the Blue Sphinx, making a round of it that puzzled his watching agents.

Axlike blows were crashing at the doors from the outer hall. Konk and his men would soon break through. Yet The Shadow kept on with his circuit of the Blue Sphinx.

"You heard the blast?" questioned Cliff, speaking tensely to Clyde.

"Yes," was the reply. "They blew the vault."

"Where from?"

"The back of the museum."

"The vault is under us?"

"Yes! Beneath the Blue Sphinx."

The Shadow was returning. Something uncoiled behind him, along the floor of the Sphinx Room. It looked threadlike in the moonlight. Then, while terrific shocks bade fair to demolish the outer doors of the anteroom, The Shadow rejoined his agents and closed the inner doors behind him.

A tiny flame flickered suddenly in the darkness. A hiss and a sputter ran along the floor. It was the end of a fuse that The Shadow had lighted. The sparkling trail sizzled under the inner doors. Clyde and Cliff waited tensely.

At that instant, a crashing blow cleaved a portion of the brass-faced door. Light issued in from the front hall. An ax fell through the opening. A hand, with pineapple bomb clutched in it, appeared beyond.

An automatic roared in the anteroom, A man flopped from the opening, dropped by The Shadow's shot.

A momentary silence. Then, from within the Sphinx Room came a terrific blast. The building seemed to rock. The stout inner doors of the anteroom crackled on their hinges. Then came the sound of shattering glass dropping in deluge from the dome above the Sphinx Room.

## The Blue Sphinx

Stunning even to Cliff and Clyde, who had expected something of the sort, the explosion produced a tremendous stir beyond the front doors of the anteroom. It stopped Konk Zitz and his crew before they could begin a new attack.

Then, as shudders lulled, the sound of Konk's snarling voice came through the ax-made opening. Konk was ordering a new bomb attack.

A hiss from The Shadow. As his agents turned, the cloaked fighter opened the inner doors and ordered them into the Sphinx Room. As the two men staggered there, The Shadow followed. He shut the inner doors and locked them, just as a gas-pineapple came through the outer break.

CLYDE BURKE was staring in amazement. So was Cliff Marsland. Before them, shattered into great chunks, lay the remains of the Blue Sphinx. Scattered about amidst the broken glass were portions of the pedestal on which the Sphinx had rested.

The Shadow had blown the whole structure loose. His fused charges, inserted in the holes that he had drilled, had totally demolished the pedestal and wrecked the statue with it.

The head of the Sphinx had toppled on its side. The face was staring with its blank eyes toward the doorway. The rear of the statue had rolled from the ruined pedestal, while the center section had broken in two halves that lay well apart.

Crash! Gas-masked invaders had beaten through the brass-faced doors. Closer strokes. They were attacking the inner entrance. Those inner doors were wood alone. They were already loosened by the blast that had shattered the Blue Sphinx. But that mattered no longer.

A yawning hole lay in the center of the demolished pedestal. The charge, spreading in all directions, had produced a yawning hole in the floor itself. Through the pungent room, The Shadow beckoned his agents to this outlet.

Clyde Burke noticed something as he followed Cliff down through the hole. The jagged cavity showed traces of a regular shape, as though there had been an opening through the ruined pedestal.

Cliff had dropped into the vault; Clyde followed. Then The Shadow swished beside them. His flashlight gleamed.

Again, Clyde stared. The vault was entirely empty. How had the other crooks managed to remove the treasure so quickly? Only a dozen minutes had elapsed since the first blast that had told of the entry through the bricked rear wall.

Moonlight showed through the rear barrier. At The Shadow's command, Clyde and Cliff squeezed through. The Shadow followed, just as smashing from above announced that Konk's outfit had crashed through to the Sphinx Room.

Clyde was looking vainly for the trucks that had come for the swag. He saw no signs of them. He could not understand how they had been loaded for so quick a getaway. Then a thought occurred to him. He turned to speak to The Shadow. A hiss commanded silence.

Swiftly, The Shadow swung toward the far corner of the museum, his agents close behind him. Pausing near the front, The Shadow, weird in the moonlight, pointed off toward a clump of trees. Cliff and Clyde headed in that direction.

## The Blue Sphinx

A shout from the front of the museum. Shots blazed toward the running men. The Shadow's agents kept on. From behind them, they heard the sudden burst of a strident, gibing laugh that rose like a mighty challenge through the clear night air.

CROOKS heard it, too. They wheeled to see The Shadow standing in the moonlight. Viciously, they opened fire, just as The Shadow began to weave a circling course away from the museum. He was drawing the fire from the foe.

Automatics loomed in gloved fists. Those weapons barked their sharp response to enemy guns. Crooks were shooting wild, at long range. Not so The Shadow. Using the white face of the museum, he picked out his living targets against that perfect background. Thugs staggered, firing vainly at the figure which seemed to fade and appear again between the moonlight and the blackness of the trees. Again that mocking laugh came ringing to their ears. Men dived for the open doorway of the museum. A gas-masked figure appeared there.

The Shadow fired.

The masked crook staggered back into the building. The others followed, ready to brave the last fumes of the tear gas rather than meet The Shadow. Then new foemen came into view, rounding the corner at the rear of the museum.

Like The Shadow and his agents, this group had dropped through the hole in the floor of the Sphinx Room and made an exit through the break that crooks had blasted at the rear of the vault. But these new enemies, arriving, could find no target at which to open distant fire.

The Shadow had glided to the trees. There, he reached his hidden coupe, where his two agents were already aboard. His hiss came from the darkness, questioning in tone. It brought a quick response from Clyde, for it concerned the very matter that was on the reporter's mind.

"Drury was with them," informed Clyde. "They'd have to take the road to Larkton. The only shortcut without hitting Latuna. Drury was acting as their leader. It was Drury who brought me here, by a phone call."

A hissed order from The Shadow. Cliff Marsland, at the wheel, pressed the starter. The motor roared. Clyde, breathless, added one more comment:

"About Drury he acted as if he wanted to kill me. But I saw his revolver when he threatened. No bullets in it —"

Shouts from near the museum. The crooks had heard the car.

A hiss of understanding from The Shadow. A reply from Cliff. The coupe shot away, clearing for the road before Konk and his outfit could intercept it.

Three minutes later, a lone gorilla, an outpost, guarding a parked sedan, was conscious of a slight swish beside him. Turning, with gun in hand, he faced the blazing eyes of The Shadow. Before the gorilla could fire, a gloved hand swept upward and clipped the crook just beneath his square-set chin.

The gorilla gave an odd gargle as he slumped to the ground.

A figure entered the car. The motor roared. The sedan shot out from the trees. Foemen heard it and turned from their chase of the coupe. Konk Zitz's yell ordered them to open fire. The cry came too late. The sedan was jouncing off along a rocky road.

## The Blue Sphinx

Then, as raging desperadoes came running toward the trees, the air reverberated with the sound of a parting taunt. The laugh of The Shadow rang out with all its mockery. The Shadow, like his agents, was departing.

Konk Zitz laughed hoarsely. Though half his crew had been crippled, he had put The Shadow on the run. So thought the big shot as he ordered his scattered henchmen to the remaining cars.

But Konk's shreds of triumph were ill-founded. He was wrong when he thought The Shadow was in flight. By that swift departure, The Shadow was planning to ruin schemes that Konk thought were beyond the master fighter's reach.

### CHAPTER XXI. BY THE BRIDGE

THE Latuna Museum was located just south of a main highway. Between the museum and the town, a paved road cut off from the through highway and led cross-country to the village of Larkton.

Clyde Burke was familiar with that fact. That was why he had told The Shadow that the supposed trucks must have gone by the Larkton road. Little traveled, the cross thoroughfare offered a perfect route for the crooks who had gone with Bart Drury.

By choosing that course, they avoided traffic and also escaped passing through Latuna itself. Moreover, they could gain the Larkton road by means of the dirt lane that curved around the hillside at the back of the museum. This eliminated all contact with the highway.

Three miles out, the Larkton road crossed the rocky ravine of a trickling creek. The bridge was reached by a sloping grade. It bore two warnings one, not to exceed twelve miles an hour in crossing; the other, barring all trucks of more than five tons capacity.

A bulky, antiquated truck was standing on the slope fifty feet from the near side of the trestle. Its dim lights revealed the bridge. Its wheezing motor was idling, accompanied by the clatter of a loose fan belt. Two men were standing by the big vehicle. Their growled conversation marked them as members of Konk Zitz's gorilla crew.

"I don't get the lay, Soupy," one was saying. "First we blow the back of that museum. Then we scam without goin' in there. Say I t'ink Konk's gone screwy."

"Yeah?" returned "Soupy." "Wid all de dough he's been flashin'? Say, if Konk's gone bugs, crack me on the dome an' make me de same way."

"Like I socked the mug that's layin' in the truck, eh?"

"Say you hit dat guy hard, Marty. You oughta been careful about dat. Remember what Konk said."

"The guy's comin' to already, Soupy. I'm keepin' an eye on him. That's somethin' else I can't figure. There's Nick an' Lefty up ahead pullin' the props out from under that bridge. So we can ditch this junker" a nudge toward the truck "an' all the stuff that's in it. What's the idea?"

"Say, Marty. You must be dumb. I got de idea as soon as Konk spilled it."

"Yeah? What is it?"

## The Blue Sphinx

"Dis old truck is supposed to be de last of a whole bunch. See? Rollin' off wid a lot of swag from dat museum. But all its got in it is de bum stuff from upstairs. When dis truck bumps trough de bridge, de bulls'll find it here. Dey'll t'ink de real swag went out dis way."

"But where's the real swag? We didn't go in that hole we blew."

"Dat's Konk's job. Leave dat to him. We're de blind, dat's all. Dat's de way I figure it, Marty."

"Sounds likely, Soupy."

MUFFLED pounding from beneath the bridge. A timber gave way with a splintering sound. Then came a crash, seconds later, as the falling beam reached the depths of the ravine.

"Dat job oughta have been done ahead o' time," objected Soupy. "No use stickin' around here de way we is."

"No?" retorted Marty. "Well, you're the bozo that's talkin' dumb now. They don't use this road much, but supposin' somebody had come through after the bridge was fixed. That would've queered it for us, wouldn't it."

"Yeah. I neveh figured it dat way. Say, you gotta hand it to Konk Zitz. He knows his onions, dat guy does!"

A moan from the front seat of the wheezing truck. Marty leaned in to make an inspection by the glow from the dash light.

"Comin' to," he said. "Maybe I'd better hand him another haymaker."

"Lay off it," growled Soupy. "De mug ain't to look like he'd been pasted. He's part of de blind –"

Soupy broke off as he heard the sound of approaching voices. Two gorillas came into the light of the headlamps. Nick and Lefty had finished the job at the bridge. One of them spoke to Soupy and Marty.

"How's the mug?" was his question.

"Wakin' up, Lefty," replied Marty.

"Shove him under the wheel, then," ordered Lefty. "That's the way. Now loose that hand brake."

"Ain't you goin' to shove it in gear?"

"No. Think I want to stall it?"

"O.K., Lefty."

Meanwhile, Soupy and Nick were talking. The man from the bridge was bringing up a question that had evidently been dropped upon their arrival here.

"That blast after we left," Nick was saying. "It didn't sound like it come from the quarry. It was too close –"

"I tell you it was from de quarry," broke in Soupy. "If it wasn't –"

"They'd have quit blastin', Soupy, after hearin' that load we let off –"

"Maybe dey would. But maybe dey had de charge all set an' –"

"Look out!" came Lefty's growl from the other side of the truck.

Nick and Soupy stepped away. The wheezy truck was rolling. Slow on this easy portion of the slope, it would gain speed straight for the bridge.

"We pinched dat wagon up in Rockport," chuckled Soupy. "Say de guy dat owns it'll be –"

He stopped. Like the others, Soupy turned, then leaped to the side of the road as he heard a car come roaring from a bend behind him. Then, like a meteor from darkness, a sedan came hurtling down the slope.

Lefty, leader of this quartet, yanked a gun as the glare bore down upon him. He shouted an order that sounded above the approaching roar.

"Let 'em have it!"

As gorillas drew, the bark of an automatic came from the left side of the whizzing sedan. Bullets sizzed into the cluster of firing thugs. Tongues of flame accompanied the staccato bursts as the sedan whirled past the crew.

Enemies sprawled all save Lefty. He leaped for the sedan as the driver suddenly applied the brakes. Catching an opened window, the ruffian went flying to the running board and swung to aim a shot at the driver, who was now trying to avert disaster.

Brakes screeched as the car cut down its eighty-mile-an-hour pace. Lefty lost aim as the driver swerved past the speed-gaining truck. On toward the very edge of the bridge. Then the brakes jammed.

The sedan did a sudden right-about. In its whirl it came into the path of the truck; then out of it. Lefty, losing his hold on the tilting side, was thrown on to the bridge.

The door of the sedan shot open; out sprang a figure that showed solid black as it dodged away from the oncoming truck.

The Shadow had arrived. He had stopped on the verge of disaster. In split-seconds, he had summed the situation. Forgetting Lefty, who had dropped his gun and was trying to rise from the bridge, The Shadow whirled almost against the passing truck.

There was no door by the driver's seat. But a man was behind the wheel, dangling there, groggy, shaking with the jolts that the truck made in gaining a fifteen-mile-an-hour speed.

Swinging to the running board, The Shadow seized the limp figure and went rolling to the roadway, carrying the man with him. Both figures went sprawling in the dust by the sedan.

A scream from the bridge. Lefty's hoarse cry was too late. He was unable to crawl clear. His rising form went over like a tenpin, as the big truck struck him. The front wheel jolted as it passed over the crook's body. The truck veered toward the rail.

Before the lumbering Jagannath reached a okheerid dan thater of scream from the ut. elf. Wethean y. The

## The Blue Sphinx

Lefty's writhing form was on the sloping brink. A clawing, helpless sight, the last of the quartet slipped with the loosening planks. While the echoes of the crashing truck were still sounding from the depths of the ravine, Lefty disappeared into the chasm.

THE SHADOW saw it, while rising from the dust. By the sedan he found a bewildered man trying to get to his feet. The Shadow helped the rescued man into the sedan. Behind the wheel, The Shadow turned on the dome light. He laughed softly as he recognized Bart Drury's face.

Groggy, grimy-faced, his clothing torn, the star reporter lay bewildered. The Shadow drew a phial from beneath his cloak. He pressed the tiny vessel to Bart's lips. A purplish liquid trickled to the reporter's tongue.

Bart stirred. The Shadow clicked out the dome light and started the stalled motor. The car was turned up the slope. As it started forward, the headlights showed the sprawled, motionless forms of three gorillas.

Then that sight was left behind. The sedan was purring toward the level road. Bart Drury, half bewildered, was mumbling:

"Burke, Burke is that you, Burke?"

"No," came the quiet response. The Shadow's tone was assuring. "Burke is all right."

"Glad of that," mumbled Bart. "Made me call him Konk did. Couldn't couldn't get out of it."

"Speak on," ordered the quiet voice.

"They grabbed me," explained Bart. "In Konk's place at the Phoenix. Konk said I'd have to be the goat. Said he'd he'd bump Burke unless I played the game."

The phial came to Bart's lips in the darkness. A taste of the potent liquid was reviving. Bart steadied, and spoke further to the silent driver beside him.

"Burke was to see me running things," explained Bart. "Konk was to let him go. Burke would pin it on me. I knew I was slated for the spot. But I played the game to get Burke out of it.

"Maybe Burke knows I was on the level. I I couldn't go out without trying to tip him off. They had me doing an act with an empty gun. They'd have plugged me if I hadn't played my part. But I flashed the revolver in front of Burke's nose. He he saw, it was empty. No bullets."

Bart subsided in the cushions. His strength had lessened. But as he rested, his mind cleared. He could hear the quiet voice speaking, stating facts that Bart Drury knew, yet which he had never pieced together. Then came orders that the reporter understood.

The car came to a stop. The door opened so softly that Bart did not hear it. The Shadow stepped through darkness to a spot where a coupe was standing. He voiced a low hiss.

Clyde Burke alighted. Cliff Marsland shifted from the driver's wheel. Entering, The Shadow took his place. A questioning hiss. Cliff spoke tensely, telling of the trip to Harrison Knode's; and how he had been trapped when he fluked the safe.

A soft laugh. Clyde Burke, by the coupe, heard whispered orders. He responded. The motor started. Taking Cliff, The Shadow drove away, leaving Clyde standing by the sedan.

## The Blue Sphinx

In the stopped car, Drury had heard voices; then the departure of the coupe. Turning to the driver's seat, he shot a question to the person whom he supposed still sat there.

"Say who are you?"

No response. Bart groped for the dome light and switched it on. He stared, dumfounded. The seat behind the wheel was empty. Then came footsteps. A face was thrust into the light. Bart stared at Clyde Burke.

"Hello, Bart!" smiled The Shadow's agent, opening the door to take his place behind the wheel. "I got that gun flash when you gave it. Well, old man, you're out of it like I am. But we're diving in again."

Bart nodded. He, like Clyde Burke, had received orders from The Shadow. Like Clyde, Bart was game.

### CHAPTER XXII. THE EVIDENCE

HARRISON KNODE was seated in his parlor. Opposite him were two acquaintances. They had accompanied the crusading editor to his home after attending the hearing at Strafford Malden's.

"I think Grewling will hold his job," predicted Knode, as he tendered cigars to his friends. "He looked pretty confident when he left. After all, I'd like to see him stay in as police chief."

Surprised looks from the guests. This statement was unexpected, in the light of constant criticism that Knode had directed against the police chief.

"You wonder why, don't you?" questioned Knode. "Well, I'll tell you. Mayor Rush wants Grewling out. That's why I want him to stay in."

"Those two never worked together. Rush is a halfway reformer. He's just too conservative in action, that's all. Grewling is a holdover from the old administration. That's his trouble."

"If Grewling stays in despite the mayor's opposition, each will try to outdo the other. We'll have some fun here in Latuna. Plenty of meat for my editorials. But we'll have action with the fun."

"If either one of those two has been pulling something and I've insinuated that all along the other will uncover it. There's been too much of the Alphonse and Gaston with that pair; each kowtowing to the other —"

Knode broke off. The front door had opened. Some one was entering. Heavy footsteps; others behind them. Then, into a curtained doorway stepped the figure of Police Chief Lawrence Grewling.

"HELLO, Chief Grewling!" exclaimed Knode, in surprise. "What's up? Have they come to a decision up at Malden's?"

"No," returned the chief, grimly. "There's more than that, Knode. Robbery at the museum!"

"Robbery? What did they take?"

"They blew the vault. Cleaned out the entire Soyer collection."

Knode stood aghast. Then his journalistic instinct seized him. He turned to his friends.



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"Remember what I said, coming down from Malden's?" he questioned. "I said those blasts didn't sound like they were from the quarry."

The other men nodded. Grewling spoke.

"They handed tear gas to the officers on duty," he stated. "Then left them bound and gagged in the curator's office. Blew their way into the vault from the back. Then blasted up into the Sphinx Room. Why they did that, I can't figure."

"Into the Sphinx Room," exclaimed Knode. "What happened to the Blue Sphinx?"

"It cracked up. It's lying there in chunks."

"What a story!"

"Wait a minute," declared Grewling. "There's more you haven't heard. The thieves had a fight among themselves. That's why they didn't kill off my men, as near as I can see –"

"Was it Konk Zitz and his crowd?"

"Yes. But it wasn't Konk Zitz at the head of it. Workmen from the quarry came over after the shooting and released my men. I've got three witnesses who saw the real leader."

"Who was he?"

"Bart Drury!"

Knode stared. Then he laughed and shook his head. Taking his cigar from his lips, he asked:

"What is this, Grewling? A joke?"

"Not a bit of it!" retorted the police chief. "You don't think I came over here to be friendly, did you? That's not all I've got on Drury." He turned toward the door and called. "Say, Jurling, come in here!"

A man entered. It was the detective whom the crooks had dubbed "Mushmug." The dick stood solemnly inside the door. Grewling spoke again. "Tell Knode what you heard at the Phoenix."

"WELL," announced Jurling, otherwise Mushmug, "I was a-talkin' to a fellow they called Dopey. He says to me that Harrison Knode has got a lot of dockaments he ain't showin' nobody. Facks about lots of people; one of 'em his own reporter this guy Drury. Dopey says Drury told that to Konk Zitz. Said the dockaments was in Mr. Knode's safe."

"You hear that, Knode?" quizzed Grewling. "Looks like your reporter has a criminal record. What do you know about it?"

"I have certain papers in my safe," admitted Knode. "I regarded them as private and shall continue to do so."

"Any about Drury?"

"Yes. Mostly recommendations."

## The Blue Sphinx

"I want to see them."

"Very well. I shall bring them from the safe."

"Suppose I go along."

Knodel smiled and shook his head. He stepped to a door that opened into the rear room. With a gesture toward a chair, he went into the room where the safe was located.

Grewling stood stolid for a full minute. Then, before Knodel's friends knew what he was about, the police chief strode across the room and burst open the door.

Harrison Knodel was opening the door of the safe. He leaped to his feet as he saw Grewling. The police chief leveled a revolver.

"Stand back!" he ordered. "In the name of the law!"

Knodel obeyed; then, defiantly, he challenged:

"This is illegal, Grewling!"

"Hold him, men!" ordered the police chief.

Mushmug and another dick pounced upon Knodel before he could shut the door of the safe. Grewling beckoned to the editor's friends. They followed the chief to the safe.

"I want witnesses," he declared. "We're going to find the real facts concerning this fellow Bart Drury. That's why I'm here. I want you men to see that I put back whatever I take from this safe –"

Grewling paused and his eyes opened wide. He pointed to the safe; as the others saw the object he indicated, the chief stepped forward and brought it into full view.

The object was a long-barreled revolver, fitted with the peculiar structure of an old-fashioned silencer.

"The gun that got Rubal and Hollis!" shouted Grewling. "The experts said those bullets came from a gun like this! How did this come here, Knodel!"

"I NEVER saw it before!" gasped the editor.

"No?" Grewling handed the gun to Mushmug, and dug in the safe. He brought out a stack of papers.

"Rubal's letters," he stated. "And here's a floor plan of the museum. Looks like Rubal's writing on it. Yes that's what it is. Hard writing to read. We'll do that later."

Passing the new evidence to Mushmug, the police chief turned solemnly to Knodel. In a voice of authority, he announced. "Harrison Knodel, I arrest you in the name of the law!"

"You can't do this!" stormed Knodel, trying to break away from the officers who held him. "This is all illegal, I tell you –"

"Take him out," growled Grewling.

## The Blue Sphinx

"City hall, chief?" questioned a cop.

"No," replied Grewling. "Up to Malden's. That's where the mayor is. Come along, the rest of you."

NEWS of unexpected visitors came to Strafford Malden when Toya appeared in the conservatory. Malden and three other men were seated in conference with Quirby Rush. Toya was polite in his interruption.

"Honorable Police Chief," he declared. "Come to see Honorable Mayor."

"Tell him I shall see him after the conference," ordered Rush.

"It is important, Honorable Mayor," reported Toya. "It is about robbery at museum. Honorable Prisoner has been brought here –"

"What's that? A robbery? A prisoner? Tell Grewling to enter at once!"

The servant departed. Two minutes later, Grewling arrived with Knode. The editor had become peaceable. He smiled sullenly as he met the eyes of Mayor Rush. Meeting a glare, Knode turned toward Malden, who looked puzzled.

"Produce the evidence," ordered Grewling.

Mushmug laid documents on a table. Then the gun with the silencer.

Mayor Rush uttered a surprised exclamation when he saw the weapon. He looked toward Grewling.

"Here are the facts," announced the police chief. "That crowd from the Phoenix Hotel got busy to-night. Gassed my men at the museum and blew the vault. They took everything."

Gasps from committee members. Grewling proceeded:

"Bart Drury was working with them. He was recognized. So I went up to Knode's. Wanted facts on Drury. Knode opened his safe; I covered him and found this stuff."

"You hear that?" put in Knode. "He admits forcible entry, without a search warrant."

"It was justified," declared Mayor Rush, sternly. "Don't you think so, gentlemen?"

"Hardly." Strafford Malden spoke for the committee. "Yet, since the act has been performed, we must accept the evidence, I suppose. Yet, you acted beyond your authority, Grewling."

"He did," sneered Knode. "I tell you, I know nothing of that stuff! Some one must have planted it in my safe. No one can prove anything against me!"

"No?" questioned Grewling. "Take a look at this, Knode. I got it this afternoon, while you were at your office. I had your housekeeper down at city hall, Knode."

"My housekeeper? Bridget?"

"Yes. And she signed this affidavit stating that you went to the Latuna Museum the night that Rubal and Hollis were murdered. You were the man who had that appointment with Rubal!"

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"You made one slip, Knode" Grewling turned triumphantly to face Rush and Malden; then he swung back toward the editor "just one slip. I walked in the other day while you were talking with your reporters.

"I caught something that was said. I didn't think about it until later. Then, to-day, worried about this hearing of mine, I quizzed your housekeeper. She blabbed. Here's her sworn statement."

KNODE looked about. A newcomer had entered; Howard Dunham, editor of the Gazette. He had joined the ranks of Knode's enemies. Even Knode's friends looked solemn. They believed him guilty.

"I did have an appointment with Rubal," admitted Knode. "He was going to talk. To tell me why he had stalled with those new museum plans. Bridget, my housekeeper, thought I went out. But I didn't –"

No one was believing. Knode's protest sounded feeble. The editor made a last attempt.

"If Drury would only show up," he said. "Maybe that would clear me. He could support my word –"

"Drury?" questioned Mayor Rush, sarcastically. "He's the man we're looking for. He's a crook. In league with those criminals who had established themselves here in Latuna. He has gone with them. He would never dare come here –"

Rush stopped. There was commotion at the doorway that led from house to conservatory. Cops turned about and stared as Bart Drury stepped into view, pushing the protesting Toya from his path.

Grimy and tattered, Bart Drury faced the group. Behind him was Clyde Burke. Witnesses to the museum raid, they were here to reveal the facts. Here, by order of The Shadow.

### CHAPTER XXIII. THE GAME REVEALED

A SOLEMN tribunal was seated in judgment. As chief official of Latuna, Mayor Quirby Rush occupied the center; he was behind a table in the middle of the conservatory. On his right sat Strafford Malden; on his left, Howard Dunham.

Harrison Knode was standing between two detectives, while Police Chief Lawrence Grewling stood alone, watching Bart Drury and Clyde Burke. The reporters were facing the improvised bar of justice.

All others had gone into the house, to await call if needed. Toya stood at the closed door, ready to obey any order.

There was another door to the conservatory. It opened into the back of the house. Just within that door stood Singler, Malden's chauffeur. He had been called in by Toya.

Bart Drury had completed his story. In steady, easy tone, the reporter had told of his efforts to watch the crooks who had been latent in Latuna. He had given details of his capture; his call to Clyde Burke; and the role he was forced to play. He came to the finish.

"They had me in a truck out back of the museum," stated Bart. "One man was guarding me. Three others blasted the brick back of the vault. Right after that they piled into the truck. I put up a fight. They slugged me one of them did.

"When I came to, I was behind the wheel of the truck. It was coasting down a slope. Then some one came

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roaring up in a car. I heard shots; brakes screeching; I was yanked from the wheel."

"The truck kept on. It crashed through the high trestle on the Larkton road. Some some motorist had saved me. He brought me back to town. Left me in the car; then Burke showed up. We came here."

"A preposterous story!" snorted Mayor Rush. "It lacks conviction, Drury. It positively lacks –"

"Why do you think I'm here?" broke in Bart. "Isn't that proof enough that I'm on the level? Can't you see what those crooks were after?"

"If I'd been found at the wheel of that truck, it would have looked as though I was with the bunch. Making a getaway that crashed. I had to play in with them to save Burke."

Bart looked from side to side. He appealed first to Dunham. The Gazette editor gave a slight nod. Though the Enterprise was his rival sheet, Dunham, as a newspaper man, seemed inclined to believe the reporter's story.

Strafford Malden saw Dunham's nod. Then he was faced by Bart's expression of appeal. Where Dunham had shown open-mindedness, Malden displayed sympathy. He turned to Mayor Rush.

"Suppose," suggested Malden, "that we accept this story on a temporary basis. Let us hear what the other man Burke has to say."

"Very well," agreed Rush.

CLYDE told his story, up to the point where he had broken from the crooks. He stated that one of the band had been slated for the guillotine. He told how he had dashed to Cliff Marsland's rescue. But he did not mention Cliff's name.

Then Clyde became impressive. He was following instructions from The Shadow.

"There was some one in the museum," declared Clyde, "who was there to thwart the crooks. That person started the fight. When I helped the fellow whom I found on the guillotine, the stranger was already battling Konk's crew.

"I was trapped, with the helpless man whom I had rescued. We headed for the anteroom, to get away from the crooks. We heard the explosion when the vault was blown. Then came the second blast. The person aiding us had opened the way for escape by blowing up the Blue Sphinx."

Facing the pompous mayor, Clyde added:

"We went down into the vault and out the back. Our rescuer was there, in the darkness. I told him that Drury was in danger. He left; and I escaped, with the chap whom I had rescued from the guillotine."

"The man you rescued was a crook?" quizzed Rush, sharply. "Where is he now?"

"He left me," replied Clyde. "I couldn't hold him. I didn't want to, after he told me why the thugs had slated him for death."

"Why was that?" quizzed Rush.

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"Because," responded Clyde, "he had failed to open Harrison Knode's safe. Konk Zitz went to Knode's to-night; for some reason, he wanted to get into the safe. This fellow fluked the job; Konk accused him of being a double crosser. Konk slated him for death; then Konk opened the safe himself –"

"Enough!" broke in the mayor. "We have heard too much of these preposterous stories! These men were both in with the crooks. They are trying to shield Knode. Come! We can have no more of this absurdity!"

Clyde turned to face Knode. All the while, the editor had been listening to the stories told by his reporters. The Shadow had ordered Clyde to count on Knode if the pinch arrived. The Shadow had counted upon the keenness of the editor.

KNODE stepped forward, the detectives accompanying him. He stood in front of Rush; then swung about to look at Grewling. Cool, Knode had been gaining that power that he had, with facts. The same ability that enabled him to produce his logical editorials was about to serve him with his plea.

"Here lies evidence." Knode swung his hand toward the table, where the death gun and the papers were lying. "These articles were found in my safe. Does any one" his eyes were challenging "believe that I would have been fool enough to keep them there?"

"You give me credit for being the master of a criminal band. Do you think that I would have linked my reporters the very men needed for an alibi with such a nefarious outfit?"

"You, Grewling" he wheeled to the police chief "are the holder of an affidavit made by my housekeeper. That document says that I intended to go to the museum the night that Rubal was murdered. I did not go; and the affidavit can not prove that I was there.

"Evidence yes. But all of a circumstantial sort. Drury and Burke have told their stories. Absurd though they may seem, they have saved me from the trap. For both those men have told facts. Their testimony will counteract this damaging evidence."

"What do you gentlemen think of this?" demanded Mayor Rush, turning to Malden; then to Dunham. It was the Gazette editor who responded.

"Knode is right," declared Dunham, frankly. "I must admit that I am confused by details. Nevertheless, he has struck the vital point. The evidence against Knode would become shaky in court when matched against the testimony of Drury and Burke."

"I have officers from the museum," snorted Grewling, "who will testify that Drury led the crooks."

"But Burke explains all that," protested Dunham. "There is nothing to prove that Burke was with the outfit. Burke has told us that Drury carried an empty gun."

"Konk Zitz tried to make me think that Drury had ordered my murder," reminded Clyde. "So I would support the officers in their testimony."

"Gentlemen," Harrison Knode broke the pause, "we are actually of one mind. Our thoughts have been clouded; that is all. Before we reconsider details, let us analyze the game. Konk Zitz and his raiders were not implicated in the death of Joseph Rubal. Yet Rubal's murder is being linked with the crime tonight."

"Because you were responsible for both," stormed Grewling.

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"Not I," smiled Knode. "But some one was responsible. There is a master crook in this. A man who knows Latuna; and who murdered Rubal because the curator knew what was coming." Knode nodded as the others stared.

"MY appointment with Rubal," declared the keen editor, "was made because Rubal was ready to give the game away. Rubal was murdered. His papers were taken away. They were planted some of them in my safe, to-night, along with the death gun. Any ordinary safe cracker could have opened that safe of mine. It was part of the game. To make it look as though I were the master crook.

"That, gentlemen, was the most insidious part of the scheme. The plotter knew that his existence would be uncovered. He wanted to find some one who could be marked as the big shot. He picked me as the goat."

"Useless words, Knode!" declared Mayor Rush. "We have proof that you went to the museum the night that Rubal was slain –"

"Proof that I could have gone to the museum."

"Which amounts to the same thing."

"It does?"

"Yes."

Knode's eyes gleamed at the mayor's reply.

"What you mean," declared the editor, "is that I have no alibi. Very well. Have you?"

"Have I?" demanded Rush. "What do you mean? I am not under accusation."

"You are," returned Knode, calmly. "I am accusing you!"

"Of what?"

"Of the murder of Joseph Rubal. Where were you at the time the curator was slain?"

Rush was on his feet, clutching the edge of the table.

"I was in my office," he shouted, "at the city hall! Until nine o'clock, or thereabouts –"

"Who saw you in your office?" interposed Knode.

"No one," returned Rush, indignantly. "But Grewling met me afterward."

"Afterward," mocked Knode. "Just as Drury and Burke saw me afterward. Well, your alibi a weak one seems to depend on the police chief." Knode swung about. "What have you to say, Grewling?"

It was a clever move. In a trice, Knode had matched the discord between mayor and police chief. Rush, indignant, had let himself go on trial. Grewling, the official whom he sought to fire, was the man upon whom he must depend!

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"I'll be honest," declared the police chief, soberly. "I went up to the mayor's house at nine o'clock that night. He wasn't there when I arrived. He showed up a few minutes later.

"The first thing he said was that he'd been at the office. I didn't think much about it then, but right now, Mr. Knode, it begins to seem odd. The mayor telling me where he'd been, like he was looking for an alibi –"

"So that's it, Grewling!" broke in Rush. "That's your game, eh? Well, make a statement for yourself. Where were you between eight and nine that night?"

"Attending to business," retorted Grewling. "Putting men on watch at the Phoenix Hotel."

"Were you at the hotel?"

"Yes. I came in there just before I went up to your house. Around nine o'clock."

"And before nine where were you?"

"Around town. No particular place."

"Hear him!" snapped Rush, viciously. "No particular place. That might mean the museum. Listen, Grewling, and mark my words. I wondered why you started that vigil at the Phoenix Hotel, without my order. You exceeded your authority, and I begin to understand why.

"Knode has awakened me. He always criticized you as a holdover from the last administration. Like Rubal. Perhaps the two of you were better acquainted than you made out. Those crooks at the Phoenix Hotel are another point. You said they would make no trouble if they stayed there."

"You are accusing me?" demanded Grewling. His fists were clenched; his face purple.

"One moment!" The sharp interruption came from Strafford Malden. Usually benign, the wealthy man was angry as he came to his feet. "This is all outrageous! Why talk of alibis from our mayor and our police chief? Both are honorable men. Knode is on trial. Let us confine ourselves to him."

"This is all ridiculous. Why, the next thing you know, I shall be under accusation. Fortunately" Malden relaxed with a quiet smile "I can avoid such indignity. I have two men right here Toya and Singler who know that I was in this conservatory on the night that Joseph Rubal was murdered."

Clyde Burke shot a quick glance to Bart Drury, who smiled and nodded. Before Malden could say another word, Drury sprang a statement.

"Go on with your alibi, Mr. Malden."

Strafford Malden halted. His eyes narrowed to a glower. While others looked dumfounded, Bart spoke again, paraphrasing words that he had heard in that darkened car; words from the hidden lips of his mysterious rescuer.

"Tell us," jeered Drury, "why Rubal suddenly changed his tune the very day that the Blue Sphinx was installed. Tell us why only one truck a dummy was at the museum to-night. Tell us why you posed as a philanthropist; but gave only the ground for the museum and, later, the Blue Sphinx –"



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Malden was quivering. He saw Harrison Knode pointing and Police Chief Grewling nodding. Malden backed from the table, pitiful for the moment. Then, with a sudden effort, he shot his right hand to his pocket and gave a sharp cry.

A revolver flashed into view. At the same instant, other weapons appeared in the hands of Toya and Singler. Malden and his servants held the throng covered. Hands went up as Malden snarled.

"Stand where you are!" was Malden's fierce order. "You want the facts. Listen and hear them!"

### CHAPTER XXIV. THE SECRET OF THE SPHINX

IN the pause that followed, grim silence descended upon the conservatory. Strafford Malden stood as master. His quick change; the prompt response of his henchmen, had rendered the throng dumfounded.

Clyde Burke stared hopelessly toward Bart Drury. Given the cue, Drury had worked too fast.

By The Shadow's design, this game should have developed slowly. The Shadow had foreseen that Knode, innocent of guilt, would twist the accusation toward either Rush or Grewling, figuring that one must be the man behind crime.

From that, Drury had been told to swing the blame on Malden. Trapped, the real plotter should have been caught helpless. Instead, Malden had gained too quick an inkling. Thanks to the presence of his henchmen, he had turned the tables.

"So you spotted the game, Drury," sneered Malden, no longer concealing the pent-up evil of his nature. "Well, you've done me a favor. But do not expect it to be returned.

"Fools!" Malden shot his gaze about the silent group "I had you hoaxed throughout! Some freak of fate damaged my cause to-night; but I have regained control. I shall remain as master.

"You, Knode, have been trying to learn who gained the big graft during the previous administration. You have wanted Mayor Rush to tell. He could not. He did not know. I was the man behind the profits here in Latuna.

"When Quirby Rush was elected mayor, I knew the game was ended. My associates departed. Darfield, the ex-mayor, was one. My former henchmen feared me. I knew they would not talk. But I needed new profits to make up for the loss of graft.

"I sponsored the Latuna Museum. I suggested the vault, to hold the treasures donated by Barnaby Soyer. I needed a tool. I chose Joseph Rubal. During the construction of the museum, we arranged a trap in that built-in pedestal and covered it with planking."

Malden paused to chuckle, as if enjoying the thought of his conniving past.

"Rubal delayed the plans for the extensions to the museum while we awaited the arrival of the Blue Sphinx. There are many such statues in Libya. The main cost of bringing that one was its shipment. I considered it worth the expense.

"The night before the Blue Sphinx arrived, I entered the museum with Toya and Singler. Rubal left the door open for us. Through the trap in the Sphinx Room, we removed all of the Soyer collection and brought it

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here. The treasures now repose in my heavily locked cellar.

"The next day, the Blue Sphinx arrived. Rubal superintended the removal of the loose planking and the placement of the Sphinx. The trapdoor was a neat one. No workmen knew of its existence. The way by which the treasure had been removed was hidden beneath a five-ton mass of stone. Resting on the solid portion of the pedestal, the Blue Sphinx covered the small opening."

Malden paused and leered craftily. The listeners knew that they were to hear the following portion of his scheme.

"I KNEW that the loss would eventually be discovered. When the extensions were built to the museum; for then the vault would be opened. There was only one answer. A fake robbery by criminals; a blind trail that would lead the hunt away from me.

"I could dispose of the treasures later. All the while I did so, the law would be trying to trace the link between the Soyer collection and the crooks. That is why I called in the services of Konk Zitz and paid him to keep his henchmen in Latuna. They were ready for the climax which Zitz termed the 'blow-off.'

"My only trouble was Rubal. He wanted to get out of it, by resigning after the Blue Sphinx was installed. He had aided in the actual robbery; I knew his resignation would produce suspicion after the false raid took place. There was only one solution.

"I went to the museum, leaving Toya and Singler here to give a fake alibi later. Hollis let me in. He was glad to see me. He wanted me to talk to Rubal. He told me that Knode was coming. I knew then that Rubal intended to confess. So I went directly to the office and shot him down with this silent revolver."

Malden chuckled as he looked at the weapon on the table. Savagely, he swung toward Harrison Knode.

"I had to wait there," he stated. "I knew you were coming. I had gathered all incriminating documents. Any that might mean a clue. I was waiting for you, Knode; but Hollis came in your place. I killed him so he could not tell the truth.

"I knew that police were watching the Phoenix Hotel. That was good. It kept Konk Zitz and his men free of blame. I knew their opportunity would come. The blasting of the empty vault did not have to be hurried. While I waited, I evolved a scheme" Malden's lips twisted in evil fashion "that made the whole game perfect.

"I left the death gun and a few old papers" a hand gesture toward the table "where Zitz could get them. He planted them in your safe, Knode. Then he framed Drury, with Burke, who appeared honest, to be a witness. You have all heard the rest."

Malden tightened his hold on his revolver. He leered savagely; his eyes were almost wild.

"Some one forced himself into the game!" cried the self-confessed crook. "Some one who shattered the Blue Sphinx in order to make an outlet of escape. What does it matter? No one will ever know the truth! Traces of the trapdoor may prove damaging. But I can divert suspicion from myself, once I have disposed of all of you.

"You are going to die!" Malden's voice was steady. "All of you, here in this conservatory! There will be a fight, presumably started by order of Harrison Knode. I and my servants alone will remain alive —"

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EYES were intent upon Malden. All save those of Clyde Burke. The Shadow's agent had gazed toward the side door of the conservatory. He saw that door open, behind Singler.

Malden's servant did not hear a sound. But as Clyde stared, he saw Singler shift forward. Clyde could tell that a gun muzzle had been thrust against the back of the chauffeur's neck.

Singler's knees shook. His fingers loosened; his revolver clattered to the floor, as he staggered feebly in from the door.

Malden turned quickly at the sound. So did Toya. Both found themselves staring into the muzzles of automatics. Their hands released the revolvers that they held.

Shrouded against the blackness of the opened door, The Shadow stood like a symbol of death. His form was vague; the cloak and slouch hat looked like a portion of the outer darkness. But the eyes that blazed from beneath the hat brim were living coals. The whispered voice that spoke was chilling.

"It was I," declared The Shadow, in his sinister tone, "I who divined your scheme! The riddle of the Blue Sphinx! It was I who placed the charges beneath the Sphinx, ready to blast it, the night before your henchmen moved!

"That would have laid bare the empty vault. Then would come my next strokes. Against you; against your criminals. Separately. But circumstances" the sibilance of The Shadow's tone was shuddering "changed my plan. Your henchmen came to me. I dealt with them.

"Your turn has come, Strafford Malden. I have allowed you to declare your guilt. Confessed a murderer, you are doomed –"

A shout from outdoors. A warning cry. Clyde Burke recognized Cliff Marsland's voice. Then came the bark of revolvers.

The Shadow wheeled in, away from the doorway. His automatics thundered as he fired into the outer darkness. Answering bullets were crashing the glass windows.

Konk Zitz and the remains of his crew had arrived!

MALDEN and his servants leaped for their guns. Upon them pounced the men whom Malden had threatened to kill. Quirby Rush and Howard Dunham overpowered Malden. Chief Grewling and Harrison Knode caught Toya. Clyde Burke and Bart Drury bore Singler to the floor.

The Shadow, turning, saw the outcome. With a swift whirl, he made for the door, firing as he went. He had stemmed the crooks' gunfire; sweeping out into the night, he was bound upon new vengeance.

Cliff Marsland and Harry Vincent, crouched behind a low wall, were exchanging shots with ruffians in the offing. They and The Shadow had shot down the ones who had made for the house. The rest were stationed in the background.

A snarl came in Konk Zitz's voice. With it, a growl from Tinker Furriss. The two had seen The Shadow appear in momentary fashion. Rising, they aimed for their archenemy.

Cliff Marsland spotted Konk and fired. His bullet clipped the big shot.

## The Blue Sphinx

Tinker was shooting toward the house. His slugs were chipping stone from the wall. His aim was wide of the elusive, unseen figure in black. Then, as Harry aimed to get Tinker, a shot burst from the darkness. The gloom showed Tinker sprawling by a tree trunk.

Sweeping across the dim lawn, The Shadow sent shots after the last fleeing members of Konk's crew. Puppet forms sprawled along the gravel drive. Cliff and Harry were in view. The Shadow hissed an order for their departure. He swung back toward the house.

Sounds of conflict indicated that Malden and his two henchmen had been captured. Such was the case; but Malden, fiendish in power, was not through. He was holding his revolver; but he could not use it. A detective, arriving to aid Rush and Dunham, snatched the weapon from the archcreek's grasp.

Toya and Singler were downed. But Malden made his sudden break. He sent Rush rolling across the table. He hurled Dunham upon Mushmug, the detective. With a wild leap Malden grabbed the silencer-fitted death gun from the table and sprang free toward the side door of the conservatory. He stopped short.

The Shadow had returned.

BLACKNESS moved inward. As he heard a mocking laugh, Malden caught the glow of burning eyes. Maddened, he fired a quick shot with the weapon that he had seized. The death gun emitted a sighing sound. Its silent bullet dug deep into the door frame that stood white beside The Shadow's shoulder.

Hard on the hiss of the silencer came a roaring burst from the door. Strafford Malden sagged. The murderous gun dropped from his grasp. The death weapon had failed the supercreek.

Men turned as they heard Malden's gargling gasp. Grewling came pouncing over to trap the prostrate fiend.

The police chief stopped. His efforts were not needed. With a hideous coughing, Strafford Malden gave his last breath. His arms sprawled. He was dead.

Grewling turned toward the door. So did others. They saw blackness only. The Shadow had departed.

Silence lay without. All tokens of the outer fight were ended. With Malden dead; with Toya and Singler prisoners, the law had won its fight.

Outside lay bodies of dead killers. But those did not concern the men in the conservatory. Below lay purloined treasure; wealth in molded gold and studded gems that they must find and restore to its proper place.

Turning to his companions, Police Chief Grewling was about to give an order. Words stopped on his lips. Like others, the police chief stood rigid as he listened. From somewhere in the outer darkness, its distance indefinable, came the tones of a strange, outlandish mockery.

Rising on the night air, the weird tone reached a startling crescendo. Eerily, it burst into a shuddering, fading taunt. Echoes rifled their ghoulish answer as the laugh reached its sudden finish.

Then the night air stilled.

Clyde Burke could see the frozen amazement upon the faces of his delivered companions. He knew the reason why they stood aghast. They had heard the triumph laugh of The Shadow!

THE END