

CASTLE OF CRIME

Maxwell Grant

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CHAPTER I. DEATH ON DISPLAY

THE hotel clerk smiled as he handed Bob Osden a letter, along with the room key; and Bob gave a grin in return. The grin, incidentally, wiped away a very solemn look that had been on Bob's face. He had been expecting that letter, and needing it very badly.

It wasn't good policy, however, to show too much eagerness in opening it. Nonchalantly, Bob thrust the letter into his pocket and went to an elevator. Reaching his room, he closed the door, sat down at the writing desk and chuckled softly, as he calmly tore the end from the envelope.

Bob was shaking the letter, when he drew it into sight, but nothing fell from it. He blew open the end of the envelope, peered in, expecting to see a bank check. Instead, the envelope was empty. Yanking the letter open, Bob scanned its brief lines, then slumped deep in his chair.

There wasn't any check, and there would not be any for a long while to come. The letter, from Bob's father, made that fact very plain.

During the next few minutes, Bob Osden acted in a mechanical fashion. With one hand, he crumpled the letter, while his other hand kept running through his shocky black hair. The mirror above the writing desk, had Bob noticed it, would have given him a remarkable picture of his own facial expressions.

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He was running the gamut of emotions, that bordered on complete desperation. With an effort, he recovered himself, stepped to a bureau and angrily uncorked a bottle. About to pour himself a drink, he noticed his face at last; this time, it was reflected from the bureau mirror.

Bob Osden took a good look at himself.

He was supposed to be handsome. Maybe he had been once, but he was losing all fights to the claim. His dark eyes were listless. His lips had a twitch that drew lines down along his face. He realized that he had been keeping up appearances along with his spirits, until his surface was almost threadbare.

The bad news had ended his mask. He looked haggard, and he felt that way. The only thing that could pull him out of his present state was some sort of lift and not the kind that came from a bottle. He had counted too much upon those "lifts" during the past few months.

Pushing bottle and glass aside, Bob kept staring at the mirror. His fists were tight; he was taking deep breaths. At intervals, his lips were muttering, but he was simply telling himself to "snap out of it"; and the formula seemed to work. Bob looked better, felt better, when he finally stepped across the room and opened the telephone book.

He found the name of Carl Sigmar, jotted down both address and telephone number. Laying the phone book aside, Bob steeled himself for the next ordeal. He gave Sigmar's number to the hotel operator and awaited an answer to his call.

There was no response. Learning that the number did not answer, Bob gave a relieved sigh. Moving about the room, he packed his suitcases, counted the twenty-odd dollars that he had in his pockets, and phoned for a porter to come up and get the bags.

ABOUT a half-hour later, Bob Osden stepped from a taxicab in front of a building that looked like an old residence turned into a small restaurant. He entered the place, left his hat and coat with a check-room girl, who gave him a smile of recognition.

Bob went upstairs to the second-floor dining room, but did not stop there. A head waiter, recognizing him, gave a nod, indicating that he could continue to the third floor.

On that floor, the young man was admitted to a room where groups were seated at round tables playing stud poker. One of the dealers recognized Bob and pointed to a chair. Bob shook his head; after a relieved glance around the tables, he asked:

"Where is Fitz Jarnow?"

"In the office," replied the dealer. "Tell Fitz I told you it would be all right."

Entering the office at the rear of the gaming room, Bob found Fitz Jarnow seated behind a desk. He was met by sharp eyes that stared from a long, sallow face, but the smile on Fitz's lips was friendly. Recognizing Bob, Fitz removed a coat and hat from a chair and motioned for him to sit down.

Fitz's hair was sleek, and his voice seemed to carry the same glossy smoothness, as he asked:

"What's the trouble, Osden?"

Bob managed a grin. He had tried to put on a front, but Fitz was one chap who couldn't be bluffed. In a way,

that was all the better. It brought Bob straight to the point.

"I need cash, Fitz."

Fitz took the statement as a matter of course. He put another question:

"How much?"

"Fifteen hundred dollars," returned Bob. "Right away, and at once."

"Why?"

Fitz's question was as unperturbed as ever. Bob gestured out to the poker room.

"I've been playing beyond my limit," he said ruefully, "so I borrowed from a fellow who was winning a lot. I hoped I'd make it up, but I only went deeper."

"Whom did you borrow from?"

"Carl Sigmar. He comes around here every now and then. Thickset chap, with light hair and a sort of reddish mustache. You know him, don't you, Fitz?"

Fitz thought for a few moments, as if trying to picture one face out of many, then gave a slow nod.

"I think I know the fellow you mean," he said, "but that isn't as important as the matter of the dough. How come you need it in such a hurry?"

Bob explained. He began with facts that Fitz already knew. Bob's father, a wealthy merchant in the Midwest, had let him come to New York, with the promise of funds whenever needed, until Bob found a good job.

Having plenty of time, with money always available, Bob had squandered both. He had borrowed from Sigmar rather than write his father for more money only a week after receiving a check. Bob had decided to bide his time for a month, then write for more cash. But the system hadn't worked.

"I gave Carl a note for thirty days," explained Bob. "The time is up tonight. My dad's letter didn't arrive until this evening. It didn't bring a check."

Bob pulled the crumpled letter from his pocket and handed it to Fitz, who read it, wearing a sympathetic expression. Then:

"What about this Sigmar guy?" asked Fitz. "Do you think he's going to crack down on you?"

"I know he is," returned Bob. "I phoned him tonight, but he wasn't in. So I checked out of the hotel, left my bags at Pennsy Station and came over here."

"Expecting to find Sigmar?"

"Hoping I wouldn't find him, until I had a chance to talk with you."

"Where do you expect to go from here?"

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"Home. To take a job in dad's store, as he always wanted me to. He never favored this New York expedition."

FITZ'S sharp eyes took on a reflective look. He pulled two cigars from his pocket, handed one to Bob, and started to chew the end of the other. Then, with a sweep of his hand, he reached to the desk drawer and found a pad of promissory notes.

"Make one out to me," he told Bob, "for fifteen hundred. Make it for ninety days. If you can't clear it by that time, I'll let you renew it."

Eagerly, Bob began to make out the note, urged by further sight of Fitz Jarnow reaching to a small safe and taking out a cash box filled with bills. While Fitz was counting out the money, he told Bob:

"Look up Sigmar and pay him off. Then head for home and get to work, so you can pay me off. Never mind the thanks; this is just a business proposition. My place here is legal enough. I've got it chartered as a club, and the fellows who gamble here are all listed as members.

"So I expect to keep going for a long while. Long after you'll be on your feet and making more trips to New York. You're a good customer" Fitz thwacked Bob's shoulder with one hand, thrust him the money with the other "so I wouldn't want to lose you. Besides, there are other people that you'll probably recommend me to."

With fifteen hundred dollars in his inside pocket, Bob left the gambling club and hailed a taxi. He gave the driver Sigmar's address, and reviewed the situation as he rode along. He had fared well, Bob had, through that interview with Fitz Jarnow.

Actually, Bob only owed twelve hundred dollars to Carl Sigmar. The balance of Fitz's fifteen hundred would finance Bob's trip home and land him there with enough money to impress his father, who probably believed that Bob was entirely broke.

The local job would be a grind, but Bob conceded that it was time for him to make amends. He wasn't at all proud of his misspent months in New York.

A curious contrast, thought Bob, how Sigmar, who had seemed a good fellow, had later called him up to make pointed threats of legal action if the money was not paid on time; while Fitz, formerly a racketeer, and now the manager of a gambling club, had been willing to help a chap who was really in a jam.

BOB was still thinking that over and promising himself that he would pay back Fitz, with interest, when the cab stopped in front of the small apartment house where Sigmar lived.

In the entry Bob found a button, with a card bearing the name "Carl Sigmar" just beneath it. While he rang the bell, Bob glanced out to the street.

He noticed that it was very dark; that occasional passers who shambled by appeared to be thuggish characters. It wasn't a particularly good neighborhood for anyone to stroll about carrying fifteen hundred dollars on his person.

Hence, when Sigmar did not answer the bell, Bob tried the inner door of the entry. Finding it unlocked, he went through and started up to Sigmar's third-floor apartment. Arriving at a door marked "3B," Bob knocked. When there was no response, he decided to wait.

Then, remembering that the lower door had been unlocked, he tried the door of the apartment. It opened; he

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stepped across the threshold. The living room was dimly lighted from a floor lamp in the corner. Bob closed the door and started toward a chair. Halfway there, he stopped.

The new angle had given Bob Osden a view beyond a gate-leg table, within the range of the lamplight. There, a crumpled shape lay on the floor; beside the whiteness of an upturned face, Bob spied the glimmer of a revolver, only a few inches away from a clawlike hand.

Bob's eyes went to the face again, met eyes that glittered like the gun, yet did not return his stare. Those eyes were glassy, bulging like oval beads. So horrible was their sightless gaze, that Bob Osden would never have recognized them as eyes that he had seen in life.

It was the rest of the face that told the identity of the corpse upon the floor. Hair light in color, lips that were topped by a reddish mustache. Bob recognized that squarish face as the very one that he had so recently described to Fitz Jarnow.

The dead man was Carl Sigmar. Slain in his own apartment, Sigmar was no longer interested in a visit from Bob Osden, the man who owed him money.

Some other debtor, it seemed, had already paid Carl Sigmar, in coin of a different sort!

CHAPTER II. THE CLOSED TRAIL

SUICIDE or murder?

The question kept popping back and forth through Bob Osden's thoughts, as he eyed the body of Carl Sigmar. From the evidence, as Bob viewed it, the chances were about equal.

Sigmar had been shot through the head; the death gun was close beside his hand. He might have fired the shot himself, or someone could have slain him and simply left the gun there. Bob found himself thinking about fingerprints, wondering if they would solve the riddle.

It occurred to him that a smart murderer could easily have clamped Sigmar's hand on the gun, to leave the dead man's own prints. Hence, if marks tallied with Sigmar's, murder might still be the answer.

Oddly, Bob found himself taking the whole scene very coolly. All was quiet in the apartment; the place seemed completely isolated from the rush of the city. Since Bob had walked in unmolested, he decided that he could go out the same way. But he felt an urge to know more about Sigmar's death before leaving the place.

Bob was stooping beside the body, when he suddenly realized that it would not be good to leave traces of his own visit; fingerprints, for instance. That thought produced a link so important, that Bob was more than ever determined to remain and investigate. He was remembering the promissory note that he had given to Sigmar!

If that slip of paper should be found on the dead man, Bob's hopes would be nullified. His anxiety to obtain a loan from Fitz Jarnow had been inspired chiefly by his wish to keep the news of his financial difficulties from reaching his home town. Even his chance to work for his father would be lost, if the facts came out.

More than that, if the police found the unpaid note, they would regard Bob as a suspect! Plenty of murders had been done for sums less than twelve hundred dollars. True, Bob could argue that if he had killed Sigmar, he would also have taken the note; but the thought of that "if" did not please him.

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In their turn, the police would argue that Bob had become confused, and fled without taking the note. Murderers had a habit of doing such things. Certainly, one argument would nullify the other; the only evidence that would stand was the fact that Bob Osden owed Carl Sigmar twelve hundred dollars and had not paid it.

PULLING a handkerchief from his pocket, Bob wrapped it about his hand and began an inspection of Sigmar's pockets. He found nothing of importance, until he drew the dead man's wallet from an inside pocket. Carrying it to the table, Bob kept using the handkerchief while he spread the contents of the wallet.

He found money there, a few hundred dollars, mostly in twenty-dollar bills. Next, a steamship ticket to Europe on a liner which was to leave within a few days. Perhaps that was why Sigmar had been so set on collecting the twelve hundred dollars that Bob owed him. He probably wanted the money for his voyage.

But Sigmar had said nothing about going abroad; rather curious, considering the several phone calls that he had made to Bob's hotel during the past week. Not so curious, though, when Bob studied other exhibits that came from the wallet.

One item was a claim check for an expensive type of imported camera that was undergoing repairs. Another article was a folded sheet of thin onionskin paper, which Bob spread to find an array of code words, listed in three languages besides English. A third item was a Pullman stub from Norfolk, Virginia, a city that Bob immediately associated with a navy yard.

Carl Sigmar, this evidence indicated, was an international spy who had not confined his gambling to the card table during his stay in America. The fact that he was ready to return abroad indicated that he had run large risks, with success.

Then Bob was unfolding a paper with frayed edges, that he recognized as the promissory note which he had given Sigmar. As he spread the paper, a calling card slipped from its folds. Picking the card from the table, Bob read the name engraved there: MISS GWENDOLYN MARCY, and beneath the name, in the lower right corner, was the address: HOTEL ROSEMONT, N. Y.

Sigmar's death began to look like murder, and Gwendolyn Marcy, whoever she might be, as in something of the same boat as Bob Osden. Unless she had been associated with Sigmar's own game, which was plausible enough; but at that, Bob doubted that she would have been responsible for Sigmar's murder. Knowing that she had given the card to Sigmar, Gwendolyn Marcy would have wanted it back, just as Bob Osden was anxious to regain his promissory note.

Folding the note, Bob tucked it into his vest pocket. He wasn't repudiating his debt to Sigmar; that had nothing to do with the fellow's activities as a spy. But Bob preferred to wait until he learned if Sigmar had heirs; then he could send them the cash.

That matter was easily decided; the only question was what to do with the other articles from Sigmar's wallet, particularly the calling card.

Bob pondered. Somehow, the stillness of the apartment became nerve-racking. Listening, he wondered if he heard sounds such as remote whispers, the soft creep of footsteps. He thought that he could catch the distant murmur of traffic from some avenue, and as he strained his ears he fancied that the vague noise swelled.

It wasn't an illusion. There was reason for that faint wave of sound one that Bob did not see. He was facing toward the door, watching it intently. He did not know that the window behind him was rising at a slow but steady speed.

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Beyond that window, all was blackness that seemed to edge in from the opening. With it came the increased murmur that Bob Osden heard. Fumbling with the articles on the table, Bob found his nerve leaving him.

A slight chill struck his neck, sent a quiver down his spine. Realizing that a draft had reached him, Bob thought of the window and guessed the cause of the outside murmur.

With a quick spring, Bob was away from the table, grabbing for the revolver that lay beside Sigmar's hand. Plucking up the weapon, he wheeled about, to stop with a terrified gasp. Frozen where he stood, Bob Osden was facing a being who had entered with the silence of creeping night.

THE arrival was cloaked in black. On his head he wore a slouch hat, with downturned brim. Like the collar of his cloak, the hat brim hid the strange personage's face, except for a pair of eyes that burned like living fire. Beneath those eyes was the aimed muzzle of an automatic that already held Bob covered.

Then, before the startled young man could fire a useless shot, a gloved hand sped forward from the cloak and plucked the revolver from Bob's grasp. A whispered voice uttered a firm command.

Mechanically, Bob Osden stumbled backward and sank into an armchair. Totally unnerved, he could only chide himself for his own stupidity. He was trapped, to every appearance a murderer, and he had added to his plight by snatching up the gun.

Now in the possession of the blackclad invader, that weapon held the telltale marks of Bob's own fingerprints. Bob Osden felt that he bore the brand of an outright criminal.

It happened that Bob did not know the identity of the cloaked invader. He was faced by The Shadow, archenemy of crime, whose methods of deduction went beyond mere summaries of circumstantial evidence. One of The Shadow's favorite pastimes was that of trapping crooks on scenes of their misdeeds. His keen eyes, quick in their analysis, saw that Bob Osden lacked the manner of a criminal.

Furthermore, The Shadow had witnessed Bob's recent actions. As he laid the revolver upon the table, The Shadow spoke again, requesting the paper that Bob had placed in his pocket.

Amazed, Bob handed over the promissory note. Then, at The Shadow's urging, he began to pour out his story in a tense whisper of his own.

Bob omitted no details. He showed the money that he had borrowed from Fitz Jarnow in order to pay Carl Sigmar. By the time that Bob had finished his story, The Shadow had put away the automatic and was picking up the revolver. Calmly, he wiped Bob's smudges from the death gun and replaced it beside Sigmar's hand.

While Bob gazed, his wonderment mingled with relief, The Shadow settled the matter of the wallet. He put back all the articles, except the calling card, which he kept; and Bob regarded that as only fair. Bob's own position was a false one, thanks to the note that happened to be in Sigmar's wallet; perhaps the same applied to Gwendolyn Marcy.

It occurred to Bob, too, that if the girl in question had actually aided Sigmar's spy work, the one person best qualified to quiz her would be The Shadow. Silent in his chair, Bob realized how fully he had talked, prompted only by The Shadow's presence and few words uttered in a weird, commanding whisper.

The Shadow replaced the wallet in Sigmar's pocket. He took long, sweeping strides about the room, searching for evidence elsewhere. At moments, he seemed to blend with the gloom of the walls, away from the

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lamplight; then he was back again, close to the table, where his gloved hand polished away a mark that Bob's hand had made when it rested there.

Confidence gripped Bob Osden. He was prepared to remain here as long as The Shadow so commanded, sure that no new difficulties would be encountered while the being in black was present. Then, into the stillness that was broken only by the faint swish of The Shadow's cloak, came a sharp, discordant sound that jarred Bob's nerves and brought him to his feet.

It was the telephone bell, ringing lustily. The jangle loosed all of Bob's suppressed fears. Instinctively, he started for the door, had his hand almost on the knob, when a gloved fist intervened. The Shadow had intercepted Bob's flight, was clamping another hand on the young man's shoulder.

"Listen!"

ALMOST as The Shadow spoke, the telephone bell ceased. From the hallway, Bob heard sounds that The Shadow had already detected. They were actual footsteps, those sounds, creeping close along the hallway. Accompanying them, Bob heard whispers that were real. He felt The Shadow turn him about; then a calm tone spoke close to his ear:

"Out through the window. Drop to the roof one floor below. Cross the roof; go through the trapdoor, down the stairs to the back street. Turn east, past the next corner, signal three fingers to the cab you see there."

Bob was nodding. The Shadow tapped the handkerchief that the young man had picked up from the table.

"Use it," he said, "when you drop from the window ledge."

Bob hurried across the room. Crouching on the ledge, he spread the handkerchief. Gripping the woodwork through the cloth, he dangled outside, ready to lose his hold and take the handkerchief with him when he dropped.

He caught an approving glint from The Shadow's eyes, saw his black-cloaked friend turn the doorknob with one hand and draw an automatic with the other. Then, at The Shadow's nod, Bob let go. A moment later, he had landed on the roof.

Whatever was to come, in that apartment above, would be The Shadow's choice. However The Shadow might fare, he had closed the trail leading to Bob Osden, the man who had played no part in crime.

CHAPTER III. THRUSTS IN THE DARK

QUICK action began at the doorway of Sigmar's apartment immediately after Bob Osden had dropped from sight. The Shadow started it by yanking the door inward the moment that he felt pressure from the outside. So quick was The Shadow's jerk that a man came lunging through, to sprawl across the floor, halfway to Sigmar's body.

The rolling man was in uniform, a police officer. He held a drawn gun, and managed to retain it as he fell. Twisting about, he heard a sinister taunt, a laugh as evasive as it was weird. But he saw no one; nothing but the blackness of the doorway.

That blackness cleared, the cop began to shoot. By that time, The Shadow was gone, wheeling out into the hallway, choosing the proper direction with his usual precision. The Shadow went to the left, and that was important.

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Down the hallway to the right was another officer, testing the door that led into the back of Sigmar's apartment. The rear door was locked, but the second patrolman had decided to cover it, and from his footsteps, The Shadow had guessed the plan. Thus, by the time the man at the rear door had swung about, The Shadow was diving for the gloom of the front stairs.

Revolver shots ripped the sloping ceiling above The Shadow's head. Dropping to the steps, the cloaked invader returned the fire, purposely aiming high. The cop in the hallway dived into the open door of Sigmar's living room, blocking off his comrade, who had by that time found his feet. The Shadow was away.

Like a bolt of blackness he had sped, unrecognized, past both officers. He was giving them a trail his own, instead of Bob's but one that they would never have time to follow. The Shadow was at the first floor by the time the policemen were starting from the third down to the second.

There was trouble, though, when The Shadow reached the ground-floor entry. A whistle shrilled the moment that he yanked the door open. Other officers bobbed into sight; some in uniform, others in plain clothes.

The Shadow could have whipped back, out of sight, and chosen a route through the apartment house. Instead, he took a long dive across the sidewalk, ending between the bumpers of two parked automobiles. All that betrayed his presence was blackness, which the officers overlooked, with the exception of one.

That individual was a patrolman at the corner. His glimpse of The Shadow was only a fleeting one, but he noticed that no figure reappeared on the street side of the parked cars. The lone officer aimed, intending to spray the space with bullets.

Fortunately, The Shadow did not have to budge. A police car had pulled up at the corner. From it sprang a stocky-built man in plain clothes, who made a leap for the aiming patrolman. The shots, when they barked, went wide. From darkness came the brief tone of a weird laugh, tinged with appreciation.

The man who had intervened in The Shadow's behalf was Inspector Joe Cardona, ace of the Manhattan force. Summoned to the scene where a murder had been reported, Cardona had caught a glimpse of The Shadow's daring flight.

One formula was always positive with Inspector Cardona: he knew from long experience that The Shadow, no matter how the circumstances might appear, never had any connection with crime, except to fight against it.

CARDONA'S rule reaped a prompt reward. There was a reason why The Shadow had chosen the danger of the street. That reason was a slow-moving automobile, swinging up toward the front of the apartment house. Guns were sprouting from the window of that car, and The Shadow had spied them.

The guns began to talk. They were aimed for the outspread police. The first shots sent the officers to cover, and gunners aimed to clip them as they dived. That was when The Shadow supplied his own intervention. His automatic, thrust from between the parked cars, spouted flame toward the traveling marksmen.

Zinging bullets dropped the gunners back into the car. Its driver jabbed the accelerator pedal and sped away in flight. Wheeling out to the center of the street, The Shadow supplied more bullets, intending to halt the departing car. Then shouts from the opposite sidewalk caused him to turn toward new opponents.

The street was suddenly alive with foemen fighters, apparently, who had no connection with those in the car, for they had not supplied a barrage during that first onslaught. These new battlers were lurkers of the sort that Bob Osden had noticed when he arrived at the apartment house; but they were no longer few, they were

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many.

Their shouts told that they had spotted The Shadow. Thugs by profession, they had dropped their passive part and were hoping to down crimeland's greatest foe.

Overzeal brought disaster to the crooks. Yells preceded gunfire; The Shadow was away before the latter came. Piling into sight, the thugs became targets for the police, who by that time had found safe spots from which to shoot.

Joe Cardona led the rush that caught the mobsters flat-footed in the middle of the street. After a wild, frantic spasm of fire, hoodlums fled, some sprawling as the others ran. A few turned around to fire from the shelter of parked cars, but their aim did no damage.

The Shadow, ensconced in a convenient doorway on the far side of the street, had drawn a second automatic. His keen eye ferreted out each would-be sniper; his perfect aim was accompanied by stabs of flame that arrowed toward the ambushed thugs and dropped a pair of them, in turn.

Joining the rest in flight, the last of the crooks dashed around the corner and scrambled into cars that they had parked there. Inspector Cardona pointed his men to the chase, then turned toward the apartment house, to talk to the two officers who had come from there.

Those three who remained upon the scene heard the aftermath of battle, a peal of triumphant laughter, that sounded eerily along the street where the echoes of gunfire had died. The mirth of The Shadow was more than a token of victory over men of crime. It heralded his own vindication.

The officers who were telling Cardona of The Shadow's dash from the third-floor apartment were realizing what the ace inspector already knew: that The Shadow's presence there had been produced by a desire to thwart crime, not to aid it.

Either Carl Sigmar had been slain before The Shadow's arrival, or the man was a crook who had challenged the fighter in black. The exact case was something that Cardona intended to determine, with the knowledge that, in either event, The Shadow stood justified.

FOR the moment Cardona, like the officers beside him, was gawking at the spot from which The Shadow's mockery seemed to come. All that they saw was the blackness of an alleyway across the street. There was not a stir amid that darkness, yet the trailing effect of the strange laugh told that The Shadow had taken that route to leave the battleground.

It never occurred to Joe Cardona that The Shadow had arranged the safe departure for another person, besides himself. The only one who knew that fact was the man in question, Bob Osden, and he was duly grateful.

In the street behind the apartment house, Bob had heard the sounds of the gunfray and its sudden finish. He knew that his own path was clear.

The stairs that Bob had used from the low roof had brought him out the side door of a two-story garage. From a passage that led to the front street, he could hear stumbly footsteps that slackened, then ended. One of the wounded crooks had tried to come through that route, but had faltered on the way.

Reason enough, however, for Bob to hurry away before pursuing police reached the rear street. Turning toward the corner that The Shadow had mentioned, Bob set out at a jogging pace that gave speed without too much noise. Nearing the corner, he paused to look for the taxi that he was supposed to signal.

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The sound of sirens told that police cars were in the vicinity. Traffic had stalled, to let the patrol cars pass. Drawing back from sight, Bob looked for the cab, but saw none, which was not surprising, for the corner limited his view along the curb of the avenue.

Glancing anxiously back along the rear street, he decided that his best step would be to stroll boldly along the avenue, relying on The Shadow's assurance that the cab would be at hand.

Before Bob could leave the corner, tangled traffic moved. A taxi twisted free, then made a jolty stop in the middle of the cross street. Other cars began to move; in a moment, that cab would be among them. It wasn't the cab that The Shadow had mentioned, but Bob decided to use his own judgment in this emergency.

With quick strides he reached the stalled cab, saw that the driver was looking the other way, arguing with the scar-faced driver of a sedan. Taking advantage of the situation, Bob opened the cab door and sidled aboard. Yanking the door shut, he settled back in the cushions just as the cab started forward. Traffic was clearing ahead, and Bob indulged in a confident chuckle.

He was picturing how surprised the cabby would be to find out later that he had a passenger. So surprised, probably, that he wouldn't realize just when his fare had entered the cab. But Bob was not counting upon a surprise of his own one that was coming at that very moment.

Something pressed Bob's neck, just below his jaw. From the cold touch and the roundness of the object, Bob knew that it must be a gun muzzle. A voice, well modulated, but firm, told him to face about. Bob let his head turn as if it had been magnetized by the metal of the gun.

Then, the revolver was away from Bob's neck, pointing squarely between his eyes. Beyond the gun, Bob Osden saw other eyes, steady and determined. Around those eyes was the oval of a woman's face.

BOB'S captor was young and very attractive. He saw that as the cab swung a corner, past a brief blaze of lights that came from the front of a motion-picture theater. She was a blonde, though the lightness of her hair was not extreme. Her eyes were gray, rather than blue; Bob noticed that as they caught the glow.

In fact, the girl was a symphony in gray. Her dress was gray, so was the tiny hat she wore. As the swing of the cab rolled Bob toward his corner, he noticed that the girl was wearing gray stockings and shoes with gray suede trim. Then his gaze was lifted again, at the girl's firm command. Below a shapely nose, lips were firmly set above a chin that had a determined thrust.

Gesturing emphatically with the revolver, the girl made a low-voiced statement; one that left Bob Osden rather bewildered for the next few moments.

"You are Carl Sigmar," the girl told Bob. "You have probably guessed who I am. I want you to tell me exactly what has happened to my uncle!"

CHAPTER IV. THE SECOND TRAIL

PREVIOUS to this night, Bob Osden might have considered his present situation a most extraordinary one. Being confronted in a taxicab by a girl with a gun, who insisted that he was someone else, while demanding news about her uncle, a man that Bob had never heard of, was quite an unusual occurrence, even in New York during a World's Fair year.

The circumstance, however, was no more astonishing than the recent adventures that Bob had undergone. His discovery of Sigmar's body, his meeting with The Shadow, the wild flight for safety all that steeled him to

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encounter new emergencies.

Somehow, the humor of the thing struck home to Bob. He chuckled; the girl frowned. The gun moved forward, prodding Bob's ribs. He decided that Carl Sigmar could not have been popular with this young lady, even though she had never met him.

It might be best, Bob thought, to declare his own identity very promptly; but he had become cool enough to try it in convincing style. Something popped to mind and Bob ventured it, just as the blonde repeated:

"You're Carl Sigmar –"

"And you are Gwendolyn Marcy," interrupted Bob. "You live at the Hotel Rosemont, don't you?"

For the first time, the girl looked puzzled.

"Gwendolyn Marcy?" she repeated. "Why, I never heard of her! What makes you think that I am she?"

"The fact that you called me Carl Sigmar," returned Bob. "That's not my name. I'm not Carl, you're not Gwendolyn. So we're just a couple of other people, who shouldn't have met."

He was reaching for the door, hoping to step from the cab as it neared a corner. The girl stopped him with a nudge of the gun and one word:

"Wait!"

There was command in her tone, but Bob noted a trifle of anxiety also. He took a look at the slender forefinger that was steady on the gun trigger, and decided to remain. As Bob settled back, the girl withdrew the gun and asked:

"What is your name?"

"Robert Osden," replied Bob, promptly. "I happened to know Sigmar; owed him money, in fact; and was dropping around to pay him tonight, when all that trouble started."

"What happened to Sigmar?"

"Carl was shot." Bob put the statement calmly. "Before I arrived there. Don't ask me what it was all about. I don't know."

There was a frankness in Bob's tone that convinced the girl. From Bob's casual summary of the Sigmar murder, she assumed that he had arrived in the midst of a gunfray. Her grim expression relaxed, and Bob saw a chance to put a question of his own.

"What's your name," he asked, "and who is this uncle that you mentioned?"

"I'm Janet Barden," replied the blonde. "My uncle is Christopher Barden. Perhaps" her tone was quick, her eyes keen "you've heard of him?"

Bob shook his head, very honestly. The name of Christopher Barden was entirely new to him.

"There's another man" Janet's tone was casual "whom you may have heard about. Edward Weddleman."

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Again, the girl had tried to catch Bob off guard, but he responded with a steady headshake. Janet Barden seemed at loss, almost embarrassed, and Bob found himself displaying a genuine smile.

"Why don't you put away that gun?" he suggested. "We could really enjoy the ride, if you relaxed. I'd like to say that it has been a pleasure to meet you, Miss Barden, but with a revolver in the picture, I can hardly be myself."

FOR the first time, the girl smiled very prettily, Bob thought. She started to slide the revolver into a handbag, when a recollection struck her. She jabbed the gun against Bob's side and demanded:

"Who is this Gwendolyn Marcy? A friend of Sigmar's?"

Bob nodded.

"Carl mentioned her occasionally," he said, deciding that it was wise to avoid mention of the calling card that had been taken by The Shadow. "I'd never met her, otherwise I wouldn't have thought that you were Gwendolyn. She lives at the Hotel Rosemont. That's all I know about her."

"How much would she know about Sigmar?" quizzed Janet. "Do you believe, for instance, that this Marcy woman could be a spy, like Sigmar?"

"A spy?"

Bob tried to register amazement. His manner was not convincing. The cab had come into the glare of many lights, and Janet saw that the lift of Bob's eyebrows, the drop of his chin were both exaggerated.

"Perhaps you do know what happened to my uncle," declared the girl, coldly. "You are going to talk, Mr. Osden, and this time be careful to make every answer truthful! I'll ask the questions –"

The cab had stopped sharply. Thrown half against the door, Bob let his hand rest on the knob. Janet made a warning gesture with the gun, but Bob merely smiled. He had snatched a look from the window.

"Do you see where we are?" he questioned. "This is Times Square. We're tied up in the middle of traffic, and an officer is standing right over there beside that line of cabs. I don't think you would be wise to pull that trigger here, Miss Barden."

Janet's eyes became very large; her lips began to stammer. Bob reached out and touched the gun. He could have plucked it away at that moment. Instead, he merely lowered it toward Janet's lap.

"Keep it out of sight," he suggested. "You can keep it. I wouldn't care to risk carrying a revolver around the city. Good night, Miss Barden" Bob gave the girl's hand a slight pat as she let the revolver drop from her nerveless fingers "and I really hope that we shall meet again provided, of course, that you leave your artillery at home!"

With that, Bob Osden opened the door and stepped from the cab. Closing the door, he made a bow toward the window, saw Janet biting her lips, partly in anger, partly in chagrin. Traffic moved and the cab was crossing the avenue, with Bob waving another farewell from the curb.

LOSING himself among the throngs on the sidewalk, Bob hurriedly reached the next street and took a cab in the direction opposite Janet's route. Ten minutes later, he was ascending the stairs to Fitz Jarnow's gambling club.

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Fitz was in the office. Solemnly, Bob drew the fifteen hundred dollars from his pocket and laid it on the desk. Fitz gave a blank stare. His face showed other expressions, among them amazement, when Bob related his evening's adventures.

At the finish, Fitz pulled a handkerchief from his pocket and wiped his high forehead.

"Whew!" he exclaimed. "You were lucky!"

"I guess I was," admitted Bob. "If it hadn't been for that chap in the black cloak –"

"That's just what I mean," inserted Fitz. "You know who he is, don't you?"

Bob shook his head.

"He is The Shadow," asserted Fitz, solemnly, "and it's a break for you that he believed your story. He's death on crooks, The Shadow is!"

Fitz reached to a radio and began to tune in.

"Maybe we'll pick up some police calls," he declared. "The cops may be looking for you, Osden."

"But I left no trail. The Shadow took the note. The Barden girl won't talk –"

"You saw Sigmar quite often, didn't you?" inserted Fitz. "Maybe he mentioned your name to somebody; the Marcy dame, for instance. And besides, what guarantee have you got that the Barden kid won't get sore and give you away? Every doll I ever met had the habit of blabbing things she shouldn't."

With the radio tuned in, Fitz reached into the desk drawer and handed back the note that Bob had made out that evening.

"Tear it up," suggested Fitz. "If you need the cash later, I'll let you have it. Right now" Fitz was writing something on a pad "I want you to go to this address and stay there. I'll keep you posted on whatever happens."

Sounds were coming from the radio. Through the crackle of static, the two listeners heard an announcement cutting short a station program. Brief word was given regarding the interruption.

"An explosion reported aboard the Finnish ship Lentura," was the announcement. "Cause unknown. Ship last reported southwest of Cape Sable –"

Fitz cut off the switch.

"An SOS," he grunted. "Even the short-wave boys will be crowding in on that. With the air all messed up, there won't be any chance of getting news about the Sigmar murder. Where's Cape Sable, anyway? Down around Virginia?"

"At the bottom of Nova Scotia," returned Bob. "East of the coast of Maine. That boat was probably coming in along the regular steamship lanes."

Fitz nodded, then dismissed the subject. He came back to the matter of Bob's future policy.

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"Since Sigmar gambled here occasionally," stated Fitz, "I'm apt to be questioned about him. That's why it's best for you to lay low. The place I'm sending you to used to be a hide-out, back in the old racket days.

"I'm out of all that. So I'm squared with The Shadow. He doesn't bother places like this club of mine, because there's nothing crooked about it. Fellows come here, gamble among themselves, and pay the house so much for the privilege."

Bob nodded. He knew the way the place operated.

"We've got a charter," added Fitz. "The law decides whether or not we can do business, and right now we're legal. If we weren't, I'd close up. I want to stay in right with the law and with The Shadow."

From Fitz's tone, it was evident that criminals sometimes regarded The Shadow as a more pressing menace than the law. He seemed to relish the fact that for once he could take sides with the superfighter whose task was to abolish crime.

"This spy ring may be dangerous," warned Fitz. "That's why you'll help yourself by laying low, Osden, and maybe you'll help me. Meanwhile, if I get a line on anything, I'll let you know. Perhaps if we land information on this spy stuff and slip it to the Feds, they will listen to your whole story. Anyway, don't worry. The Shadow is for you."

THEY shook hands, while Bob gratefully thanked Fitz for his advice and aid. Shortly afterward, Bob Osden was on his way to the quarters that Fitz Jarnow had so obligingly provided for him.

Ten minutes had followed Bob's departure, when a cab pulled up in front of the ground-floor cafe. From that cab came a gentleman in evening clothes, who went upstairs and was admitted to the gaming rooms. Fitz Jarnow saw him from the office and approached to shake hands.

"Good evening, Mr. Cranston," said Fitz, warmly. "I haven't seen you for a long while. There's a place over at the corner table –"

Cranston was looking toward the corner. His face, hawkish and masklike, was something of an enigma to Fitz Jarnow. Finally, Cranston turned about, a slight smile on his thin lips.

"Sorry," he said, "but a dollar limit is hardly worth my while. I shall drop in again, Jarnow, when they are playing for larger stakes."

Cranston's eyes took a searching glance through the open door of Fitz's office. Again they shook hands; then the visitor was gone. Fitz Jarnow wasn't at all surprised that Cranston had ignored a game with a mere dollar limit. Lamont Cranston was reputed to be many times a millionaire.

What really would have surprised Fitz was the soft laugh that came from Cranston's lips as the hawk-faced visitor returned to his cab. That tone, though subdued in its whisper, was a virtual echo of the mockery that gunmen had heard tonight during their brisk battle with the police.

The personage who called himself Lamont Cranston was actually The Shadow. He had come to the gambling club in the taxi that Bob Osden should have taken, to learn if the young man had returned to talk to Fitz Jarnow.

Evidence told that Bob had returned, for on Fitz's desk the Shadow had spied a partly spread stack of bills that looked very much like the fifteen hundred dollars that Bob had shown him. The Shadow, knowing Fitz

Jarnow, could also reconstruct the sort of advice that the gambler had given Bob.

Though The Shadow had lost Bob's second trail, he foresaw that he could find it again when occasion required. Meanwhile, upon this eventful evening The Shadow was planning other moves.

CHAPTER V. BLONDE MEETS BLONDE

DURING the events surrounding the murder of Carl Sigmar, one person had figured in the case without being present. That person was Gwendolyn Marcy, who lived at the Hotel Rosemont.

Gwendolyn occupied a small two-room suite on the twelfth floor. The telephone was in the living room, and she had been making calls at fifteen-minute intervals, all to Carl Sigmar's number. It had been her call that The Shadow and Bob Osden had heard, just before the police arrived.

A quarter hour after that, Gwendolyn had tried again to get Carl. That time, a gruff voice had answered. Suspecting that something had occurred, Gwendolyn had promptly hung up without saying hello. Since that time, she had made no more calls to Sigmar's number.

At present, Gwendolyn was lounging in the little living room. She was attired in a green kimono, matched by slippers of the same color. For the tenth time she was reading a letter, which she finally folded and replaced in a pocket of her kimono.

Under the light of the living-room lamp, Gwendolyn's features showed very clearly. Her face was attractive; in fact, it could have been termed beautiful, by a person who appreciated waxworks.

Gwendolyn Marcy had a baby-doll expression that was increased by the absolute blueness of her eyes. She had a habit of opening those eyes slowly, just as a mechanical doll would, and her lips had a cute, pursed expression, as if they were ready to say "mamma."

Her hair was a natural blond, but it was a few shades lighter than it originally had been, thanks to frequent peroxide treatments. Gwendolyn was very proud of her hair, as its fluffy condition indicated.

After reading the letter, she lighted a cigarette. While smoking, she watched the telephone and her patience was rewarded when the bell began to ring. Rising from her chair, Gwendolyn strolled to the telephone, answered it in languid fashion.

"Hello, Carl –" Gwendolyn's low, drawled greeting ended and her eyes opened wide. "Oh, I'm sorry! It's you, Mr. Zelta... No, I hadn't expected to hear from you until tomorrow. Your letter said –"

Gwendolyn broke off suddenly, as a smooth voice interrupted across the wire. While she listened, the girl drew her kimono collar higher about her neck. She had left the bedroom window open and the draft was bothering her. But she didn't want to leave the telephone at that important moment.

When Zelta had finished his statement, Gwendolyn let her lips form a cold smile. Her drawl had something of a sneer, as she remarked:

"So Carl is dead. I should have guessed that something had happened to him... No, I didn't hear from him. I had expected to, tonight... Yes, I think we can make arrangements... At dinner? Certainly, Mr. Zelta..."

Gwendolyn's smile had changed to one of anticipation. She looked through to the bedroom, where a closet door stood open, saw an array of evening dresses that hung with her other clothes.

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"In just one hour," said Gwendolyn, nodding at the telephone. "In the Gold Room at the Hotel Belwood... You will recognize me quite easily, Mr. Zelta. My hair is blond. I shall be wearing a blue velvet evening dress with a pearl shoulder buckle. And a sapphire ring" Gwendolyn was glancing at her hand "with tiny pearls set about it."

FINISHING the telephone call, Gwendolyn tripped lightly into the bedroom, only to stop a few feet beyond the door with an alarmed gasp. She was faced by a very determined visitor, who greeted her with a leveled revolver.

The arrival was Janet Barden, and Gwendolyn suddenly realized how the other blonde had entered. The window opened onto a wide ledge that had originally been intended as a promenade, but which had never been completed.

Being unused, the ledge had passed almost unnoticed by guests at the hotel. Janet Barden, however, had seen its possibilities as a means of making a surprise visit to Gwendolyn's suite.

That Janet had overheard most of Gwendolyn's phone call, was evident when she commanded:

"Give me the letter that you mentioned."

Gwendolyn hesitated, then saw that Janet had spied the edge of the letter poking from the kimono pocket. Angrily, Gwendolyn snatched out the letter and thrust it into Janet's hands.

Stepping back, Janet unfolded the letter and read it, keeping a watchful gaze over the edge of the paper. Not once did she let the gun muzzle drift away from Gwendolyn.

Couched in careful terms, the letter was obviously an offer of a large sum for certain information that Gwendolyn Marcy might be able to supply. Janet noted the flourished signature at the bottom, and asked pointedly:

"Who is Fernand Zelta? Another spy like Carl Sigmar?"

Gwendolyn's lips went tight. Her overblue eyes flashed rebelliously as they met Janet's gray. It was blonde against blonde, and the girl in the green kimono tried her utmost to defy her gray-clad questioner. Gwendolyn's stubbornness, however, could not match Janet's determination. Besides, Janet had a gun, and gave it one of the casual thrusts that had worried Bob Osden.

A moment later, Gwendolyn's nerve broke. She began to talk, trying to soften her defeat by speaking in a sullen tone.

"Zelta is big-time," she declared. "Carl was just small-fry, compared to him. When I got a bid from Zelta, it interested me. Why not? It's grab what you can in this game."

"Very probably," agreed Janet. Then: "Just what were you going to tell Zelta tonight?"

For a moment, Gwendolyn looked blank. When the gun moved closer toward her, she became panicky. She was in a dilemma, for she could tell nothing but the truth and chances were that Janet would not believe it.

"I had nothing to tell him," she said, anxiously. "Honestly nothing! I was to see Carl... tonight" Gwendolyn's alto voice became a stammer "and learn whatever he knew... about whatever... well, just whatever he knew –"

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Gwendolyn was telling the truth, and Janet knew it. But the girl in gray let her face show an expression of contemptuous doubt. Her hand, too, was deft as it raised the gun. Gwendolyn's stammer became a pant:

"Carl had papers... he was going to give them to me... what they were, I don't know. I couldn't tell Zelta... that I had nothing. I wanted to meet him... to make a deal —"

AMID Gwendolyn's plaintive outbursts, Janet began to have ideas. She saw a plan that might work, particularly with Gwendolyn in this frantic mood.

Stepping forward, Janet took the other girl by the shoulder and pushed her, unresisting, to the center of the bedroom. Then, stepping to the doorway, Janet ordered.

"Stay right where you are! Not a move!"

Trembling, Gwendolyn nodded. Janet side-stepped through the living room, opened the hallway door and announced in a whisper loud enough for Gwendolyn to hear:

"All right, Frank. Close the door and sit down in the big chair."

The door was swinging shut of its own accord, which made it all the better. Janet was back, looking into the bedroom, when the slam came. She could tell that Gwendolyn believed that another invader had entered. That made it all the easier.

Stepping to the closet, Janet brought out the blue velvet evening dress and placed it on a chair near the dressing table. Gwendolyn watched, puzzled; her bafflement increased when Janet returned to the closet, found a pair of silk pajamas and tossed them on the foot of the bed.

"Put those on," ordered Janet. "Then get into bed and stay there! I'm wearing the blue dress tonight. I'm going to meet our friend, Fernand Zelta!"

Gwendolyn's eyes went large, then showed a gleam of wild anger. Her fists were clenched, her willowy body seemed to swell from the fierce breaths she drew. Coolly, Janet calmed that surge of rage with the remark:

"I suppose we'll have to tie you up and gag you. The closet is rather small, but there will be room there for you. After all, you've asked for it."

Stepping half into the living room, Janet began to beckon to the imaginary Frank who Gwendolyn still thought was somewhere out of sight. That was enough for Gwendolyn. She gave a plaintive screech, gasped her willingness to obey any commands.

Hearing Gwendolyn scramble about, Janet made another gesture into the living room and said:

"Never mind, Frank. Stay where you are."

When Janet turned about, Gwendolyn had already flung away slippers and kimono and was hurriedly putting on the pajamas. She clambered into the bed and stared from the propped pillows, wondering if she had squared herself with Janet. It was good policy to let her wonder; so Janet did.

Placing the revolver on the dressing table, Janet kept watching Gwendolyn in the mirror. Gwendolyn's head sank farther into the pillows every time that Janet frowned. Repressing a smile, Janet calmly discarded her plain gray dress and the shoes and stockings that went with it. In front of the mirror, she fluffed her hair until

it rivaled Gwendolyn's.

Then, choosing garments from Gwendolyn's sizable wardrobe, Janet put them on, along with the blue velvet dress. Having plenty of time to spare, she dabbled extensively with her make-up, tested Gwendolyn's perfumes until she found one that suited her.

Janet looked very lovely when she had finished, but Gwendolyn didn't appreciate it. Staring from the pillows, the other blonde could not restrain the glare that told that she would have liked to tear Janet into very tiny bits.

After tightening the pearl shoulder buckle, Janet picked up the revolver, stepped beside the bed, and said:

"The ring."

Gwendolyn raised one hand. Janet drew the sapphire ring from the other girl's finger and slipped it on her own. It fitted very nicely, as had the shoes and stockings that went with Gwendolyn's blue gown. After that, Janet transferred the contents of her own handbag to a blue one that belonged with the borrowed attire.

"If you keep very quiet," she advised Gwendolyn, "Frank will stay right where I've left him, until I call up and tell him to leave. That will be after Mr. Zelta and I have left the Hotel Belwood, to have dinner elsewhere."

Gwendolyn forced a smile that was very much a wince. Janet returned it sweetly, and turned out the light. She went out through the living room, leaving the connecting door half open.

While whispering pretended orders to "Frank," Janet lighted a cigarette and left it burning in an ash tray, so that the smoke carried past Gwendolyn's door. That would help the illusion that someone was on guard in the living room.

LEAVING the suite, Janet Barden glanced at her wrist watch while she waited for an elevator. She gave a satisfied smile, and with good reason. Within fifteen minutes, she would be meeting Fernand Zelta, a man who, in all probability, could supply certain facts that she needed.

Not only could Janet, gowned in blue, pass for Gwendolyn Marcy, but she was satisfied that long after the required quarter hour, the real owner of the borrowed raiment would still be lying in the bed where Janet had left her, a prey to imaginary fears.

Janet Barden felt that she owed some thanks to Robert Osden, who had told her about Gwendolyn Marcy. Bob's information had enabled Janet to pose as the woman spy who had been so closely associated with Carl Sigmar.

What the future would bring, Janet did not exactly know, but she was confident that she could impress Fernand Zelta, who, as a superspy that brought out lesser rivals, might be the very man who could trace Janet's missing uncle, Christopher Barden!

CHAPTER VI. THE MASTER SPY

JANET'S first test came when she reached the Gold Room of the Hotel Belwood. Waiting near the entrance, she felt very much like a garish fly on the end of a fisherman's line, set to catch some large and unwary fish.

Her attire was the bait. Coupled with her blond hair, it identified her as the girl whom Fernand Zelta expected

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to meet. Janet was at present an imitation of Gwendolyn Marcy, but a good one. Fingering the pearl buckle on her shoulder, she let the sapphire ring glitter in the light. It worked like a charm.

A tall man stepped forward, gave a profound bow and said:

"Good evening."

He did not add the name "Miss Marcy," nor did Janet expect it, for she knew that mention of names was avoided among spies when they were in public. But there was a smoothness to the man's tone, a significant glitter in his eyes. Janet Barden recognized instantly that she had met Fernand Zelta.

There was a singularly impassive expression to the man's face. Long, thin, it tapered downward from his temples to a rounded chin that appeared narrow in comparison to his upper head. That effect could have been due to the spread of Zelta's hair, which was fairly short, yet bushy.

Streaked with gray, the hair added to a certain dignity that Zelta's face proclaimed. The man was straight-nosed; his lips formed a firm line. His eyes, sparkling despite his half-closed lids, were both friendly and searching.

A curious medley, thought Janet, yet it fitted with her expectations regarding Fernand Zelta. He seemed a man quite competent of learning much, and keeping the important facts to himself.

Politely, Zelta asked Janet where she would like to dine. The girl had hoped to hear that question, for she wanted to get Zelta away from the Hotel Belwood. Anticipating that prospect, she had mentally chosen a little tea room where she knew they could find a private booth.

Janet suggested the place, giving its address. Zelta bowed again, reclaimed his hat and cane from the check room and escorted Janet to a cab.

Zelta was wearing evening clothes and looked well in them. The only foreign touch to his attire was a plain blue band; a decoration of some kind, that ran diagonally across his stiff-fronted shirt. Yet, when Janet eyed the well-formed profile of Zelta's face, she found herself quite unable to guess his nationality.

That did not greatly surprise her.

From what she had heard of Carl Sigmar, and from what she had seen of Gwendolyn Marcy, Janet knew that international spies had a flair for erasing traces of their nationality.

Fernand Zelta, it seemed, had done that to perfection, which marked him as the perfect spy. The more that Janet studied his never-changing face, the more ready she was to class him as a man who actually had no country.

DURING dinner, Zelta introduced the subject that Janet expected. In a low tone, oddly accented, yet which gave no clue to his real nationality, Zelta inquired:

"What did Carl Sigmar seek?"

Janet was qualified to answer that question better than Gwendolyn could have. What was more, she felt it safe to talk. Certain damage had been done in matters that concerned her uncle. Hoping to counteract that harm, Janet was anxious to enlist any powerful ally, even though she chose one who might prove dangerous later.

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Pretending that she, as Gwendolyn, had learned facts from Sigmar, Janet began an actual story that she knew would interest the singular Mr. Zelta, master of intrigue. As she spoke, Janet remembered Gwendolyn's drawl and imitated it, knowing that Zelta had heard the other girl's voice across the telephone.

"You've heard of Christopher Barden," began Janet. "He's an inventor who was experimenting with special guns, to be mounted on heavy planes."

Zelta gave the slightest of nods, one which did not require him to move his eyes at all.

"Barden's plan was intended as a new means of coast defense," he recalled. "Unfortunately or should I say fortunately?" he chuckled, without showing the slightest trace of a smile "Barden's idea did not work. The planes would have had to maintain fixed positions, which was impossible."

Janet gave a nod of her own. She knew the flaws in her uncle's calculations. Then:

"Barden has begun new experiments," she said. "He is using a base on the Maine coast, very near the Canadian border."

Zelta showed interest with his eyes. "Do you know the exact location?"

Janet shook her head. This time, she was trying to mislead Zelta. She actually knew where her uncle's experimental station was situated, but did not care to reveal its whereabouts. That might be necessary later; for the present, it was better to reserve the facts. Besides, Janet had an alibi.

"Carl didn't tell me the location," she said, continuing her part of Gwendolyn. "But he knew it. What is more, I am sure that he had a confederate working there."

"The man's name?"

"Edward Weddleman. He is a technician employed by Christopher Barden. I believe" Janet leaned forward, to add the statement "that Weddleman is the person responsible for Barden's disappearance!"

There was a sudden glint from Zelta's eyes. The sign pleased Janet. She was impressing the master spy by the simple expedient of telling him the truth. Then Zelta's eyelids showed the trace of a flicker, as if he doubted the news. His question came:

"What proof do you have that Barden has disappeared?"

Janet had the best of proof. Opening the blue velvet handbag, she brought out three letters addressed to herself. All were postmarked with a name of a town in Maine; one was from Christopher Barden, the other two from Edward Weddleman. Zelta read them.

"I don't know how Carl acquired those letters," said Janet, still remembering that she was supposed to be Gwendolyn. "Perhaps he stole them from the Barden girl. But it is quite plain that, lately, she has been writing to her uncle and not receiving replies.

"Weddleman has been answering her instead. Notice how he repeats that her uncle is very busy, and asked him to write the letters instead. But Carl told me that the girl is Barden's only living relative. It seems odd, doesn't it, that he isn't writing to her himself?"

Zelta agreed that it was odd. He returned the letters to Janet. Then, in matter-of-fact tone, he questioned:

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"What did Sigmar learn about Barden's new work?"

Janet couldn't answer for Sigmar, but she was able to tell what little she herself knew, attributing it, of course, to the dead spy.

"Only that it relates to coast defense," she declared. "But if Carl acquired any of Barden's plans, I don't know what he did with them."

ZELTA looked disappointed, to a degree that made Janet feel uneasy. She was sure that he wanted to buy her uncle's plans; that if he couldn't get them from Gwendolyn Marcy, he would try some other measures of his own. To keep Zelta interested, Janet played a trump card.

"Carl gave me this" she was drawing a folded slip of paper from the purse "and said that it might be important. He said, too, that it had something to do with Barden's present experiments; a great deal, in fact."

She unfolded the paper, to show Zelta a diagram that consisted of straight lines spreading at equal angles. The ends of the lines were connected, and those farthest apart continued, to form the major portion of a large circle.

"It looks like a balloon," said Janet, after a moment. "It may be that" she caught herself as she was about to say "my uncle," and changed the next words "that Christopher Barden has some scheme of using balloons in connection with coast defense."

Zelta stared. His gaze seemed to pass beyond Janet, through the wall to distant scenes, as though he were picturing the far-away base where Christopher Barden had begun his new experiments. Suddenly, his eyes were upon Janet again.

"All this interests me, Miss Marcy," said Zelta, smoothly. "Suppose that you keep this diagram" he returned her the paper "along with those letters. I notice that you have an address book in your bag. Take down this telephone number. It will be the one where you can reach me."

The address book was Gwendolyn's. There was a little pencil wedged between its pages. Opening at that place, Janet wrote the number that Zelta gave her on the blank page at the left. She was conscious that there was already writing on the other page. As her eyes sidled toward it, she noted the name of Carl Sigmar, with an address beneath it.

That address, however, was not the one where Sigmar's apartment was located!

It struck Janet instantly that Sigmar, like any clever spy, would have another place where he could go. Perhaps real evidence could be found at this other address: stolen papers, or even some clue to her uncle's whereabouts!

Closing the book, Janet looked up, hoping that Zelta had not seen the writing and been able to read it upside down. She was relieved when she observed that the straight-faced master spy was lighting a cigarette and indulging in another of his distant stares.

Janet waited. She wondered if Zelta would question her further regarding the diagram. It did pertain to her uncle's invention. Often absent-minded, he had inclosed it in the last letter he had sent her, mistaking it for a tax receipt that he had intended to mail her.

In broaching the theory that the diagram represented a balloon, Janet had voiced her actual opinion. Her uncle

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had always seen an advantage in balloons and dirigibles over airplanes, and might very logically have chosen to experiment with lighter-than-air craft.

Janet's act of showing the diagram to Zelta and discussing it, could hardly be important enough to injure in any way her uncle's plans as the diagram told very little. She was sure, though, that by that same act she had impressed Zelta sufficiently to insure a future meeting between herself and the master spy.

It was impossible, however, to get an inkling of Zelta's deeper thoughts. His face was inscrutable; whether or not he would suggest a search for Christopher Barden, was something that Janet would have to wait to learn.

Perhaps he cared nothing about the fate of the missing inventor; for all that Janet knew, Zelta might be concentrated entirely upon some scheme of tracing any important documents that Carl Sigmar had gotten through the treacherous Edward Weddleman.

Then, suddenly but smoothly, Zelta put a question: "Tell me, Miss Marcy, who do you think killed Sigmar?"

FOR a moment, Janet felt blank. She was herself, rather than Gwendolyn, when she stammered the reply:

"Why... why, I really have no idea!"

For the first time, a flickering smile appeared upon Zelta's lips. A moment later, those same lips were straight and inscrutable. He suggested that since dinner had ended, the time had come for their departure. Janet could do nothing but agree.

A radio was operating from the front of the tea room. As they went out, Janet caught snatches of a news report regarding a mysterious explosion aboard the steamship *Lentura*, with the added flash that the stricken ship had floundered. The crew, the announcer said, were being picked up in the small boats that they had used to leave the vessel.

"The *Lentura*," remarked Zelta, as he escorted Janet to a cab, "was bound to New York from Finland. Did you ever hear of the ship, Miss Marcy?"

"No."

"Might it be possible" Zelta's tone was persistent "that Carl Sigmar could have known that the *Lentura* disaster was to occur?"

Again, Janet was a bit bewildered.

"I really wouldn't know," she said, at last. "Carl wasn't working on anything of the sort. At least, he never mentioned it."

Zelta bowed Janet into the cab. The girl told the driver to take her to Times square, where she knew that she could lose herself in the crowd, as Bob Osden had done. After that, she would take another cab, to a certain destination that she had come to regard as very important.

As she rode, Janet kept thinking over Zelta's final questions: one, concerning Sigmar's murderer; the other, the matter of the Finnish ship *Lentura*.

A gasp reached Janet's lips, as a sudden thought struck home. There could be a reason yes, a very important reason for the two questions that Zelta had asked. It might be that he had been testing her, to learn if she had

guessed a double secret.

Fernand Zelta, himself, could have murdered Carl Sigmar! Zelta, moreover, could be the man responsible for the explosion aboard the *Lentura*! As Janet analyzed it, the master spy had sounded her to learn if she presumably Gwendolyn Marcy had guessed the source of twofold crime!

With that conclusion, Janet Barden decided that if anyone already knew what had become of her uncle Christopher Barden, Fernand Zelta would be the man!

CHAPTER VII. THE BROKEN SNARE

WHILE Janet Barden, dazed by her own conclusions, was still riding toward Times Square, another blonde was speculating on plans of her own. The girl in question was Gwendolyn Marcy, still tucked in bed in her apartment at the Hotel Rosemont.

For more than an hour, Gwendolyn had fumed silently, her only solace being the hope of sometime settling scores with Janet. At moments, she pictured the other blonde dining with Fernand Zelta, and the thought maddened her. Time and again, she had wanted to leap from the bed and dash for the telephone; but always the thought of a guard in the other room deterred her.

Staring at the ceiling, Gwendolyn drew in her breath with a sharp hiss. From the open window, she could hear the doorman's whistle, summoning taxis to take gay parties to theaters and night clubs, while she, wide awake and anxious to be going places, was sentenced to stay ignominiously in bed.

Gwendolyn was afraid to turn on the night lamp, so that she could read a book; or even to light a cigarette. In fact, for the last hour she had scarcely dared to stir. She was getting hungry, which made her think more and more of the dinner she had missed, until, at present, her ordeal had become unbearable.

Boldly, she sat up in bed and stared through the half-opened door to the lighted living room. She listened, heard no sounds from the imaginary watcher that Janet had pretended to post there.

Pushing the covers slowly downward, Gwendolyn sidled from the bed and began to creep toward the door, hoping that she would find "Frank" asleep in his chair.

She didn't waste time looking for her slippers, which was an error, for halfway to the door Gwendolyn stubbed her toe against the foot of a large chair. Losing her balance as she stifled a pained cry, Gwendolyn landed full length, just short of the door.

Coming to her feet, the girl scrambled back into bed and lay there, hoping that the guard would come no farther than the door. Hearing no sounds, Gwendolyn pushed the covers down from her head and stared quizzically at the door. Sudden suspicion seizing her, she scrambled out again and entered the living room.

When she saw that the place was empty, Gwendolyn clenched her fists in rage. Furiously, she began overturning chairs and batting ash stands about the room, until the scene was strewn with objects that had received the spite she felt toward Janet. Realization that she had been tricked by Janet's bedtime story of a bogy man, was the one spark that Gwendolyn needed to explode.

The only thing left to throw was the telephone, but as Gwendolyn snatched it up, she had a better idea. Curbing her anger, she called a number, held a rapid conversation with a man at the other end. The conversation completed, Gwendolyn began to pack, using a system that resembled her room-wrecking process.

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Opening two small trunks and three large suitcases, Gwendolyn flung her belongings into them, hit or miss, pausing only when she came to garments that she intended to wear. Those, she tossed on the bed.

When she had completed that scrambled packing, she looked about the room to see what she had missed. Finding nothing else, she discarded her pajamas, flung them into the suitcase and hurriedly began to dress.

TEN minutes later, Gwendolyn Marcy was checking out of the Hotel Rosemont, with porters carrying her luggage to a taxi. The dark dress that she wore was rumpled, her stockings didn't quite match and her blond hair was tousled, instead of fluffy.

But Gwendolyn did not regard this as a time to be fastidious. She had a task to accomplish and was eager to get started.

Just before the cab rolled away, a straight-faced man in evening clothes walked into the hotel lobby. He stopped at the desk and inquired for Miss Gwendolyn Marcy. He was told that she had just left; that her cab might still be outside.

The man did not give his name when the clerk asked for it. Fernand Zelta seldom gave his name to anyone.

Instead, he stepped toward the street, caught a glimpse of Gwendolyn as she flung a two-dollar bill at the doorman, angrily telling him that she hoped it would bring him bad luck. Before Zelta could reach the cab it was away, carrying its passenger to parts unknown.

However, Fernand Zelta smiled. He had satisfied himself upon one definite point: that he had dined with the wrong Miss Marcy. He beckoned to the doorman; pocketing the two-dollar bill, the fellow called another cab. Zelta gave the address of a hotel and rode away.

MEANWHILE, Janet Burden was riding in the fourth cab that she had taken since leaving Times Square. She was not only anxious to make sure that she remained untrailed; she was debating upon the course that lay ahead. Janet was still wondering whether Zelta had seen the address previously written by Gwendolyn in the little book.

Janet's determination was returning. She spoke to the driver, giving him a new destination. Alighting in front of a row of old-fashioned houses, she waited until the cab had left the obscure street. Then, bravely, Janet approached one of the houses.

It was a place made over into apartments, probably very cheap ones. The front door was wide open, and Janet noted that there was no name with No. 24, which was the apartment she intended to visit.

Going up a flight of gloomy stairs, she found Apartment 24 at the back of the second-story hall. She tried the door; to her surprise, it was unlocked.

Gripping the gun that she carried, Janet stole into the first of two small rooms. She saw an open doorway ahead; past it, slight streaks of dull light that came from the edges of frayed window shades. Groping through the inner room, Janet found a table lamp and turned it on.

The place was furnished, but that was all. No signs of recent occupancy, nor was anything disturbed. Probably Carl Sigmar had simply kept this cheap apartment in reserve, should he be hurriedly forced to flee from his usual lodgings.

Janet was reaching to turn off the lamp, when she heard a sound from the outer room. It seemed to come from

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the first door that she had entered, the one leading in from the hall. Wheeling about, Janet started for the connecting door. A light came on in the other room.

Peering through, Janet saw Gwendolyn, recognized her despite her unkempt appearance. Pointing the gun, Janet told the other girl to stand right where she was and to lift her hands. Gwendolyn obliged, smiling.

"So you landed here first," spoke Gwendolyn. "I thought perhaps you would. I suppose you'll send me to bed again, to catch up on some of the sleep I've missed. But it won't work this time, sweetie-pie!"

Gwendolyn was coolly fluffing her hair with her raised hands, looking past Janet as she spoke. Before Janet could realize the reason for the other girl's confidence, there was a rush behind her. Hands caught her arms, plucked the revolver from her grasp. Other hands clapped across her mouth.

Three men had been lurking in that inner room, in the corners away from the light. Janet had not spied them during her short inspection. She could see their faces as they held her helpless. They were sleek-looking chaps, which made her realize that they weren't ordinary crooks.

One of the men had a bandaged wrist. The outer door opened to admit another of the crew, who closed the door behind him. He was carrying one arm in a sling. Gwendolyn calmly introduced her pals.

"Some of Carl's friends," she told Janet. "They had a little shooting match with somebody outside his other apartment. But they got away very nicely in their car. That's where they're taking you."

JANET tried to wrench her face free. If she could only gasp a few words enough to tell these small-fry members of the spy racket that Gwendolyn had intended to sell out their leader, Carl Sigmar!

The attempt didn't work. One of the men clamped a wide strip of adhesive tape across her lips, while the others bound her wrists behind her and strapped her ankles.

Gwendolyn, smiling disdainfully, was at the door. She opened it a few inches, whispered to an outer guard:

"All clear?"

Catching an affirmative response, Gwendolyn beckoned to the others. As they brought Janet forward, Gwendolyn spoke, softly but tartly:

"Easy with her! She's wearing my best dress. My shoes and stockings, too, so don't let her do any kicking."

Reaching behind Janet's back, Gwendolyn took the sapphire ring from the helpless girl's finger, then hissed in her ear:

"It's lucky for you that you kept those clothes. But you won't have that dress much longer. We won't go easy with you afterward!"

Janet tried to fling her head at Gwendolyn's face. Two of the captors pushed her through the doorway, let her topple in the narrow space, to be caught by the man outside. A strong arm gripped Janet as she fell, gave her a side twirl and sent her rolling toward a rear stairway, where she slid half across the top step.

With all the previous urge for silence, the action amazed Janet. As she spun to a stop, she was too dazed to realize why this rough treatment had come so soon, despite Gwendolyn's order to the contrary. It must have struck others the same way, for there were suppressed exclamations from the apartment.

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Then, out of a blur, Janet saw an amazing scene that she was to understand later, from her scattered observations. On the floor just beyond the door lay the limp figure of a man, who had either been choked or slugged by an efficient foe.

That man was the guard who had been outside the door. It was his conqueror who had received Janet when the others thrust her through the doorway. He was still in sight, that person who had so promptly rolled the bound girl from harm's way, but he would not have been visible, except for the light that issued from the apartment.

He was cloaked entirely in black, that being, except for his head, on which was a dark slouch hat. The headpiece was quite as effective as the cloak, for both hid his face, but neither concealed his hands.

Incased in thin black gloves, those fists were thrusting toward the open doorway and from each projected a huge automatic, guns that the strange invader had whipped suddenly from hidden holsters.

Unseen lips produced a peal of sudden mirth a strange, shuddering mockery, like a whisper that had come to life. The tone, sinister in its threat, was a challenge to foemen who had been driven off to cover by this same fighter upon this very evening.

Veneered crooks were startled as they recognized their adversary; but to both Janet Barden and Gwendolyn Marcy, sight of this materialized battler was something that brought total amazement.

The rival blondes were gaining their first impression of the formidable warrior who was known as The Shadow!

CHAPTER VIII. NEW LINKS AND OLD

CORNERED rats could fight and the crooks who faced The Shadow were rats in human form. They were men who lived by their wits, craftily covering their actual characters by glossy methods in everyday affairs.

Adventurers who had come from many climes, each was dangerous in his own right. As a pack, The Shadow had previously defeated them in a brief skirmish, chiefly because they had sense enough to leave a scene where they could suffer more harm than they could give.

At present, the situation was reversed. They were trapped, and their only course was to blast The Shadow from their path. They didn't resort to a blind surge, such as ordinary mobbies would have used. All the strategy that they had learned as spies came into action. Each used a measure of his own.

They were four. One wheeled for the inner room, hoping to use it as a vantage spot from which to snipe The Shadow. Another grabbed a chair back, thrust the legs of it toward The Shadow and pulled a gun with his other hand.

A third, the man with the bandaged wrist, made a grab for the door that opened from the hall. That door pointed into the room; the fellow whisked between door and the wall, to be out of The Shadow's sight.

The fourth man, whose arm was in a sling, took to a closet at the side of the room, while Gwendolyn, last member of the trapped group, was scrambling behind a large armchair in the corner.

From cover, had they made it, those shrewd tools of Sigmar could have finished The Shadow's career with a deluge of bullets. But the black-cloaked fighter did not allow them the few seconds that they needed.

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Left-handed, The Shadow fired a shot that clipped the most dangerous of the four: the man who was heading for the inner room. The crook reached the spot that he desired, but arrived there with a sprawl that kited his gun across the floor ahead of him. One foe was out of combat.

The Shadow's right-hand gun was jabbing toward the spy who was trying lion tamer's tactics with the chair. The fellow did exactly what would be expected. He shoved the chair forward, hoping to ruin The Shadow's aim and then get in a shot of his own. But the crafty spy omitted one important detail.

He was holding the chair on an even level. Had he kept the legs at a diagonal, it might have balked The Shadow. As things stood, there was a vertical space between the legs that made a wide-open goal. With a sideward lunge, The Shadow drove his body straight between the chair legs.

The force of that quick counterstroke thrust the top of the chair back squarely against the foeman's chest. The guy was jarred backward, his gun hand flinging toward the ceiling as he fired.

But The Shadow hadn't stopped. With increasing power, he drove the spy clear back to the wall, where the man's head cracked the plaster when it struck.

No need for The Shadow to slash with his gun, or waste a bullet. Instead, as his foe went limp, The Shadow dropped one gun, to grab the chair instead.

At that moment, a loud slam sounded in back of him; The Shadow knew exactly what it meant. The crook who was behind the room door had given the barrier a terrific swing, hoping that it would thwack The Shadow.

The attempt had been made too late. Wheeling full about, The Shadow did not waste time in aiming for an enemy who might have a chance to beat him to the shot. Instead, The Shadow simply let the chair fly from the powerful fist at the end of his long, sweeping arm.

THE SHADOW'S guess was right. The crook had started to aim with his revolver. But the fellow instinctively ducked the flying chair. His shots were wide, and too late; so was his dive.

Splintering from the bullets that it received while in flight, the chair met the marksman's warding arm, drove it backward and struck the fellow's head.

Without bothering about the staggered foe, The Shadow aimed for the closet, to deal with his fourth opponent.

Amid the quick strife, The Shadow had not forgotten the very important fact that he had previously softened this crew in their other meeting. He had purposely dealt with those who were in good physical shape, before coming to the others.

His last enemy, the only one who really had a chance to turn the battle, was the man in the closet, who was handicapped by one arm in a sling.

As The Shadow had calculated, the man's gun hand was the one that was out of commission. He was trying to stab shots with a fist that did not respond to his accustomed skill. After one wild shot that missed The Shadow by half a foot, the fellow no longer had a chance to reach his black-clad target.

The Shadow was weaving across the room, fading in expert style, timing each shift to the give-away motion of looming revolver. Each time the gun sputtered, it was pointing in the wrong direction. Two such shots were

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fired; then The Shadow inserted one of his own from a choice angle that he had reached.

There was a howl from the closet; the crook slumped, a bullet in the shoulder of his one good arm.

From near the door, the spy who had received the chair was rising, grasping for his gun. A flying shaft of blackness, The Shadow reached him, struck down his gun hand and ended the man's brief grapple. The short fray was a breather, in which The Shadow looked for the one remaining person who might still cause trouble: Gwendolyn Marcy.

The blonde had come from her corner, was stopping halfway to the door, hoping to snatch up a gun that one of the crew could no longer use. When she saw The Shadow turn toward her, Gwendolyn screeched and dashed out into the hall, gunless.

Swinging in pursuit, The Shadow saw that she was making for the front stairway, which didn't matter. He simply wanted to keep her from coming across Janet, on the other stairway.

Gwendolyn, though, was still able to make trouble. On the stair she was met by two police officers, coming up to investigate the battle. Turning, Gwendolyn pointed wildly back along the hall, shrieked something about a crazed murderer. The cops started toward the rear; to halt them, The Shadow was forced to fire warning shots from darkness.

His bullets were slanted toward the ceiling, but the officers didn't know it. Someone had opened the door of a side apartment; they made a dive into that refuge, expecting the maddened killer to come past them in pursuit of Gwendolyn. But the imaginary wild man did not show up. The Shadow simply went down the back stairs, as he had originally intended.

Janet was no longer at the top steps. She had purposely worked herself over the edge, to slide down to the bottom, where she would be safer. Near the end of that bumpy course, she had hooked her wrists against the corner of a projecting step. Taking advantage of that projection, she had worked the cords down over her hands.

First pulling the adhesive from her mouth, Janet yanked at her ankle bonds and freed them, to the accompaniment of the staccato shots from the second floor.

Completely released, Janet heard the sudden quiver of a triumphant laugh at the top of the back stairs. The shooting was over; she knew that The Shadow had won. Janet decided to dash out through the back door.

She wasn't quite sure whether she wanted to wait for her mysterious rescuer, but the question was decided for her. Reaching a passage in back of the house, Janet was blocked by a pair of men who rose from the darkness.

She didn't listen to their argument that they were friends. When they grasped her, she tried to shriek and struggle.

They managed to suppress her cries, but at moments she almost broke away. The sleeveless blue gown wasn't easy to grab, particularly because of its smooth velvet. What was more, Janet had come to hate the gown because it belonged to Gwendolyn. She deliberately wrenched to break the shoulder buckle; tugged as hard as she could in a successful effort to rip the belt.

All that took place en route to the rear street. Suddenly exhausted by her own struggles, Janet subsided, gasping for breath, in the rear of a taxi, where her captors placed her. Almost in a daze, she saw the two men

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start away, while the driver clambered into the front seat, leaving the rear door wide.

Then, blackness blotted Janet's vision. It seemed to fill the whole door, and as it faded, the door closed. The cab was in motion. Realizing that she was actually safe, Janet began to repair the ruin of Gwendolyn's favorite evening gown.

A VOICE spoke from beside Janet. It was a whispered tone, definitely like the eerie challenge that she had heard issue from the hidden lips of her cloaked rescuer.

Numbed, she felt the shoulder buckle slip from her fingers, as she turned to meet a pair of glowing eyes all that she could see of her companion's features.

She realized that the blackness at the cab door had been The Shadow, entering; that the men who had put her here must be the cloaked fighter's aids. The cabby, too, was obviously in The Shadow's employ.

From that, Janet calculated that she could have traveled in this cab before, while on her way to find Sigmar's hide-out. The cabby could have reported that to his mysterious chief.

Velvet slid into Janet's hands. It wasn't part of the sagging gown; it was the blue handbag. The Shadow had brought it with him, from a chair where Janet had dropped it when she first entered the hide-out. Then the whispered voice was questioning her, in a manner that increased her confidence in the cloaked rescuer.

Almost automatically, Janet was giving her story, with no reservations. She told of her uncle's disappearance, naming the exact location of his base upon the northeastern coast.

She related her suspicions of Weddleman, mentioning a letter that the man had once attempted to hide, its envelope bearing the name and return address of Carl Sigmar.

She detailed this night's adventures: how she had met Bob Osden and learned of Gwendolyn Marcy. Laughingly, she told how she had borrowed the other blonde's gown and taken over the dinner date herself, after deciding that pajamas were to be the extent of Gwendolyn's own attire and bed the proper limit of her range.

Janet became sober, however, and very tense, when she described her later meeting with Fernand Zelta. She was afraid that she had told him too much, although she was sure, by this time, that she had at least managed to keep Zelta from noting the address of Sigmar's hide-out, as listed in Gwendolyn's book.

As Janet paused, The Shadow spoke:

"You mentioned letters that you showed to Zelta, and a diagram –"

He did not complete the sentence; he was leaving the rest to Janet. The girl opened the velvet bag and brought out the papers in question. The cab was riding through darkened streets; he used a tiny flashlight to study the letters and the sketch.

"These are all?"

"Yes," returned Janet. "I suppose they have taken my uncle somewhere. Whether or not Sigmar's band knows the place, I cannot guess."

The Shadow was silent. He was thinking of how little Sigmar had intrusted to Gwendolyn and his other

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confederates. That was the way with spies. Always in fear of counterespionage, or the meddling of some rival group, they preferred lone-wolf tactics in certain affairs.

Yet Carl Sigmar might have needed more aid than only the traitor, Edward Weddleman, could give, in managing to abduct Christopher Barden and cover the deed afterward. Besides, there was the matter of the missing plans for Barden's coast-defense inventions, which Sigmar had certainly intended to acquire.

Janet was thinking of that very subject.

"I believe that Zelta murdered Carl Sigmar," she said, solemnly, "and took my uncle's plans. I am sure, too, that Zelta had something to do with the steamship disaster tonight. I mean the Lentura –"

HER statement ended with a gasp. The cab had slowed; it was coming to the bright lights of an avenue. Instead of viewing The Shadow, Janet was staring at emptiness, and talking to it, as well.

Wondering if she had lost her senses, she rapped on the front window of the cab. The driver's peaked face appeared. Janet asked:

"Where are you taking me?"

The driver handed her a slip of paper; unfolding it, she read the name of a hotel; beneath it, another name: "Jane Barton."

"That's where you're to stay," informed the driver, "and that's the name you're to use. It's enough like your own to remember. Don't worry; you'll be hearing from the chief again."

Janet nodded. As she did, the writing faded. Inscribed in some special ink, the message had obliterated itself, once unfolded. Like The Shadow, it was gone. But Janet no longer wondered if she had really met The Shadow.

The girl knew that she had found a friend who was much more than a rescuer. The Shadow, she believed, was the one being who could solve the riddle that surrounded the disappearance of her uncle, Christopher Barden.

The Shadow had aided Bob Osdan; Janet had already recognized that fact. Should she meet Bob again, as she hoped she would, Janet could tell him how she, too, had needed The Shadow's help and had received it. Janet and Bob, it seemed, had a common bond that they hadn't recognized during their brief encounter.

Perhaps they would meet again, for Janet was sure that many adventures lay ahead. The climax, when it came, might produce the strangest meeting of all.

Janet was picturing The Shadow versus Fernand Zelta!

CHAPTER IX. THE NEW GOAL

THE murder of Carl Sigmar should have been front-page news, the next day. Instead, it was relegated to the second page, as was the account of a massed battle in an old apartment house. All local items were crowded out of sight due to a matter of international importance: the sinking of the Finnish ship Lentura.

That disaster was attributed to the explosion of dynamite on board the vessel. Odd that dynamite should be coming from Finland to the United States, but official reports stated that this was a special type of blasting powder that had recently been developed in Finland and used there in the construction of water-power dams.

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A supply had been ordered by the American government for test purposes.

Of all men, Inspector Joe Cardona should not have bothered himself about the Lentura disaster. Joe's actual job was to trace the murderer of Carl Sigmar. But it became plain, as Cardona advanced with the investigation, that Sigmar's death linked up with international intrigue. Evidence showed that Sigmar had been a spy; it was possible, therefore, that he could have known what was to happen to the Lentura.

Late in the afternoon, Cardona learned some facts that interested them. He confided his next move to the ear of a listening detective sergeant.

"You've heard of Fitz Jarnow, haven't you, Markham?" queried Cardona; then, as the sergeant looked doubtful, Joe added: "He's the guy that runs a poker room under the charter of the old Grand Union Club, that died of old age a couple of years ago.

"One of that bunch that's in the hospital the guys that The Shadow crippled down at Sigmar's hide-out says that Sigmar used to play poker at Fitz's place. I'm going there and find out what Fitz knows about him."

FITZ was in his office when Cardona arrived. He received the inspector cordially, and nodded earnestly as soon as Cardona mentioned Carl Sigmar.

"He used to come here pretty often," declared Fitz, "but all he did was play poker. All the dealers knew Sigmar, and you're welcome to question them, Joe. But none of them knew that he was in the spy racket. If I'd gotten any line on that angle, I'd have called you before this."

Cardona nodded. Fitz's tone was sincere and carried weight. Anxious to keep his gambling club legitimate, Fitz had frequently cooperated with the police on minor matters.

"Did you ever talk with Sigmar?" questioned Cardona.

"Twice," replied Fitz, "but I hardly even remembered his name. Each time, he came into the office wanting me to cash a check. He looked O.K., so I did."

"His own checks?"

"No. Ones that other players had given him. He was lucky, Sigmar was, or else a good bluffer. Every now and then, some of the other players touched him for a loan."

By that statement, Fitz was covering the case of Bob Osden. He expected another question, and Cardona put it promptly:

"Who were the guys that borrowed from him?"

Fitz shrugged.

"Just fellows he met here," he replied. "The dealers don't remember anyone in particular."

"When did Sigmar first come here?" demanded Cardona. "Who introduced him?"

"I don't know," admitted Fitz. "We've been going on the system that if one customer brings in a new one, it means the guy's all right. Once in a while we make a bum guess, but we don't like to blame it on the old customer, because we might lose him.

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"So we cut the introduction stuff. No signing records, or any of that bunk. When a new customer has been around a few times, we ask him if he's paid his dues. When he says no, we soak him five bucks for a membership card, good for a year.

"Whatever name he signs on the card, we list in the membership book. Take a look here" Fitz thumbed the pages of a big ledger "and you'll see that Carl Sigmar signed his card a month ago. He used his own name that is, if Sigmar happens to be his right moniker. But that's all we know about him."

Cardona decided to question the dealers, so Fitz obligingly turned one office over to him, arranging for the men who ran the poker tables to come in one by one.

Announcing that he was going out to eat, Fitz took his hat and coat. His real purpose was to visit Bob Osden and assure the hiding man that, so far, matters had gone well.

SOMEWHAT later, Inspector Cardona arrived in a hotel suite, where three persons awaited him. One was a Fed named Vic Marquette; another, a gray-haired senator up from Washington. The senator's name was Ross Releston, an active member of a committee that dealt with foreign affairs.

The third man was one whom Cardona knew to be a mutual friend of both Senator Releston and New York's police commissioner, Ralph Weston, who was unable to attend the conference. The man was Lamont Cranston, millionaire globetrotter. Both the senator and the police commissioner had learned to value Cranston's advice.

Neither, however, knew the real reason behind Cranston's value. Like Fitz Jarnow, they had never guessed that Lamont Cranston was actually The Shadow.

Cranston sat back puffing a thin cigar, while Joe Cardona described his visit to Fitz's club. The dealers had been very honest in their testimony, and every statement had supported those made by Fitz.

To The Shadow, of course, certain facts showed through the surface evidence; among them, the obvious one that Fitz was covering Bob Osden's visit to Sigmar's apartment.

That detail suited The Shadow. The farther Bob Osden kept from the law, the better, for the simple reason that he could give no evidence not already known. At present, Bob was safe where he was, and very likely to prove of value to The Shadow later.

"There's a lot I'd like to learn," asserted Cardona. "I'd like to know who tipped us off to Sigmar's murder. I'd like to know why a mob supported Sigmar's crew outside his regular place, but wasn't on deck when there was trouble at his hide-out.

"What's more, there's a dame mixed in it; some blonde, who was with Sigmar's outfit. None of them seems to know who she was, though."

Perhaps The Shadow had answers to all of those questions. Certainly, he could have revealed the name of Gwendolyn Marcy, as well as that of another blonde, Janet Barden, who figured definitely in the case. But there were more important matters to be discussed. Vic Marquette introduced them.

"We're looking for a man named Fernand Zelta," declared the Fed. "Ever hear of him, inspector?"

"No. Who is he?"

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"The mystery—man in the spy racket. He's been standing them on their heads. This guy Zelta buys half of what he wants, and grabs off the other half. It's a sure bet that he was after whatever Sigmar had."

This was real news for Joe Cardona. The police inspector was getting an inside angle on big-time government matters.

"Zelta is an enigma," announced Senator Releston. "Sometimes, he actually sends the facts that he acquired right back to the government departments where they came from."

Cardona gaped; then grunted: "The guy must be nuts!"

"Not a chance," put in Marquette. "He simply sends us stuff that other foreign agents have grabbed, so as to queer it for them. We've always figured that there may be other data, much more important, that Zelta is keeping for himself.

"He's got a stunt, too, of getting one spy to pay another plenty for some real information. Somewhere during the deal, the dope falls right in Zelta's lap, leaving the other birds out. The trouble is, Zelta is getting such a rep that some day he's going to line up all the spies we're after.

"Once they're working for him, he can become the big brain of the entire racket, getting anything he wants, selling it wherever he pleases. It's the future that's worrying us."

Senator Releston inserted a correction.

"Not only the future, but the present," he said. "It looks as if Fernand Zelta has already begun his great campaign. I am speaking in confidence, gentlemen, when I tell you that there was not an ounce of dynamite aboard the *Lentura*.

"Instead, the ship was carrying a much more important cargo, which was removed by members of the crew. The men who took it in charge proved traitors. They and their boat disappeared with a half million dollars in gold!"

THE senator's statement was, in its way, as great a bombshell as the one that had blasted the *Lentura*. He looked from man to man, watching for reactions. It was Lamont Cranston who remarked:

"From what you tell us, senator, I assume that the *Lentura* was wrecked from an outside source, rather than from a blast that occurred on board."

"Your assumption is correct, Mr. Cranston."

"Might I ask," continued Cranston, calmly, "if that explosion was caused by an aerial bomb dropped, let us say, from a balloon, not from an airplane?"

The senator shook his head.

"The cause was much more serious," he declared. "We have managed to keep the matter something of a mystery, although we know the actual truth. If the culprits were only within our jurisdiction, we might be able to apprehend them.

"But they are out of reach. The sinking of the *Lentura* was an act of high-seas piracy. The vessel was attacked, not from the land but from the ocean. From the evidence at hand, Cranston, we believe that the

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Lentura was sunk by a torpedo discharged by an unknown submarine!"

With paper and pencil, Senator Releston drew a rough map showing how the attack had occurred. He marked the position of the Lentura, indicating that the torpedo had struck the port side of the vessel, coming from the open sea. Then he added, solemnly:

"Other gold shipments are due. Some are already on their way. The fact has not been publicized, but the importation of gold into the United States is on the increase. Many vessels are carrying such cargoes secretly.

"Many spies have learned the fact; indeed, it may be said to be common knowledge among them. Within the next twenty-four hours, the Dutch freighter Marmaduke will enter that same danger zone. She is carrying a quarter million in gold. We hope, however, to save her from the fate that overtook the Lentura."

Again using his map, Releston marked dots and little arrows. Trusting implicitly in his listeners, he described the measures that were to be taken.

"A radio dispatch has gone to the Marmaduke, ordering her to put into Halifax," said Releston. "Spies have been reported in Nova Scotia; there are probably others on board the Marmaduke. Any effort to unload the gold would merely cause the pirates to forego an attack.

"It is preferable to draw them from cover. Therefore, the Marmaduke will not unload at Halifax. Instead, she will take on some cargo, supposedly machinery for South America, where the ship is to go later. That freight will be machinery, but of a special sort."

Leaning back, the senator detailed the exact nature of the coming shipment.

"High-powered searchlights," he stated, "antisubmarine guns and depth bombs. A few passengers will go aboard with them. A few passengers will be trained navy men, detailed by the Canadian government.

"There will be no patrol of the coast. Through the co-operation of the Canadian government, and permission cabled from the Dutch ambassador, the Marmaduke will be able to handle matters on her own. We are sending a few observers, to view the results at close range."

From then on, the conference dealt with Fernand Zelta and the prospect of enmeshing the master spy after the pirates were settled. One more mention was made of the freighter Marmaduke, however, when Senator Releston stated that the vessel would soon be due in Halifax and would commence to load before dawn.

That was important news to Lamont Cranston, otherwise The Shadow. When he left the New York hotel, he drove directly to Newark Airport. Soon after that, the night sky of Manhattan showed a swift, low-flying plane thrumming northeastward.

The Shadow's next destination was Halifax, capital city and chief seaport of Nova Scotia.

CHAPTER X. OFF CAPE SABLE

DAY was advanced when the freighter Marmaduke left Halifax, the mid-point in the peninsula of Nova Scotia. Far east and north of New York, Halifax operated on Atlantic time, an hour earlier than the Eastern standard of the New England seacoast.

Plodding at a staid twelve knots, the vessel was still off Nova Scotia when night arrived. She was not due to pass Cape Sable, the tip of an island at the extreme south of Nova Scotia, until about midnight. The journey,

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approximately one hundred and fifty miles, was a long one for the slow-moving Marmaduke.

With evening, uneasiness began to seize the mixed crew that manned the Dutch freighter.

Used chiefly for service in the tropics, the Marmaduke had a personnel made up of many races. The officers were Hollanders, but the seamen were chiefly from Dutch possessions. Among them were natives of Borneo and New Guinea, with others from Sumatra.

There was also a sprinkling of Javanese, tan-skinned specimens of the Malay race, yet differing distinctly from the other natives. Those men from Java, though few in number, had been a constant problem to the Dutch captain.

Under stress, they could be cooler, more reliable than any others that he commanded; but there were times when the slightest of matters – a shift in the weather, a change of rations, a stay in some foreign port could render them sullen and unmanageable.

There had been times when the captain politely clapped the whole lot in irons and let them cool for a day or more. They always accepted it in fatalistic style, showing no resentment. It was their own mood, not conditions imposed upon them, that made the Javanese manageable or otherwise.

At present, to the captain's joy, the Javanese were the most dependable persons on board. Whatever mistrust he held was toward the scattered European members of the crew, who were largely beach combers, or other riffraff, who shipped from various ports. Usually, the captain regarded them as a safety valve against outbursts from the Malaysians.

However, there were "passengers" on board, who were well equipped to take over the entire ship, if trouble arrived. With darkness, those men from Halifax suddenly dropped their passive character. To the surprise of the crew, they began to unlimber the "machinery" that the captain ordered from the hold.

Briskly, the newcomers mounted searchlights and guns, converting the merchant ship into an auxiliary cruiser. The guns were not confined alone to the sort that would make trouble for another craft at sea, such as a pirate submarine. There were also antiaircraft weapons, in case some nosy plane should reconnoiter overhead. Though an air attack was not expected, the Marmaduke was prepared for it.

There were depth bombs, too, but it was doubtful that the freighter would have a chance to use them. She would have to overtake a submarine first, which would not be easy, although the Marmaduke could better her twelve knots, under pressure.

SIGHT of the guns and other equipment caused the first stir among the crew; but that was not the only factor. A mate told the captain that the Malaysians were muttering among themselves, so he went to see about it. From the babble of various tongues, which were finally translated into a Dutch dialect, he learned that there was a "ghost" on board.

Wisely, the captain treated that theory seriously. He picked out the men who seemed most troubled and ordered them to deck duty. Ordinarily, the decks of the Marmaduke were as spooky a place as the hold, for there were many corners where one might unexpectedly walk into anything. Moreover, the natives believed in a batch of superstitions involving weird creatures of the ocean.

A ship's ghost to them was something that would prefer the darkness of the decks to grab some unwary seaman and carry him overboard; then come back for a new victim. Time and again, the captain had heard that story voiced, when a man had been lost at sea. He had seen natives cluster, all trying to keep close to the

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few lighter patches along the freighter's deck.

Tonight, the hard-headed skipper had the very antidote for that trouble. As soon as he had herded the weak-hearted natives to the deck, he ordered the searchlight into action. The Marmaduke promptly lighted up the sky so brilliantly that the masters of fishing schooners rubbed their eyes, thinking that they had drifted from the Grand Banks and were floating past Coney Island.

Lights were all along the deck; great beams were sweeping out to sea. The natives were chattering happily to each other, confident that any ocean ghost would take to the depths of the ship's hold and stay there. That satisfied the captain on one point, but there was another that puzzled him.

None of the worried seamen had been Javanese. In fact, the crew members from Java were curiously aloof from everyone tonight. They were neither broody nor active. They seemed to have declared a holiday, and were loitering as they never had before.

It wasn't good policy to bawl orders at them, for they might shift into one of their peculiar moods. But the captain could not understand why they were no longer industrious. The mates could not figure it out, either, and finally the captain questioned a European member of the crew, speaking in English, which was the fellow's native tongue.

"There's a Jonah on board, sir," said the seaman, in a worried tone. "Don't ask me what the thing is; but those Malays say they've seen it!"

"Dot is all seddled," explained the captain, thickly. "It is dese men from Jaffa dot bodder me. What about dem?"

"They like it," was the seaman's explanation. "I guess they think they're too tough for any Jonah to handle. They think it's great stuff, seeing other people get the jitters."

Pacing along the deck, the captain rubbed his chin and decided that he had heard the correct theory. At any rate, he had settled future trouble. There would be no more rumors of a ghost on board; the searchlights had settled that question.

IT was fortunate, perhaps, that the captain did not go immediately to his own cabin. If he had, he would have regarded rumor as fact. The thing that the crew claimed to have seen was at present occupying the skipper's own quarters!

The "ghost" was The Shadow. He had come on board with the shipment of so-called machinery, as a stowaway. Foreseeing that the boxes of guns, bombs, and searchlights would not be opened until the ship was well under way, The Shadow had packed himself in one of the crates while it stood on the Halifax pier.

Coming from the hold, The Shadow had made the rounds of the ship, looking for future vantage spots. Several times he had been forced to sidle from sight, when he encountered a Malaysian seaman. Those fellows had been sharp-eyed enough to glimpse The Shadow's fading figure.

At present, The Shadow was interested in the captain's navigation chart. It was a large-scale map showing every tiny island off the shores of Maine and Nova Scotia. The coast line, too, was heavily indented, and of particular interest to The Shadow.

The Marmaduke had reached Cape Sable. The map showed a fact not commonly recognized; namely, that Nova Scotia is a block of land lying east of Maine, not north. Thus the present course of the Marmaduke was

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tending toward due west.

To the north lay a great bight, set with indentations that represented the Maine coast. That space was marked with occasional islands, some of them scarcely more than large rocks, miles out to sea. Moving from isle to isle, The Shadow's finger went north and reached a thin, curved bay on the Maine coast.

Unnamed on the map, that gap was actually known as Windward Bay, and on the rocks above it stood an old stone structure called Windward Castle. Built during a period when Maine had enjoyed a brief gold rush, the building had been furnished as a luxurious headquarters by a millionaire who bought up all the surrounding land.

The purchaser had expected to increase his millions tenfold. Instead, he had died with the castle and its fixtures as his only possession. Today Windward Castle, lone and long-forgotten, was the base used by Christopher Barden in his schemes for coast defense.

Janet had told The Shadow those details. From the map, The Shadow noted that Barden's castle and the outlying islands controlled a vast sweep toward the south, covering the Atlantic steamship lane, along which the Marmaduke headed.

But the curious factor was that the freighter did not expect an attack from the north. Trouble, judging from the experience of the *Lentura*, would come from the south, out of the vast Atlantic!

While The Shadow still pondered upon that riddle, a key clicked in the cabin door. Extinguishing the lamp on the captain's table, The Shadow glided to a corner beyond the door just as it opened inward, to admit the skipper in person.

Closing the door, the captain did not lock it. He was feeling the urge for a glass of schnapps, and stepped to the cabinet where, under the head of medicine, he kept the bottle.

While the captain was helping himself to a liberal dose, The Shadow quietly opened the door and edged out into the passage. Silently shutting the portal behind him, he started in the direction of the fo'c's'le. There, he decided, might lie at least a partial answer to the riddle.

This was not The Shadow's first visit to the crew's quarters, but previously he had been handicapped by too much confusion. Though he had noticed something of the stir among the crew, The Shadow was not yet aware of the captain's solution. He observed, however, that the space below decks was almost deserted.

During his present course The Shadow paused once, when footsteps came from a passage. He drew back, in case the man came in his direction, but the fellow turned the other way. The Shadow merely glimpsed the man's face, noticed that he was a Javanese, but had no chance to discern more.

That fact was to prove unfortunate. Upon reaching the fo'c's'le, The Shadow heard the buzz of voices. Two men were seated just inside the door, talking in low tones, so that others, resting in bunks farther forward, could not hear their conversation.

The two, moreover, were white members of the crew and their discourse was in English. Their slang had an American tone, and their faces a thuggish look. Evidently they had shipped on the Marmaduke at the port before it touched at Halifax.

Like certain men who had been on the *Lentura*, these two were obviously scheduled to turn traitors as soon as occasion demanded. Curiously, they did not seem at all worried about the secret preparations that had been

made on the Marmaduke, as guard against a submarine's attack.

They were calling each other by nicknames; one was Lugger, the other Steve. It was Lugger who asked suddenly:

"Say, you'd better go take a look at that Java outfit. Their guy oughta have showed up by this time."

"Maybe he can't make it," snorted Steve. "I slipped him a double round, last time he was here."

"You shoulda waited!"

"Why? We're west of Sable, ain't we?"

"Yeah, but unless things happen soon, we may –"

LUGGER cut off. Slow footsteps were coming from the passage. The Shadow drew back, while Lugger and Steve were shoving their hands toward their gun pockets. Then, into the light came a man of singular bearing.

He was one of the Javanese. Though clad in rough seaman's clothes, he bore himself with the dignity of an Oriental prince. His manner, however, was decidedly unnatural. That was evidenced when Lugger rose to meet him.

Staring steadily ahead, the Javanese seemed to bore his gaze straight through the man who faced him. He did not speak; instead, he simply thrust out his hand like a human automaton. Stiff as a waxwork figure, he waited, while Lugger queried:

"More pills? Sure! Steve, here, will give 'em to you."

The Shadow was shifting from his hiding place, drawing an automatic as he came. Things might have proven bad for Lugger and Steve, if an interruption had not come from a hatchway up above. There was a shout, and a couple of scared Malaysians tumbled down toward the fo'c's'le babbling excited words that only The Shadow understood.

The attack upon the Marmaduke had arrived! Despite the precautions taken against international crime, the freighter was doomed to destruction. These men, knowing it, had dropped down to rouse their comrades.

Not even The Shadow could avert the disaster that was already on its way!

CHAPTER XI. PIRATES LAIR

IN the chaos that swept the fo'c's'le, The Shadow had no choice except to get clear before it reached him. Lugger and Steve were out of reach; they had grabbed the Javanese, slung him into a bunk, and dived for other shelter of their own.

Drowsy Malays, roused by their pal's shouts, were coming out in wild stampede. Some were yanking knives, expecting battle with the ship's officers, and had they spied The Shadow on their way, they would have surged upon him en masse.

But The Shadow was gone, up the steep steps to the deck, where he swung to a darkened corner ahead of the ascending herd. He was in time to see what had caused the alarm, for the menace was still on its way in from the open sea.

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Playing searchlights showed the white wake of a torpedo churning shipward at high speed. Though the searchlights roved far toward the southern horizon, there was no sign of any submarine that could have dispatched that explosive messenger.

Gunners were at their posts, but they lacked an enemy. Seemingly, the Marmaduke had fallen prey to a ghost submarine, a ship as elusive as the famed Flying Dutchman. But there was nothing imaginary about the torpedo. It was real enough, and would prove its power further if it found the hapless freighter.

The Marmaduke was no Flying Dutchman. She couldn't leap into the clouds like that famous ghost of sea tales. The Marmaduke was a squatty plodder, and her efforts to elude the torpedo were pitifully ridiculous. Bells were clanging from the bridge, but the urge for speed produced nothing more than a sidewise quiver from the freighter's hull.

Guns ripped. They were beginning a rapid fire at the only possible target, the wave-cleaving torpedo. To pick off that cigar-shaped streak was impossible. Slashing half beneath the waves, the torpedo was gobbling the last few hundred yards like a whippet after a mechanical rabbit.

There was only one hope that the torpedo would miss its mark. At a distance, that had seemed likely, for the point of the torpedo had shown itself to be aimed at an angle. But the next flash of its nose, only a few hundred yards away, showed it coming dead ahead.

The torpedo had curved, as if some magnetic force had drawn it back to its target!

It was then that a single second became a vast expanse of time. Machine guns seemed to clutter that interval with their rattle, all to no avail. There was an instant when the oncoming torpedo was lost in the white-flecked wash from the freighter's prow. Then, from the streaky foam, the devastating messenger struck.

THE blast seemed to lift the Marmaduke clear of the water. Reeling amidships, the freighter heaved and quivered, threatening to buckle. Flattened, The Shadow could feel the deck bulge upward.

Rolling to port, the Marmaduke held her tilt while the reverberations of the explosion continued. Then, reeling to starboard, the ship gave a thump that was followed by the gurgling surge of water cascading in through the blasted hull.

A mouth had opened in the ship's side, to swallow with an increasing fury. The Marmaduke was trying to drink the whole Atlantic Ocean before it swallowed her. Never recovering from her tilt to starboard, the freighter was listing farther with each succeeding second. Mere minutes more, she would no longer be afloat.

Men were on their feet, stampeding for the boats. The Dutch captain and his officers were shouting at them, firing revolvers to stop the rush. The gunners at the rails rallied to the task. Order was coming out of chaos, with escape assured for all. Then, from near the stern, a small group of men began to return fire.

Lugger was in charge. He and a few others had improvised a barricade to shelter them while they dropped a motorized lifeboat. Steve and a few other traitors were shoving square boxes from a hatchway. They had made a foray, to bring away the gold shipment. Gunfire didn't bother that rapid-moving squad.

They were pushing the gold-laden boxes into the boat, where the swag itself became a bulwark for the men that leaped in behind it. All the while, members of the busy band were inserting a spasmodic fire, to prevent a charge along the deck.

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A half dozen men were holding off ten times their number, thanks to well-laid preparations. The only way to reach them was by a flank attack. Such a measure, when men thought of it, seemed too late, until a rousing cheer went up from loyal fighters along the deck.

In the glare of searchlights a long figure, cloaked in black and with a slouch hat, came diving from the superstructure near the stern, squarely among the laboring traitors. Gloved hands were swinging heavy automatics straight for the heads of the gold-robbing crew. Gunfire ended from beyond the barricade. Six vicious men were finding themselves entirely occupied with a struggle against one The Shadow!

Though seemingly suicidal, The Shadow's attack was sound. He had waited until the moment when the dangling lifeboat was touching the water, now only a few feet below the freighter's rail. The list of the deck had added power to his surge, and he was fighting opponents who had used all but a few of the bullets in their guns.

With flaying strokes and timely shots, The Shadow had only to keep the rogues at bay until an overwhelming number of men arrived to aid him. He could hear a clatter and clang approaching the stern. Armed men by the dozen were hurrying onward, in the V trough formed by the slanted deck and the rail that rose at right angles from it.

The charge was slowed because the men had difficulty in keeping their footing. The moments that they lost should not have mattered, for The Shadow had calculated upon that delay. There was another factor, however, that The Shadow recognized, but could only hope would not enter until the traitors were settled.

Instead, the menace arrived before any of the loyal men had reached the barricade.

With wild, high-pitched shrieks, a dozen men came leaping from within the ship, brandishing knives that looked like short swords. Madly, they hurled themselves upon the fighters who were moving toward the barricade. With that surge, The Shadow was cut off from all aid, for these newcomers were madmen.

They were the Javanese. The traitors had supplied them with opium pills, knowing the peculiar effect that the dope produced upon that type of native.

For centuries, the use of opium had never deviated in its result, so far as inhabitants of Java were concerned. It invariably turned them into "muck runners," insane fanatics, pressed with the sole desire to run at large and slay everyone in sight.

Only one cure existed in Java. That cure was death. The men faced by this surge on board the Marmaduke recognized instantly that they must treat the muck runners as if they were mad dogs. Guns talked, driving home bullets from close range. The fire crippled the Javanese, but did not stop them.

Though knives were dropping from their waving hands, they kept up their shrieks, and literally bowled their challengers back along the deck. Guns did not cease their spurts; instead, the fire increased, as the wild cries of the drug-maddened killers diminished. But the scene itself was blackened from view.

SEA water had reached the freighter's generators. The searchlights were blotted out, along with the ship's own feeble illumination.

Back near the stern, The Shadow was suddenly unable to keep track of the opposition. From the darkness, a slugging gun glanced from his head, driving the slouch hat down over his eyes. The slanted deck seemed to whirl.

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Dazedly, The Shadow flayed back. Slipping, he struck the rail, toppled half across it. Momentarily loose, he took the only route that offered present safety: a dive across the rail. Instead of striking water, he landed against hard planking that seemed to rise up and meet him.

The Shadow's head took another thump. Badly jarred, his guns gone from his grasp, he was wedged in a space that proved triangular in shape. He was between the stacked boxes of gold and the bow of the motorized lifeboat. Lifting his hands, The Shadow groped. An overbalanced box yielded as he clutched it.

Under a weight that had taken two men to lift, The Shadow was crumpled to the bottom of his small refuge. He was stunned by the blow; had the full load continued its drop, it might have crippled the cloaked victim badly. But the box, descending at a diagonal, was stopped before its fall could be completed.

It wedged between the other boxes and the tapering gunwales. The senseless figure of The Shadow lay trapped beneath it.

Flashlights sparkled along the rail. No longer seeing The Shadow, his enemies thought that he had rolled through a hatchway. Except for the boxes of gold, the lifeboat appeared empty when they scrambled aboard it, dragging wounded pals with them. Releasing the davits, they were ready for their flight. Lugger took the helm, while Steve started the motor.

Heading out to sea, the gold-snatching crew saw other flashlights along the tilted side of the Marmaduke. The fight with the Javanese was over; the escaping men could hear disappointed shouts, as crew members reached the stern of the freighter. Then davits were creaking, announcing that the loyal crew was taking the last opportunity to leave the sinking vessel.

Veering the lifeboat, Lugger steered northward. Steve opened the motor; the little craft showed real speed. They were a mile away, those traitors, heading straight for the Maine coast, when they saw the last of the Marmaduke. A blackened thing against the moon-filtered clouds, the squatty freighter upended like a monster in torture and made an angled dive into the ocean's depths.

Little lights bobbed crazily about the spot where the Marmaduke had departed. They represented the lifeboats containing captain, crew and the few passengers. Twisted by the miniature maelstrom that the sinking steamer created, the little boats were threatening to capsize. Traitors chuckled, hoping that the lights would disappear; but they remained.

Surviving the temporary whirlpool, those little boats would row to shore and carry word of all that had passed on board the Marmaduke. Crooks grumbled, as they discussed that sequel; then they resumed their chuckles, which they punctuated with oaths. After all, they had the gold, and were taking it to the place where, in their crime-warped opinion, it belonged.

They were taking something else, a human cargo of which they were unaware: The Shadow. They thought they had seen the last of the fighter in black, but they were wrong. He was traveling with these modern pirates, to their lair.

Though senseless, cooped up with useless guns beside him, The Shadow might again become a menace to these crooks and others of their ilk. He might even carry a threat to the hidden master mind who had schemed great crimes at sea.

Such future deeds, however, were dependent upon how The Shadow fared at present. Should his hiding place be uncovered while he still lay totally helpless, The Shadow's cause would be forever gone.

CHAPTER XII. HANDS IN CRIME

THE next day's news of the Marmaduke disaster dwarfed the sensation that had surrounded the sinking of the Luntura. The New York evening papers appeared in many special editions, each producing new details, while radio flashes were constantly cutting in on regularly scheduled programs.

Until afternoon, all sorts of wild theories were advanced concerning the ultimate purpose of the unknown submarine supposed to be lurking somewhere off the New England coast. A rumor started that the ghost vessel had appeared in Long Island Sound and had opened a bombardment on the World's Fair.

By the time that hoax had been suppressed, people were confusing the submarine story with a fantastic radio program, wherein men from the moon came down to the earth in gigantic capsules. Reports were circulated that moon-made submarines were dropping into the Pacific, as well as the Atlantic and could be expected in the Great Lakes next.

All that folly forced an official bulletin from Washington, telling exactly why two steamers had been sunk. The news that gold had been aboard both vessels, that the precious metal had twice been stolen, gave a sensible aspect to the situation.

It was openly declared that more gold ships were due; that destroyers, cutters, and seaplanes would begin an intensive patrol of the shipping lanes. All craft from fishing smacks to yachts were requested to relay any information of strange vessels sighted at sea.

It was well in the afternoon when Fitz Jarnow folded a late edition of an evening newspaper, tucked it in his pocket and left the gambling club. He took a taxicab to an address in the lower Sixties, near Ninth Avenue, went upstairs and knocked at a door. Bob Osden admitted him.

Fitz spread the newspaper and let Bob read the sensational news. After a hurried perusal, Bob gave a grunt.

"This makes sense at last," he declared. "Carl Sigmar must have had a hand in this business or known too much about it. Who do you think is in back of it, Fitz?"

Fitz thumbed through the pages, found the final paragraph in a news account that had carried over from the front page.

"If my hunch is right," he said, "the next big news will be all about this guy."

Bob read the name of Fernand Zelta. It was mentioned as that of a spy wanted by the government, along with various other spies. But Zelta's name appeared to be the most important.

"Cardona was in again," explained Fitz. "Wanted to know if I'd found out anything about Sigmar's friends. Joe's after a murderer, so he says, but he slipped a few inside hints without knowing it. Joe's working close with the Feds, and they're after somebody on more than one count. It's got to be this Zelta, that's all."

Bob nodded agreement.

"It means a lot to you, Osden," continued Fitz, "if they get him. Your name is in my membership book and if Cardona ever starts going through that list one by one, as he's likely to, he'll begin to think about you when he strikes the letter O.

"If you can't be found, it will be bad. If you do show up, you'll have to answer two big questions: if you knew

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Carl Sigmar; and when you saw him last. It's going to be tough to laugh those off with a poker-faced gent like Joe Cardona."

OBVIOUSLY, Fitz was right. Mere mention of the prospect worried Bob, and he knew that he showed it. So far, Bob had fared well by sticking to the truth with The Shadow and Fitz Jarnow. His hope was that he could use the same policy with the law.

"I've been thinking of something," said Fitz, slowly, "that I ought to tell to Cardona. But I've held off, because the more dope I give him, the more questions he'll ask me. But there's a guy he ought to look up, it he can find him. A fellow named Pete Andro."

The name was new to Bob, and he said so.

"Pete used to be on the shore end of a smuggling racket," explained Fitz. "It began with rumrunning, and he kept at it later. He was always after me to help get rid of the stuff he handled, which was mostly booze. But I didn't like the looks of it."

"Do you think," asked Bob, promptly, "that Andro could be getting the gold shipments ashore?"

"I don't know," returned Fitz. "But Pete hasn't been around for a long time, and nobody seems to know what's become of him."

There was silence, while Fitz stared at the newspaper; then he gave a shrug.

"I guess I'm goofy," he said. "There's been no reports of the gold coming ashore. So Pete couldn't be in on it. The business of meeting ships offshore wasn't his specialty."

"Whose was it?" asked Bob.

"That belonged to Shag Rengle," returned Fitz. "But he's quit. What do you think Shag is doing right now?" Fitz gave a short laugh. "He's running a fishing fleet, whenever he can get a cheap enough crew together. For all I know, Shag may be going out to look for that pirate submarine."

Fitz finished with another chuckle, but Bob became tense. He grabbed Fitz's arm.

"Maybe that could be a blind!" he exclaimed. "If the submarine wants to unload its gold, why wouldn't Shag's fishing boats be the ones to carry it?"

"Where would they take it?"

"To wherever Pete Andro is! Shag would smuggle it, Pete would unload it. They'd be working together, just like you said they did."

Fitz supplied a whistling noise from between his teeth.

"Maybe you've got something!" he decided. "Say, this place is kind of cramped" he was looking around the little room "and fresh air would do you good. You'd be the right guy to look up Shag Rengle."

"What could I tell him?"

"Tell him I sent you. If he phones me, I'll give the O.K. for you. Say that you're on the lam, and want to join

his crew."

The idea appealed to Bob. It offered a chance to clear himself, by bringing home firsthand evidence, if Shag proved crooked. On the contrary, if the expedition turned out to be a legitimate fishing trip, Bob would have an excuse for a long absence from New York, should the police look him up when he returned.

Bob had been on sailing cruises and liked sea life. The open ocean was far more preferable than the stuffiness of this hide-out. Fitz saw the increased eagerness on Bob's face and clapped him on the shoulder. Looking through the window and observing that dusk had gathered, Fitz suggested:

"Better wait until tomorrow night, before you see Shag. I'll be seeing you again before then."

ANOTHER self-made prisoner was studying the same dusk that Bob Osden saw from the window, but at a spot very remote from New York. In a cove beneath overhanging rocks and tree boughs, a lifeboat lay deserted, a pile of boxes at its prow, a few at the stern, to equalize the weight.

A tilted box stirred, moved upward under a powerful heave that would have been a creditable effort for two men of average strength. Straining, a black-cloaked figure rose from a cramped space beneath. Balancing the box with his shoulder, The Shadow flipped two guns on shore, then rolled clear. The box tilted back to place with a heavy thump.

Removing his slouch hat, The Shadow splashed salt water on his forehead. At intervals, during a long nightmarish period, he had struggled with that box. Finally, after a long rest, he had awakened and found strength enough for the successful effort.

Replacing his hat on his head, The Shadow began to reload his automatics. He paused, stared at the sky for a full three minutes. A whispered laugh came from his lips. He had mistaken the dull light for dawn; its gradual decrease told that it was dusk!

More than a few hours had passed since that midnight battle on the Marmaduke. Dawn had come, day had followed, and luck had been with The Shadow. The crooked crew must have been late getting to this cove. Rather than unload the boxes by daylight, they had let them stay in the boat.

At the present moment, The Shadow stood in sole possession of a quarter million dollars in gold, but without a chance of keeping it. The weight of the metal prevented its lone-handed removal, while the boat had been hauled so far on shore that its ribs had buckled, making it unseaworthy, even if it could be shoved back into the cove.

Beneath the deepening dusk, blinks of flashlights appeared among the trees. Men were coming along a path, to gather in the swag. Though it would have been easy to ambush them, The Shadow had no intention of making such an attempt in their own terrain. Moreover, there were other things at stake than this one shipment of stolen gold.

Choosing the overhanging rocks, The Shadow made a swift climb to a projecting ledge and waited there, while a large squad of arrivals began to remove the gold, four men to a box.

Climbing higher, The Shadow could see above the trees. He made out the path by the blinks of the flashlights wending their way along a roundabout slope. The mobsters were forced to follow open ground, to make their way to the top of the cliff. The trek was a long one, with no chance for cover on the way.

Any passing plane and aircraft were not infrequent along this coast could have spied them by day. That

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told why the gold had remained in that boat, fitting with The Shadow's own theory.

Recognizing that the procession had the clifftop as its objective, The Shadow headed there by a more direct route. The cliff was high and precipitous but the weather-worn rock offered many hand grips and toe holds.

As he neared the summit, The Shadow saw that the flashlights were only halfway to the top. Lower darkness blotted out the scene below; the flashlights looked like flickering fireflies roving through the air.

Then The Shadow's hands found smoothness. Here was a wall above the crag, built of large stone blocks. Below was the lash of surf, that cut in beneath projecting rocks. A tumble would mean a series of brutal bounces, with the surf as a last resting place. Nevertheless, The Shadow persisted in his climb.

While one hand gripped a chunk of rock, the other had probed the stone blocks to find that wide gaps had broken in the joining mortar. Foot by foot, The Shadow coolly ascended, taking care that his fingers had a solid clutch, that his toes dug his soft-tipped shoes into a suitable crevice.

Time and again, one probing hand rejected a stony edge, to choose a better one. Always, when The Shadow had lifted his full length upward, his feet found the same holds that his hands had picked.

At the top of a twenty-foot wall, he clamped a castellated cornice, worked over the rough parapet, and rested within the shelter of a promenade that fringed this side of a huge building which hulked above him.

DULL lights shone from windows. Between them, The Shadow saw the blackened surface of a door. It yielded when he tried it, for no one supposed that any invasion could come from the cliff side of this stronghold. Beyond the door, The Shadow found a vaulted stone-walled corridor leading deeper into Windward Castle.

Stealthily, to prevent echoing footsteps, The Shadow advanced until he came to a balcony that formed a foursquare ledge around a great hall below. He was on the second floor of the castle, and on the opposite balcony he observed a light from a door that stood ajar.

Conveniently near a stairway, that room looked like a place of conference. Rounding the balcony, The Shadow stopped before the door in question. He heard voices with men calling each other by name. By the time The Shadow was peering past the door, he knew the identities of the speakers. He had heard of both before.

One was Edward Weddleman, mentioned by Janet Barden. The other was a New York crook that The Shadow had long been seeking, a mob leader named Pete Andro.

Their backs were turned, but The Shadow recognized Pete by his voice. The man who took charge of the gold shipments was chortling to Weddleman: "That's another in the bag. When the next shows up, a smarter guy will bring it. That's when Shag Rengle will be in the game!"

Within an hour after Fitz Jarnow and Bob Osden had held conference, The Shadow was obtaining proof of the guesses that they had voiced. Though he had not reached the master mind behind the piracy racket, he had learned the identity of two lieutenants besides Weddleman: namely, Pete Andro and Shag Rengle.

The Shadow had learned all he needed regarding the hands in crime. From now on, he would seek the brain!

CHAPTER XIII. DANGER FAR BELOW

FEW men could have contrasted more than Edward Weddleman and Pete Andro. All that they had in common was their service to a master who dealt in supercrime. That, however, seemed enough to hold them in complete accord.

Weddleman was a short, stocky man, who looked the part he played that of an accomplished technician capable of impressing an inventor like Christopher Barden. Weddleman's pose was serious, his face rounded and smooth. His age would have been impossible to guess, for he had the exact expression of a midget, boyish yet wise. But his frame was of normal size; if anything, above average. Pete Andro was taller, and rangy. From the stubbly growth upon his face, only a coin toss could have decided whether he was cultivating a beard, or had simply decided that shaving was a useless habit. His expression was a sneering one, as if a jest was constantly about to issue from his twisty lips.

When Weddleman spoke, his voice had a dull tone, while Pete mouthed words in a habitual snarl. The eyes of the technician lacked expression to the point where they were merciless, while the mob leader had a suspicious gaze that frequently became a glower.

Their very contrast made each the sort who would get along with the other. The Shadow could picture the first meeting the two had held. Whatever its cause, whoever had arranged it, Weddleman and Pete had probably come to immediate and agreeable terms, regarding their disposal of Christopher Barden.

There was a tray on a table in a corner of the room; from it, Weddleman took a cup of coffee and a sandwich, poured Pete out a cup. The stubbly-faced man shook his head.

"I'll scoff downstairs," he told his companion. "I'm going to check on the swag. Hand me the figure sheet, wherever it is."

Weddleman found it. Withdrawing along the passage, The Shadow let Pete go by, saw him descend the stairs. There was a fading stamp of footsteps as Pete continued downward, evidently to some basement beneath the main floor.

Returning to the door, The Shadow was able to enter the room itself. Weddleman had gone to a deep corner; the room, lighted by scattered lamps, offered many darkened spots. The Shadow chose one beyond the refreshment table, watched Weddleman at work.

The deep corner of the room was equipped with radio apparatus, wall maps, and a large switchboard. Weddleman looked at the map, nodded, pulled a switch and began to tap a message. It passed as a report of some amateur sender, stating that no new report had been picked up from a coast-guard cutter, heard an hour before.

Pulling another switch, he tapped a second message. Another amateur, it seemed, was calling the first one, to correct him. After that, the first sender thanked the second.

Through Weddleman's actions, The Shadow understood the substance of a very clever scheme. Any SOS from a stricken ship always brought a deluge of amateur reports, and later conversations between such senders would logically follow.

Into such messages, Weddleman was coding information for his chief, probably in New York. Each switch furnished remote control to a different amateur station somewhere in Maine, or Canada. Probably those were dummy stations, that could be cut off permanently any time they were suspected.

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Tuning in on wireless reports, Weddleman jotted down a scrambled message and clucked to himself as he decoded it evidently some official report, in a code which he had cracked. A buzzer sounded from the switchboard; Weddleman picked up a telephone.

The matter was a minor one; Weddleman merely said: "Very well, Hackett. Come up and get the tray."

Swinging in his swivel chair, Weddleman strode briskly through a doorway into another room. The place was evidently a laboratory, for Weddleman thumped the door shut behind him and The Shadow could hear the sliding of a bolt.

WHATEVER Weddleman intended to do, he would be busy for a while.

Making the most of opportunity, The Shadow reached for Pete's untouched coffee, drained it in one continuous swallow, and poured himself another cup from the pot. He had a sandwich with that second cup; then, hearing footsteps on the stairs, he finished the coffee and took the rest of the food.

Shifting to the darkened corner beside him, The Shadow saw Hackett enter.

The fellow was not a crook. He was probably one of the few men who had made up Barden's staff. When Weddleman and Andro had taken charge, the loyal men had evidently been reduced to a servant status.

As Hackett took the tray, he tightened his pale lips and stared longingly at the equipment in the deep corner. Then, shaking his head, he left the room.

The Shadow had purposely avoided conversation with Hackett. He had detected an outside sound that the man had not heard. Just as Hackett reached the stairs, patrolling footsteps approached, paused at the door, then went past. Hackett had been under surveillance by some thuggist guard.

Moving across the room, The Shadow reached the important corner. It was out of sight from the door; he had ample opportunity to study everything in view. First, he studied the maps. One was small, it showed land only, and it was marked with the letter "W" in five places, each initial followed by a figure.

The switches that Weddleman had pulled were labeled "W-2" and "W-5," which meant that the map simply showed the location of the dummy-wireless stations. Its purpose known, it was of no further interest to The Shadow.

A larger map offered important features.

It was a chart very much like the one the captain of the Marmaduke had owned, until he lost it with his ship. It had a large dot on the shore, marking the location of Windward Castle, with dotted lines leading out to certain tiny islands far off to sea. Each of those isles was checked with a blue dot, the color of the large one that stood for the castle.

Beyond each island was a row of tiny dots, in red. The Shadow noticed that each row was to the south of its particular island, the intervening distances between islands and dots being uniform, but a matter of many miles. The blue dots were numbered, the red ones lettered. On the switchboard were many keys, with corresponding identification marks, such as 3-A, 4-C, 6-L.

On the flat surface in front of the switchboard were tables of figures and beside them The Shadow saw a very important link. It was a finished diagram like the rough one that Janet Barden had carried in Gwendolyn's handbag.

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Drawn in elaborate detail, its lines inked in black, this diagram showed more tracings than the penciled sketch. From the first, The Shadow had doubted that it stood for a balloon; only the fact that Christopher Barden had dealt in aeronautics had caused Janet to present that theory.

In the light of later events, plus the equipment that The Shadow was studying in this control room, the meaning of the diagram at last was definite.

It was the key to the mystery of crimes at sea, which The Shadow had known originated from Windward Castle, not from an imaginary pirate submarine.

A flat notebook lay near the diagram. Opening it, The Shadow found messages that Weddleman had sent. On another page were printed steamship schedules, with reports of sailings.

These completed The Shadow's survey. His finger tapped a name mentioned in the messages, that of Shag Rengle. Reaching forward, The Shadow pressed the station switch marked W-1.

Muffling the sending apparatus with his cloak, he transmitted a message very much like those that Weddleman had sent. Switching to W-2, he transmitted a reply. He kept up the reports between the two stations, interjecting chaffing remarks. He was repeating certain of Weddleman's dispatches, and more.

Near New York, The Shadow had a receiving station of his own, managed by a capable contact man named Burbank. Tersely, The Shadow was inserting snatches of his own private code: brief instructions for Burbank to relay to other agents. That done, The Shadow fixed the switches as he had found them.

There was one thing more: the official report that Weddleman had decoded. Reading it, The Shadow learned why the traitor had clucked so cheerfully. The report was an admission that the authorities were entirely balked in their investigation of the sea crimes. So far, they had not found a trace of a superspy named Fernand Zelta.

THE warning slide of a bolt caused The Shadow to wheel from the swivel chair. He was at the door to the balcony when Weddleman came out of the laboratory. The man showed no traces of suspicion. The thick connecting door had cut off any sounds that The Shadow had made.

Returning to the outside parapet, The Shadow finished the rest of the sandwiches. Brisk breezes from the open sea whipped the cloak about his shoulders. Below, the grumble of the surf ascended with a hollow growl. Yet The Shadow felt no qualms concerning a return trip into the threatening darkness beneath.

He would make that journey when occasion called, but that would not be for another forty-eight hours, at least. The Shadow was timing his future actions to coming developments, which involved the actions of his own agents. Their moves, in turn, would be dependent upon the strategy of the opposition, for crime was due to make another thrust on a larger scale than ever.

For the present, The Shadow could choose no better abode than Windward Castle. Though the place was a very nest of crooks, it offered many comfortable spots where he could remain unnoticed. He would be able, also, to keep tabs on all developments by reports that Weddleman received.

Returning into the castle, The Shadow decided to familiarize himself with its interior. Gliding along the balcony, he passed the door of the control room, went down the stairs to the great hall, which was deserted. Through a passage, The Shadow looked into a kitchen, where Hackett and two other prisoners were engaged in washing dishes.

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Several guards were present, tough-faced ruffians, who had come in from the Lentura and the Marmaduke. Each sea disaster had swelled the ugly crew that took orders from Pete Andro, the lieutenant who commanded the fighting men. There might be a chance, later, to talk with Hackett or some other prisoner and learn some trace of Christopher Barden.

The Shadow saw a tray of food go out through a far door from the kitchen, but it was carried by one of the guards, not by a prisoner.

Skirting back through the hall, The Shadow investigated other passages. One was obviously the route that Pete had taken. It led to a stairway going down into a honeycombed cellar.

There, among vaulted catacombs that carried echoes from many sources, The Shadow traced the entrance through which the boat crew had helped bring the gold. It evidently opened from the cliffside, but from voices along the passage, The Shadow discovered that the route was heavily guarded.

His own route to the outer world would have to be the sea cliff, unless he found another exit. Continuing his search through the cellar, The Shadow passed a large lighted room where Pete Andro was checking the gold from the Marmaduke, near a larger stack of boxes that represented the Lentura swag.

Pete was surrounded by a choice selection of ugly aids, Lugger and Steve among them. Gliding away by another passage, The Shadow reached a portion of the vast cellar where the air was considerably sweeter.

In a low-roofed room, he discovered a trapdoor that led to a deep subcellar. Hearing a scuffle beneath it, The Shadow withdrew to an alcove in the far wall. He crouched there, above a grating that formed a black air shaft to the pit below. Watching, The Shadow saw the trapdoor rise.

The man who came from it was the guard who had left the kitchen only a short while ago. He closed the trapdoor, and as it descended The Shadow saw the top of a steel ladder, just beneath it. The man did not bother to clamp the trap, but merely fixed it in place and set off on his return route to the kitchen.

WHILE the guard's footsteps faded. The Shadow passed the time by investigating the air shaft, intending to try the trapdoor after he was sure that the guard was gone. The shaft was worth inspection, for it ran up, as well as down, from the alcove where The Shadow stood.

Flickering a flashlight beam up into the shaft, The Shadow noted that the top was closed, and on a level with the ground floor. It was possible that the top of the shaft was merely capped, not permanently blocked. The shaft itself showed crevices; by using them for grips, it would be possible to use this as a private route to the main floor.

Extinguishing the flashlight, The Shadow placed it beneath his cloak. It was his intent to make a brief test at scaling the inside of the shaft. A short try was all that he would require to learn if the route would prove feasible; but that attempt was a disastrous procedure.

To start his climb, The Shadow rose from his crouch, turned toward the inner wall of the alcove and shifted his full weight to the grating that topped the lower shaft. Before he could dig his fingers into the wall, the grating gave.

To the clank of a spring hinge, The Shadow plunged down the air shaft, with no chance to break his fall until he struck, a dozen feet below. Relaxing as he dropped, The Shadow saved his legs at the partial expense of his head. His shoulders jerked sideward, his skull struck the side wall.

Crumpling senseless, The Shadow rolled from a lower alcove, stretching face upward upon a bare stone floor. His crash was echoed by the walls of a tiny room; then, after a brief silence, came the sound of a slow, advancing creep.

A match sputtered. Its flickery glow revealed the glitter of fierce eyes set in a dark-bearded face. Yellowish teeth shown from spreading lips. A tight-skinned fist, saffron in color, came into the matchlight clutching a knife.

The blade poised above The Shadow's heart, while the gritted teeth sucked in a long-drawn breath. With that moment, the match flame quivered, died, leaving only a struggling spark that lived only a single second longer.

Blotted by pitch-darkness, The Shadow lay at the mercy of the bearded creature who dwelt in the depths of the castle where crime held sway!

CHAPTER XIV. NORTHWARD BOUND

THOUGH The Shadow had struck a pitfall in the depths of Windward Castle, his plans were carrying elsewhere. Burbank, in New York, had picked up the messages from the control room, had fitted them with facts he already knew. Expecting no new word from The Shadow, the contact man had simply proceeded to carry out commands.

When The Shadow intrusted such duty to Burbank, it was like winding the mainspring of a smooth-running machine. All through the next day, Burbank relayed orders to active agents, received their reports and gave replies, exactly as if he had been in steady communication with The Shadow.

Like human cogs, the active agents revolved about that center, meshing their efforts in the common cause. By the time that evening had arrived, one group, working in perfect co-ordination, were ready to take over the important duty that The Shadow had assigned to them.

Down on the East River water front was a dive known as the Black Hole, due partly to its underground location, also because of its stifling atmosphere. The Black Hole was well liked by certain persons, because it had as many entrances as a rabbit burrow. Murder or mayhem could occur there, and the perpetrators would invariably be gone when the police arrived.

On this night, a stalwart man with chiseled, poker-faced expression had reached the interior of the Black Hole by one of its devious routes. Hands in the pockets of the rough jacket that topped his heavy sweater, he looked about, spied the table that he wanted and sat down.

The arrival was Cliff Marsland, an agent of The Shadow. Cliff's realm was the underworld, where he posed as one-man mob, ready to undertake any tough duty. When needed, he could promote himself to the head of a larger outfit, formed by men of his own choice.

At the table sat a long-faced fellow whose flattish, off-center nose looked as if it had received every sort of treatment that savage battle could produce. It had been knocked one way, then the other, but had not been properly equalized. Nor had a straight-on collision with a fist improved it.

The nose was still out of line, as were the irregular teeth that the man displayed when he grinned. Those big molars were the sort that could bite nails, and judging by their jagged edges, their owner had probably used his teeth for such a pastime. The owner of the crooked nose and oversized teeth was Shag Rengle.

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"Hello, Shag!" greeted Cliff, in a level tone. "How's the fishing?"

"Going slick," gruffed Shag, with a grin. "Here" he shoved a bottle toward Cliff "try some of this shark bait."

Cliff poured himself a drink, while Shag, shifting his chair half around the table, buzzed in undertone:

"It's all set. I'm putting you with Cap Gumbert, on the big cabin cruiser. Like you was some stuffed-shirt guy looking for pirates along with fish. Get it?"

Cliff nodded.

"The guys you've brought can join the crew. Where've you got 'em?"

Cliff's thumb nudged back toward the passage that he had entered. Shag arose, deciding that he wanted to see the new recruits. Cliff led the way to where a pair of men awaited.

One, a small, hunch-shouldered man with a shrewd, wizened face, raised two fingers toward Shag and said: "Hi!"

Shag returned the greeting with a nod of approval. He knew the fellow; his name was Hawkeye, and he had a fighter's reputation despite his half-pint size.

The other was a huge African, solemn-faced until he grinned. Cliff introduced him as Jericho, and remarked that he had just resigned his position as bouncer in a Harlem night club.

"How come?" demanded Shag, suspiciously.

"Jericho was too good," informed Cliff. "The waiters couldn't open doors fast enough for him to chuck the drunks out. So he smashed a door last night."

"With what?" inquired Shag. "A chair?"

"No. With a customer who had slugged a bunch of waiters. That's why they didn't get to the door in time."

"What about the guy that this bird hove through the door?"

"They took him to the hospital," replied Cliff. "He left there this afternoon in a hearse! That's why Jericho wants to go fishing for a while."

SHAG gave a satisfied grin. He told Cliff to send the others outside. Then, after telling Cliff how to reach Gumbert's dock, Shag nudged toward the teeming mass of ratty humanity that decorated the interior of the Black Hole.

"There's stoolies in this dump," announced Shag. "Picking 'em out of fifty guys ain't going to be easy. So we're going to wreck the joint. I got a bunch of tough mobbies ready, and they'll knock off all the mugs they don't know."

From Cliff's survey of all the mugs in the Black Hole, the more that were knocked off, the better.

"Don't bother to stick around, Cliff," advised Shag. "You'd better get along so Gumbert can heave off."

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Indifferently regarding the brawl that was to come, Cliff went out through the side passage and found Jericho waiting alone. Hawkeye had gone to contact Burbank, by telephone. At the end of several minutes, the little man rejoined them, breathless.

"Burbank just got word from Moe," informed Hawkeye, excitedly. "The fellow in Fitz's hide-out Bob Osden is on his way here!"

Cliff's eyes took a sudden glint.

"You know how we trailed Fitz to the place," reminded Hawkeye. "He and Moe, I mean. Anyway, Moe's been posted there, in his cab. Fitz went to see Bob a while ago; and after Fitz has gone, Bob comes out.

"Moe takes him for a fare, but Bob switches cabs around Thirty-fourth Street. Only, Moe is smart enough to slide after him with a newspaper he'd forgot, and catch what he tells the other hackie. Any minute, now, Bob ought to be here, only there's no telling which door he's coming in by."

It didn't take Cliff long to decide the proper move in this emergency.

"Come along with me," he told Jericho. "You can follow, Hawkeye, but wait in the passage until you're needed. Jericho and I are going in to see Shag."

From his corner table, Shag tilted a suspicious glance as Cliff arrived with the big African. Coolly, Cliff gave explanation for their return.

"You're going to get a look at a real tough guy," he told Shag. "Give your gorillas the high sign. Wise them up that Jericho belongs. How long did you figure it would take to wreck this dump?"

"Ten minutes," returned Shag, suddenly intrigued.

"It won't take five," assured Cliff, "not after Jericho gets into it!"

A man had come into the Black Hole through one of the entrances used by strangers. Though Cliff had never met Bob Osden, he promptly identified him. Bob was wearing old clothes, but still looked like a gentleman. Jericho grinned at Cliff. It was the equivalent of a nod, meaning that he had also spotted Bob.

Noting a clock over the door, Shag decided it was time for battle to begin. He picked up a bottle, thumped it on the table. The sound wasn't heard amid the raucous chatter of the fifty customers; but the signal was seen.

Instantly, riot broke loose. Bob Osden, trapped near the front of the dive, didn't have a chance to inquire where he could find Shag Rengle.

HALF a dozen men overturned tables, grabbed up chairs and began to sling them. The place became a milling mass, with everyone willing to fight. Chuckling, Shag drew Cliff down behind the table in the corner, leaving Jericho to join the fray alone.

Jericho was already on his way, and there was nothing that could stop him. Choking a brawler one-handed, Jericho used his other hamlike fist to pluck the table that the fellow tried to swing. Stalking forward, the big African flayed the table right and left, whipping it like a cane cutting a path through a wheat field.

Those strokes, mere flips to Jericho, cleared away the massing brawlers, who flattened amid the tumble of lost chairs and smashing bottles. Then staggering men were closing in behind the giant fighter.

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When Jericho reached the front of the dive, only his head and shoulders were visible. Shag couldn't see exactly what happened after Jericho arrived there.

Despite the approaching rescue, Bob Osden had gone down beneath a slugging attack. One of Shag's thugs was crouched above him, ready to give a skull-cracking blow with a big bottle.

Jericho didn't grab for the slugger's arm; instead, he clamped the fellow's neck, gave a long sweep upward and sideward.

Shag didn't recognize the man who came speeding out of the melee, to graze the ceiling in his long, whirling flight. When the victim hit the wall and seemed to telescope, Shag thought that another stoolie had taken punishment. He knew that Jericho had staged the trick, though, for Shag spied the big fighter's hands as he released the victim's neck.

Jericho's hands were doing more. They were taking toll at random. Above Bob's senseless figure, Jericho leaned to the right. Thrusting his left hand beyond his right, he grabbed a slugger's neck with an inverted clamp.

He had chosen a lightweight, with a reason. Lurching leftward, Jericho whipped the man feet over head, a struggling, living bludgeon, to bash him down upon one of Shag's crew who had suddenly become suspicious and was yanking a gun. The flaying stroke left two victims limp upon the floor.

A chair was slashing for Jericho's head. With an uppercut, he knocked it from the hands that swung it. Under his own lunge, the man who had lost the chair came into the clutch of Jericho's other paw. That big hand almost encircled the thug's neck. While throttling that foeman limp, Jericho looked around for others.

There were none at hand. The rest of Shag's picked sluggers had fallen prey to their intended victims, who had closed upon them from behind while the thugs were trying to get at Jericho. As he let the throttled man drop to the floor, Jericho stood alone. Shag, getting his first clear view of the scene, thought that the giant African was taking over where the crew had failed.

It wouldn't do to lose a fighter like Jericho, who, seemingly, had saved a lost cause. Yanking a gun, Shag fired shots toward the bar. A hand came up from behind it, pulled the light switch. The dive was put into darkness.

Yells greeted the dark. From then on, everyone was equal and took advantage of it. So did Jericho. Carrying a human burden, he plowed right through the brawlers, never stopping until he reached the passage where Hawkeye's flashlight furnished guiding blinks.

Outside, Hawkeye pointed Jericho to a dark alley. Placing Bob Osden out of sight, Jericho returned just as Cliff arrived with Shag. Bobbing suddenly into the beam of Hawkeye's flashlight, Jericho let his teeth glitter in a wide grin.

Cliff understood that Bob was safe. As for Shag, he interpreted the grin differently.

"What a guy!" ejaculated Shag, approvingly. Then, turning to Cliff: "If you hadn't brought this bird along, the t'ing would have gone sour! He had to clean up the job my outfit couldn't finish."

"That's his specialty," declared Cliff. Then, as he heard the shrill of a police whistle: "We'd better lam, Shag!"

Heading one way, Shag told his companions to go the other. Cliff led the way through the alley, where

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Jericho reclaimed Bob and carried him along. Hawkeye spotted the cab of Moe Shrevnitz, another Shadow agent, in the next block. The Shadow's agents climbed into it, propping Bob's limp form between them.

"I'll fix it with Cap Gumbert," stated Cliff. "I'll say that Bob is a guy that Shag told us to bring along and dump overboard at sea. Only, we'll take over that cabin cruiser before the time comes."

Clearing a closing police cordon, the cab reached the dock. Soon, the new members of the cabin cruiser's crew were on board and the boat was clearing for its unknown goal.

The Shadow's agents were northward bound, carrying Bob Osden with them.

CHAPTER XV. RIVALS MOVE

AT seven o'clock the next evening, Gwendolyn Marcy was bringing a gorgeous new evening gown from the closet of a hotel room. Gwendolyn was in Boston, where Janet Barden probably would not find her. Nevertheless, Gwendolyn shied skittishly at the sight of a pair of pajamas.

Laying her elegant golden gown across a chair, Gwendolyn withdrew a revolver from a suitcase and laid it on the dressing table. This was one night when she did not intend to find herself lying meekly in bed watching a rival blonde calmly appropriate her finery and set out to steal Gwendolyn's dinner engagement, as well.

Dressed by half past seven, Gwendolyn carried the revolver in her sequin-covered handbag when she went down to the mezzanine floor. There, she entered the door of a private dining room, where eight guests had already assembled.

All were men; they stood up when Gwendolyn entered and bowed her to the place of honor at the head. As dinner began, the girl looked along the double line of faces and felt a thrill at her own importance.

Her companions were dressed in evening clothes. Some looked like residents of Boston's swanky Back Bay district; others had the appearance of distinguished foreigners. These men happened to be the eight top-notchers of all foreign spies operating in the United States.

Every one of them rated higher than had Gwendolyn's former crony, Carl Sigmar. Yet none could begin to match a man who was absent from this meeting: Fernand Zelta. Nevertheless, it was Zelta who had arranged the dinner, and upon Gwendolyn Marcy he had conferred the honor of acting in his stead.

Though Gwendolyn had never yet met Zelta, she had heard from him soon after she left New York. He had seen through Janet's subterfuge, and informed Gwendolyn of the fact. Apparently, Zelta had not lost confidence in Gwendolyn simply because she had been tricked once.

How he had managed to trace where she had gone, was still a mystery to Gwendolyn. It simply proved that Fernand Zelta lived up to his reputation of keeping tabs on everything.

Only letters direct from Zelta could have brought the guests who were gathered here tonight. As yet, however, those visitors to Boston mistrusted one another. Their conversation was polite but guarded; each would have shown horrified surprise, had anyone even mentioned the word "spy."

Gwendolyn was smiling as the dinner ended. From the sequin-studded bag, she brought a packet of thin envelopes. None were marked with names, but she knew them by key letters in the corners. Motioning toward each man in turn, the blonde distributed envelopes.

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Guardedly, the spies opened them. Their faces showed restrained delight as they read the messages. Each contained facts known only to its receiver; and every message offered specific reward, in return for service.

Spies who had sought elusive data and never found it were told at last that Zelta had exactly what they wanted. It might be theirs, if they accepted terms that were to be described by Gwendolyn.

Eight pairs of eyes fixed upon the girl in the golden gown. The glitter of Gwendolyn's attire was appropriate to this occasion.

Gwendolyn's face lost its doll's expression, as she toned in her cool contralto pitch:

"You wonder, perhaps, why Zelta freely offers you what you have wanted most. There is a very plain reason. He no longer intends to deal in such intrigue. Fernand Zelta has decided to retire, a millionaire."

VOICES buzzed. The spies, no longer suspicious of each other, were becoming chummy. They were not surprised to learn that Zelta had acquired great wealth; but they had not yet heard all that Gwendolyn was supposed to tell them.

"Fernand Zelta is a man without a country," the girl resumed. "Therefore, he does not care who loses by his gain. Two steamships have been sunk at sea, each robbed of gold that it was bringing to America. Those disasters, however, were mere tests.

"Before dawn tomorrow, another ship will be stricken offshore. Crews are waiting to rob it of its chief cargo, gold to the value of five million dollars, new wealth that will join that already gained. I refer to the steamship Medea."

Startled looks swept the gathering. The Medea was a huge British ship, a passenger liner, approaching America under heavy convoy. Thought of the loss of life that might attend the sinking of that ship was not what brought astonishment to the listeners. Rather than horror, they displayed admiration, as their amazement faded.

The boldness of the thing held them breathless. It was another tribute to the genius and cool daring of the master spy whose reputation made their own pride dwindle: Fernand Zelta!

"To accomplish his final purpose," informed Gwendolyn, referring to a letter, "Zelta has been forced to use accomplices, criminals of a class that he would not ordinarily employ. He prefers to have persons of reliance aid in the disposal of the gold.

"Particularly persons" Gwendolyn was emphatic "who prefer other rewards than money. Such persons as yourselves. Each of you has received an individual offer; you all understand why such offers have been made. How many are willing to proceed?"

Affirmative responses came from all. Gwendolyn unfolded a sheet of thin paper that bore a rough-drawn chart.

"Windward Castle," she explained, "a forgotten stronghold on the Maine coast. Our path leads to this entrance, where we are to take the guards by surprise. After we have disposed of the unsuspecting crooks batch by batch, we shall meet with Zelta.

"Some living men tell tales. Zelta will be rid of that sort, when we have exterminated them. His secret will rest safely with us, because" Gwendolyn gave a wise smile "Zelta, himself knows certain facts concerning

all of us."

WITHIN an hour after that meeting, two magnificent automobiles of the same make stopped at a traffic light. They were pointed north, bound on a speedy trip to Maine. Those cars were carrying Gwendolyn Marcy and her crew of spies de luxe.

From a hotel window, another girl eyed the elegant vehicles, watched them continue on their way, never guessing that she knew one of the passengers.

Then, with a bored sigh, Janet Barden turned about and paced the hotel room.

Janet was tired of keeping out of sight. First in New York, again in Boston, she had remained hidden away because of The Shadow's orders. This evening, she had expected the ordeal to end; but, so far, she had received no word.

Shuffling the rug with her slippers, Janet finally settled in a chair. She was lounging in a loose kimono, which had a way of slipping half from her shoulders, to show the pink hue of the cute step-ins that she wore beneath it.

Janet wanted to get dressed, but she could not decide on what to wear. That would depend upon where she was going next, and apparently she was never going to have any future plans. Janet was brooding over the annoying prospect, when the telephone bell rang.

Recognizing the voice, Janet exclaimed:

"Oh! Good evening, Mr. Vincent... Dinner? Certainly! Do you mean that we can have dinner together, in a real restaurant... How long? Not five minutes!"

Harry Vincent, the man who had phoned, was one of The Shadow's agents, whose present job was to see that nothing harmed Janet. The girl had met him at brief intervals in the seclusion of hotel lobbies; and Harry had dropped into her drawing room on the day Pullman that she had taken from New York to Boston.

Except during cab rides, Janet had never seen Harry for more than five minutes at a time. All her meals had been served in hotel rooms, where she ate alone. At last that necessity was past, and Janet was so eager to get out to dinner that she did not intend to spend much time getting dressed.

Kicking off her slippers, she drew on the first pair of stockings that she found. Stepping into a pair of high-heeled shoes, she dropped the kimono and slid a green dress over her shoulders. The sleeves were tight, but Janet finally forced her hands through them and quickly arranged her hair.

Rapid with lipstick and powder, she was ready within the five minutes that she had promised. Grabbing her bag, Janet went out to the elevators. Harry was waiting in the lobby; he was a good-looking chap, and he gave Janet an understanding smile. He could tell how glad she was to be going somewhere again.

Harry knew Boston well. He took Janet to a tiny comfortable restaurant on a secluded street. Seated in a booth, they dined on fare that Janet liked much better than the food at the hotel. During dinner, the girl asked what news there was.

"Everything is going nicely," declared Harry. "I had to wait, though, to make sure that certain plans had gone through."

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"The Shadow's plans?" queried Janet. "You've seen him?"

Harry shook his head.

"I am working on special instructions," he informed. "So are several other persons. We are all doing our part, and so far, everything has turned out right."

Obviously, Harry knew more than he was free to say. Noting that Janet was a bit put out by the fact, he added a promise:

"By tomorrow, you will know all about it. It will be all right for you to go anywhere, even to Windward Castle."

"But what about my uncle?" queried Janet. "Has he been located?"

"I don't know," replied Harry frankly, as he recalled the latest word from Burbank, "but I am sure that he will be safe when the trouble is all over. I know that The Shadow will not forget him."

Harry's confidence seemed real. They finished dinner and strolled back to the hotel. As they said good night, Harry repeated his assurance:

"You're safe here in Boston, Miss Barden, and by tomorrow morning you will be safe anywhere."

CROSSING the lobby alone, Janet paused. A new thought struck her. If "tomorrow" began at midnight, why should she stay in Boston? There was a train leaving for Maine at nine thirty.

Certainly she would be safe enough on board it. She could ride in the lounge of the parlor car as far as Portland, and the train didn't leave that city until after midnight.

From there, she could ride in a day coach until the train reached Bangor, after four in the morning. As luck had it, she had left an old car in a Bangor garage, one that she had used during her summer vacation on the Maine coast. It wouldn't take her more than a few hours to reach the vicinity of the castle, after she drove from Bangor.

The hotel clock showed nine fifteen. Perhaps Harry Vincent had purposely kept her lingering after dinner, so that she would not have time to pack and catch that very train. But Janet decided that packing wasn't necessary. What she needed most was her gun, and that was in her handbag.

Turning from the lobby, Janet Barden went out by a different exit and sprang into the first cab that she saw. The girl asked the driver how quickly he could get her to North Station; his reply was: "In ten minutes, easy."

Thus assured, Janet leaned back in the seat and smiled. Whatever the coming plans of The Shadow or his agents, Janet Barden intended to play a part in them.

Rivals were on their way to Windward Castle. There, perhaps, Gwendolyn Marcy and Janet Barden would have their second meeting!

CHAPTER XVI. DOOM RIDES ANEW

IT was after midnight. A slight drizzle was coming in from the ocean; offshore, the sea was calm, except for leisurely swells that lifted tiny blinking lights, then lowered them, with monotonous regularity.

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In the cabin of a motor cruiser a burly, red-faced man was talking to Cliff Marsland. The burly chap was Cap Gumbert, long a smuggler who had worked with Shag Rengle. Cap was pointing out certain details on a map.

"That's where Shag gave the last flash," declared Cap. "He'll be watching for more, but he won't bother none until he gets a signal here."

Cap moved his stubby finger toward the northeast, covering the equivalent of thirty miles.

"We can make it in a couple of hours," he told Cliff, "but Shag is giving us three. So we'll show up, all right, and take our own route getting there. I've set the course, so all we've got to think about is that lubber you're still keeping in the fo'c's'le."

The "lubber" was Bob Osdan. Cliff had expected the conversation to take its present turn. Cap showed every sign of visiting the front bunk room himself, but Cliff was ready for it.

"O.K., skipper," said Cliff. "We might as well chuck the guy before the fun starts. I'm still trying to figure him out. Maybe it would be a good idea for you to talk to him."

"About what?"

"About what he knows. Shag was worried over a lot of stoolies that were hanging around the Black Hole. Maybe the guy's one of them. I'll join up with you, Cap, after I've told the cook to get busy with that coffee I want."

When Cliff made his way forward, he counted noses along the deck. Cap and his big crew outnumbered The Shadow's agents by three to one, but Bob could be depended upon in the coming pinch. Arriving at the fo'c's'le, Cliff could hear the skipper's growl. Cap was talking to the prisoner.

There was another man beside Cap, a chunky crew member who held a lantern, swinging the glare into Bob's eyes. Bound in a bunk, Bob refused to answer questions, until Cliff appeared. When Bob tried to lift his shoulders, Cliff grinned at Cap, then propped the prisoner into a seated position.

Giving Bob a few quick words beneath his breath, Cliff turned suddenly and drove a hard punch into Cap's chest. The burly man doubled forward; before he could recover, Bob had him by the neck. Those ropes were nothing but twisted slack and slipknots.

Cliff took the man with the lantern. The fellow pulled a gun, but never used it. Cliff was quicker with the automatic from his own pocket. One hard-slugged blow felled the crew member. Leaving Bob in charge below, Cliff made for the deck. Hawkeye popped into sight; coming from separate angles, the two agents fell upon unsuspecting enemies and downed them. Lights from the other boats were out of sight, when guns began to bark. Both Cliff and Hawkeye responded.

They were driving the remaining opposition back toward the stern, near the little galley where Cliff previously had gone for coffee. Entrenching themselves, half a dozen mobbies were ready to give real battle, for the alarm had spread. But all of them had forgotten the ship's new cook.

Jericho loomed upon them. He proved their equal when he struck. Swinging handy kitchen utensils, he rapped the skulls of the excited marksmen; amid clanks and thuds, the others turned upon the new foe. For a few seconds, Jericho was the flaying center of a swirling mass.

No one remained to stop Cliff and Hawkeye. Arriving, they slugged the first mobbies that they reached.

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Relieved of all but two, Jericho spilled the last pair to the deck, where they bounced around from the powerful jolts the big fighter gave them.

Telling the others to gather up the prisoners, Cliff took the deserted helm of the cabin cruiser. Checking by Cap's chart, he turned the ship to an inshore course. This craft had a rendezvous to keep before it joined the rest of Shag's flotilla.

THREE hours were nearly gone, when Shag Rengle learned that the cabin cruiser had joined the flotilla. Signals blinked, then a procession of six oddly assorted craft headed out to sea, with Shag's flagship, a fair-sized sloop, in the lead.

To all appearances the sloop, like others in the fleet, was an old sailing vessel equipped with an auxiliary motor. But the sloop was moving swiftly, smoothly, without an inch of aiding canvas. Its motor was high-powered, capable of producing a racing speed.

In the cabin, Shag chatted with a few of his toughest confederates. They were mobbies, these, but they looked the part of swashbuckling pirates. The difference was that these modern rovers of the high seas knew how to handle machine guns, and had a plentiful supply of such weapons on board.

"We've got some bozos planted on board the Medea," explained Shag, "but they're laying low, and there's not enough of 'em to handle things on their own. That stuff was O.K. with the freighters, but here it's going to be a bigger job."

Grins showed that listeners appreciated the situation, and were looking forward to it.

"When the torpedo hits the big tub," continued Shag, "we'll haul close, like we wanted to help take off the passengers. That's when the boys on board will begin their job, starting from the strong room out.

"They'll hold off everybody behind 'em, savvy? What's more, they'll heave down rope ladders and the guys from our boats will climb 'em. By our boats, I mean Cap's and the rest of 'em. This packet" Shag chuckled at thought of the sloop's part "will stay back."

Like Shag, the listeners were calculating the number of men aboard the other boats; their estimate was close to fifty. Enough, they knew, to get the gold away in the confusion; but they were wondering what the sloop was to do. Shag explained.

"We've got the typewriters," he declared. By "typewriters" Shag referred to the machine guns. "We'll make 'em talk all along the side of the Medea, except where our own guys are. We'll give 'em a barrage they'll remember, and it'll cover the getaway perfect!

"After we're through" Shag's big teeth gritted a huge grin "they won't have to worry about having enough lifeboats on the Medea. We'll chop down so many boobs, that the ones left over will have a lot of extra boats to take in tow!"

Completing the prediction of wholesale carnage, Shag fingered a grimy map. It showed the spot where the six boats would intercept the Medea and follow on the lee side of the liner, keeping close.

"She'll be coming slow," asserted Shag, "which means we won't have to show our speed. We've sighted coast-guard cutters on the way here and talked nice to 'em, so we've got a clean bill of health. There'll be some regular fishers tailing after the Medea, so everybody will be welcome.

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"What's more, the Medea is hugging close to shore, so the navy boats can make a barrier outside. They're looking for a submarine, not us. Let 'em get the sub" Shag leered, as if to emphasize that such a result would be impossible "so long as they don't stop the torpedo. When that thing hits, we're in the money! And I'm telling you this: it ain't going to miss!"

Cleaving onward to meet the incoming dawn, the sloop and its companion boats were near the shipping lane when they saw great searchlights sweep the water. Studded rows of lights appeared near the horizon. Those glowing lines, dim compared to the searchlights, were the cabin windows and portholes of the mighty Medea.

The drizzle had ended at sea. Struggling moonlight was coming from the clouds, indicating that the dawn would be comparatively clear. Shag's flotilla joined a few other craft that were trailing the wake of the slow-moving Medea. The liner seemed timid of the waters ahead, as she kept nosing southward.

WHEN dawn began to flicker on that scene, the sky was still dark above Windward Castle, many miles to the west. There, rain clouds still cluttered the sky, producing a heavy gloom. In the control room, Weddleman had thrown a switch, illuminating the map that showed the region offshore.

One red dot was a twinkling bulb. When it extinguished itself, Weddleman watched a moving time dial. Another red dot lighted. Weddleman checked the interval. He pressed a button; a blue bulb sparkled.

"We'll use this island," announced Weddleman, pointing to the blue dot. "I've clocked the liner's speed between the buoys."

He ran his finger along the line of red dots, indicating them as the buoys. Pete Andro, who was standing by, gave a nod. Then, anxiously, Pete asked:

"How come nobody's spotted any of those buoys?"

"They were lowered to ten fathoms," returned Weddleman. A slight smile came to his boyish lips. "Old Barden planned that himself. He had everything just right, when we took over."

Weddleman's hand was on a master switch. He was waiting for the next red light to indicate the course of the Medea. Nothing but a sudden alteration of the liner's speed could change his intent. That, however, would simply cause him to begin a new calculation, covering the next blue island and its string of red buoys.

"Too bad the chief ain't here yet," grunted Pete. "I guess the bum weather delayed his plane trip."

"He will arrive presently," assured Weddleman. "In time to see the gold come in. He was not here when we sank the Lentura and the Marmaduke. So why should it matter?"

Pete guessed that it didn't matter, after all. It was important, he knew, that the stroke should come at dawn, rather than later. Like Weddleman, Pete saw a red bulb go out and watched the dial tensely, hoping it would record the proper time space.

There was a timid tap at the door. Pete swung about expecting to see a member of his own mob, bringing a tray of coffee and sandwiches. Instead, it was Hackett who had appeared.

"What're you doing here?" demanded Pete. "I said for Louie to bring up the grub."

"Louie hasn't been around," explained Hackett. "So they sent me instead."

"All right. Leave the tray and scam."

Hackett obliged. He had hardly gone before Pete heard a pleased exclamation from Weddleman. The next red bulb had lighted exactly at the right second, as indicated by the moving dial.

"There she goes!"

With that announcement, Weddleman pulled the master switch. Another load of death was on its way, intended for the mighty Medea, superliner of the transatlantic route!

MILES off the coast, there was a quiver in the water that lapped the shore of a tiny, rocky islet. A long torpedo launched itself and streaked straight out to sea. A radio control had released it, the moment that Weddleman pulled the switch.

The torpedo was not headed for the Medea; it pointed toward a spot that the liner had passed. It was making for the first of the hidden buoys that lay off the island's shore. As it passed that spot, the torpedo did a singular thing.

Finding no target, it continued out to sea, but its swift course became a long curve to the right. It was arching around to overtake the Medea, and swing in toward the last buoy in the line. Its own terrific speed in exact ratio to the liner's slow gait, the cigar-shaped death device was due to meet the Medea just as the big ship reached the line extending from the final buoy.

The torpedo's course explained Barden's diagram. The inventor had done more than create a method of control whereby torpedoes would shoot straight to hidden buoys. He had invented a way to bring them back, should they miss their intended mark.

The brain behind the scheme of modern piracy was taking advantage of that system. Curving back toward shore, the torpedoes struck from the direction of the sea, not from the land.

That had produced the theory of a ghost submarine, a myth which only The Shadow had shattered. But unless The Shadow had also developed some remarkable counter plan of his own, his findings would be useless.

Disaster was already on its way, with massacre to follow, should that streaking carrier deliver its load of terrible explosive into the great hull of the liner Medea!

CHAPTER XVII. DEATH FOLLOWS DAWN

MORE miles out to sea, the incurving wake of the swift torpedo was sighted first by a government cutter looking for the mystery submarine. Wireless messages crackled; swift destroyers sped to action. Those ships were sluggish, compared to the torpedo.

Rapid-fire guns, trained for that sleek target, might as well have been trained upon a streak of lightning. The thing was past the horizon before the gunners realized it. The minutes that still separated it from the path of the Medea would be very few.

A quick change in the liner's speed could have altered the situation. In fact, the Shadow might have proclaimed that fact a few nights ago, but such advance notice, spread about, would have been a give-away to the criminals themselves.

Once learning crime's full set-up, The Shadow had determined to bait crooks to their downfall. He had

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foreseen a way to counteract the mortal stroke intended against the liner Medea. It was a method though, that depended upon The Shadow's own mastery of vital situations.

His agents could not turn the trick alone, except, perhaps, at cost of their own lives. Therefore, The Shadow's plunge into the deep pit at Windward Castle had threatened others, as well as himself, with doom. Long ago, The Shadow's agents had sworn that should death overtake their chief, they would carry on his cause against crime.

Three men aboard Cap's cabin cruiser Cliff Marsland; his aids, Hawkeye and Jericho all would have welcomed anything resembling suicide, if it would mean the culmination of some task that The Shadow could no longer perform.

Like the crews of other tiny boats that trailed the Medea, those aboard the cabin cruiser saw excitement begin upon the liner. They could guess the cause: word had been radioed to the liner to beware of a torpedo off the port bow.

Bells clanged from the great ship. Steam issued beside a huge funnel, as a mammoth whistle throbbled a warning signal to the small craft nearby. Perhaps there were orders to alter the liner's course, or change her speed; but, if so, they came too late.

The torpedo had already been sighted against the rising sunlight. Apparently off course, the projectile seemed destined to miss the liner. After all, the Medea was only a speck on the vast sea.

Observers on board the steamship thought that some harassed submarine had tried this attempt from too great a range. They were confident that the torpedo wouldn't come within a quarter mile of its nine-hundred-foot target. They forgot that both the Lentura and the Marmaduke had been struck directly amidships.

Shag Rengle hadn't forgotten it. He was signaling from his sloop, ordering the other boats to swing out past the Medea's stern, so that they could close in from the starboard side after the torpedo struck. When the Medea listed, that would be the side from which to receive the gold. As yet, no smoke indicating naval vessels was visible on the horizon, nor had early-morning planes begun their coast patrol.

Nothing in sight but the Medea and the streaking torpedo that was to bring her doom! Unless Shag counted the boats in his own flotilla and the few straggling fishing smacks farther behind them. Shag began to count prows at that moment, and finished with an oath.

One boat had done more than cross the Medea's stern. Cap's cruiser had gone crazy! At top speed, she was speeding up beside the liner, keeping some two hundred feet to port. There, to the left of the liner, the speedy little boat was almost in the torpedo's path!

The crew had gone as crazy as the vessel. Two men were lowering a little boat at the stern. Two others were tearing away a tarpaulin that covered the deck in front of the cabin, a sheet of canvas that looked like a large sail and which had no right to be on board the cruiser.

Shag lost sight of the dropping canvas as the boat made a veer in a seaward direction. Then all four men were piling into the stern boat. They dropped it as the cabin cruiser slackened speed, and began to ply the oars with all their strength.

For the first time, Shag saw the helmsman. It wasn't Cap Gumbert. Instead, the figure that sprang from the cabin was a form cloaked in black; a being who made a weird sight against the ruddy glow of the half-risen sun.

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Cloaked shoulders, the slouch-hatted head above them, were tokens of a master who belonged with night, but who had lingered to bring his presence into the glare of day.

The Shadow!

WHILE Shag snarled the name, its owner leaped for the top of the cabin. Tiny at that distance, The Shadow for once seemed helpless, for the bulletlike nose of the torpedo was boring in from closer range, fairly gorging the last stretch that lay ahead of it.

Leaping from the front of the cabin, The Shadow landed somewhere below four curious blades, that looked oddly like a propeller uplifted to the horizontal.

Instantly, the blades began to spin. As the boat's lazy drift carried it half about, Shag saw something rise in the air. He couldn't identify it, nor could his pals, for the sun's glow blinded them. Then came a flash that outdazzled that ruddy orb from the horizon.

The torpedo had struck. Instead of the Medea, it had found the tiny substitute craft that The Shadow had planted in its path. What the torpedo might have done to the liner could be gauged, though imperfectly, from what it did to the cabin cruiser.

The charge blasted the fifty-foot craft into thousands of fragments that scaled skyward, spreading fountain-fashion amid a briny geyser that rivaled famed Old Faithful. The blaze from that blast was tremendous; so was the roar that followed it. Echoes silenced the splash of descending water that pelted the sea with the fury of a cloudburst.

In place of flame, geyser, and timber fragments was a mass of quivering smoke, a black cloud caused by the boat's ignited fuel, streaked with white layers provided by explosive mixtures released from the torpedo.

Above that smoke was another object, visible at last, a thing that reeled amid the myriad air currents produced by the explosion. It was incredible enough to be the spirit of the vanished cabin cruiser, taking to a higher zone. It was a wingless autogiro, slanting crazily while the spinning blades above it tried to clutch a sure grip on the unstable air.

Spreading smoke curled about the curious ship. Then, as the smoke billows straightened, so did the giro. Triumphant, it spun upward, rising from the grayish cloud like a phoenix taking wing from the ashes of its past.

Perhaps imaginations had been enlarged by that amazing spectacle, for certain witnesses thought they heard a quivering burst of laughter rise above the giro's motor roar. Those who thought they caught that sound were persons who had cause to fear The Shadow's power: Shag Rengle and the crew aboard the sloop.

They had seen The Shadow block off disaster from the Medea by a move that offered death to few, instead of many. It had been a feat of well-calculated navigation, and crooks might actually had admired it, had The Shadow finally sacrificed himself to save the Medea.

But The Shadow had not only ordered his agents clear from danger; he had literally launched himself from the very midst of doom, to find life instead of suicide.

SHAG and his fellows could not stomach that result. They wanted blood: The Shadow's life along with the lives of other likely victims. Shag howled an order that his pals sought to follow before it had cleared his lips.

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They leaped for the machine guns. Some aimed for the autogiro, which was spinning almost overhead. Others, seeing that those guns were already trained on the target, swung their own weapons toward the stern of the Medea, where the rails were lined with crew and passengers, ignorant of danger.

One gun covered the little boat that The Shadow's agents were pulling toward the Medea, where shouts of acclaim were rising in appreciation of their heroism. Doom again impended, but its stroke never came. Shag Rengle and his incorrigible crew weren't starting murder. They were actually engaged in suicide.

The only guns that had a chance to chatter were the ones most rapidly aimed. They were training on the autogiro, by this time several hundred feet above them, a moving target difficult for ordinary machine guns to locate.

Shooting at aircraft was a new experience for Shag's gunners, and The Shadow did not allow them time to learn their faults.

Something was dropping from the autogiro. It looked like a gleaming egg, as it whistled down toward the sloop's deck. Someone yelled, others looked up. Machine guns were forgotten, as men dived overboard.

Shag saw them go, a mere handful of his total crew. He wheeled about, his face an uncouth sight with its bloodshot eyes, hammered nose, and teeth that his lips could not cover.

Shag caught a glimmer as the egglike object landed. It was the last thing that he ever saw. He and the men about him were obliterated by a blast that seemed small in comparison to the torpedo's explosion, yet which performed its own particular duty in comprehensive fashion.

With the same precision that he had used in navigating into the torpedo's path, The Shadow had laid a bomb within six feet of the sloop's very center. The exploding egg ripped the ship in half, and banished all humanity within a reasonable range.

Shag and the cream of his crooked crew were gone, along with their machine guns. A few stragglers were pitched from bow and stern, where they struggled madly to keep afloat, like those already overboard. Boats from the Medea set out to pick up the survivors.

The Shadow's agents had reached the liner. They were pointing out the other boats that made up Shag's flotilla. Men were on the decks of the disguised fishing boats, hands above their heads. They had seen Shag's fate and didn't want to share it. Surrender was their only policy.

Off to the northwest, fading blades were whirling a farewell from the sky. Hundreds of passengers were watching the autogiro's departure, wondering what new mission called the superman who piloted it.

Perhaps they could have guessed, had they been told of The Shadow's earlier adventures; but that involved a mystery that still shrouded The Shadow's past. Even his agents had not heard all the facts relating to it.

How he had escaped death in the depths of Windward Castle, to rejoin his agents and save the Medea from destruction, was something that only The Shadow and one other person knew!

CHAPTER XVIII. CRIME'S MASTER

BELOW the cove that offered steep access to Windward Castle was a snug, secluded cottage that crooks had visited once, then ignored. It belonged to a family named Elville, and Janet Barden had been a summer guest at the place.

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Driving coastward from Bangor, Janet had chosen the cottage for her first stop. Along the wood road, she thought that she had seen a light in the cottage, but decided that it was merely the reflection of the car's headlights. The cottage was entirely dark when Janet unlocked the front door.

The upstairs room was dark, for thick trees cut off the sunrise that was clouded over along the coast line. Lighting an oil lamp, Janet laid her revolver on the table beside it, opened a bureau drawer and brought out sneakers, slacks and flannel shirt.

When she tugged at the sleeves of her rain-drenched dress, they wouldn't loosen. Determinedly, Janet peeled the dress clear from her head and shoulders, flipped it inside out and tried to yank the sleeves from the inside. While thus engaged, she heard the door swing open.

Janet stiffened at sight of an aimed gun muzzle. She tried to reach for her own revolver, but found herself completely handcuffed by the dangling dress. Sinking her slender form back against the wall, she gave a hopeless gasp.

Then, to her astonishment, she recognized the man behind the gun. It was Bob Osdan. He smiled, dropped the .38 in his pocket.

"You look cute," laughed Bob, "but very funny, too!"

Janet didn't know whether to be embarrassed or indignant. At first she frowned, then saw the humor of the situation just as Bob was bowing himself out through the door.

"Tell me when you're ready," he called back. "I want to talk with you. It's quite important!"

Janet followed to the door, thrust her dress-laden arms through the half-closed space.

"Grab," she said, "and hold on!"

Bob gripped the dress, saw a shapely form in pink go backward into the room as Janet managed to wrest her arms from the troublesome sleeves. A few minutes later, the door opened, revealing the girl in slacks and flannel shirt.

BOB recounted his adventures, up to the time that The Shadow's agents had taken over Cap's boat.

"Fitz Jarnow had it figured right," asserted Bob, "but I didn't get a chance to introduce myself to Shag Rengle. If I had, Fitz would have given me an O.K., if Shag had phoned him. I guess poor Fitz has given me up as lost."

"But who brought you here?" persisted Janet.

"The Shadow's men, of course!" laughed Bob. "This is where The Shadow met them and went on the boat. They loaded on an autogiro, farther up the coast."

"What?"

"An autogiro. A chap named Crofton flew it there for The Shadow, and went along with them. At least, that's what I heard. I was left here, to look after the prisoners."

"The prisoners?"

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"Cap and his bunch. They're down in the cellar. Don't worry; they won't get loose! Not after the way Jericho tied them!"

Bob was lighting a cigarette. As he blew out the match, he eyed Janet, studied her new attire from head to foot and asked:

"What brought you here, and where are you going in that getup?"

"I came myself," returned Janet, with a shake of her tousled hair, "and I'm going to Windward Castle."

"You aren't –"

Bob halted Janet had her revolver again. His gun, loaned him by Cliff, was in his pocket. Bob was facing a muzzle backed by the same gaze that he had seen that night in the cab.

Quietly, Bob said: "I thought that we were friends."

"We are," returned Janet. "If you'll promise to come along with me, I'll depend on you."

"I'll go," agreed Bob. "But I won't let you rush in foolishly. I've been thinking a lot about you, Janet."

"You have?"

"I've been thinking you're the swellest girl I ever met!" affirmed Bob. "I've been waiting to tell you so. What I felt was real, Janet –"

"I know." The girl's tone was soft, her gaze seemed to drift back to the past. "I didn't forget you, Bob. I don't know why, but" her eyes steadied, her thoughts returned to her present purpose "but what about going to the castle?"

Bob's hand lifted slowly, drew Janet's chin toward him. His face was bending forward; Janet let her chin nestle in his hand. Their lips met in a long, expressive kiss.

It wasn't Janet who let those lingering moments end. Bob remembered his promise, felt that he should prove his love by showing that he meant to see the agreement through.

His hand descended to Janet's arm. He turned the girl toward the door. Eyes straight ahead, Bob was unconscious of the admiring gaze the girl gave him, when he announced:

"We're going to the castle. We'll see this through together, Janet. After that, we're going other places many of them always together –"

FOLLOWING a path made plain by increasing daylight, Janet and Bob reached a clump of bushes opposite the rock-lined entrance to the castle cellar. Her trust in Bob complete, the girl agreed to wait until they could be sure that their approach was unnoticed.

Bob's advice was excellent. As they watched and listened, they heard sounds among the rocks. Then figures crept into sight from the lower path. They counted eight men in the cluster, all with revolvers and automatics; then Janet spied a tall, blond-haired girl.

"Gwendolyn!"

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Bob heard Janet's surprised gasp.

"Gwendolyn Marcy?" he inquired. "You've met her?"

"I certainly have!" smiled Janet. "She's a sweet child, Gwendolyn is! The one time I met her, she loaned me her best gown and let me keep a date she had arranged. Gwendolyn went to bed instead."

"Was she ill?"

"I don't think so. She preferred not to take some pills I offered her" Janet gestured with her revolver "out of this gun!"

Bob chuckled, as he began to understand. Janet gripped his arm tensely. Something was due to happen over by the rocky entrance. Gwendolyn had finished a brief conference with her distinguished-looking companions. Outargued, she returned to her place along the path, while they turned and filed toward the castle entrance.

One man advanced, while the others waited. A muffled gunshot sounded. The advance man staggered out from the passage, three rough-clad men following him, one with a smoking revolver. Instantly, Gwendolyn's tribe opened fire, riddling their three opponents.

Ignoring their fallen companion, they charged in through the entrance. More muffled shots were heard, coming with the rapid succession of a barrage. Wisps of bluish smoke were floating out from the hollow in the rocks. Janet's grip went limp on Bob's arm.

A man crawled out from the entrance. His creep was slow, for his body was tilted to the right. He was one of Gwendolyn's followers, and when he tried to lift his good arm, he caved in the opposite direction. Flat on the ground, he managed to raise his hand and beckon.

Gwendolyn arrived on the run, alert and trim in her hiking costume of green jodhpurs and short-sleeved polo shirt to match. Stooping beside the dying spy, Gwendolyn heard the words he uttered. Rising, she started boldly through the entrance.

Janet's fingers tightened, until they dug through Bob's sleeve. Her nerve had returned at sight of Gwendolyn's boldness. If the other blonde was game enough to meet what lay ahead, so was Janet. Bob didn't hold back when he heard her say:

"Let's go!"

ONCE through the entrance, they came upon fallen fighters, representing both factions. Seemingly, spies and crooks had eliminated each other, leaving the way clear. Gwendolyn must have found the stairway, for she was not in sight when Bob and Janet reached it.

Janet knew the way. Arriving in the ground-floor hall, she and Bob heard Gwendolyn on the stairs to the balcony. They followed, not realizing that they might be due for trouble after Gwendolyn had passed it. They saw the open door of the control room, started through it.

Suddenly pressed by guns, they halted helplessly and let their own weapons fall. Bob didn't recognize the man who had them covered, but he guessed correctly that his captor was Pete Andro.

As for Janet, she knew the smooth, smug face that viewed her above a revolver barrel. She had been trapped

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by Edward Weddleman.

It was Pete who snarled in welcome: "Step right in! The chief's here. He'll be mighty glad to see you!"

"Zelta!" gasped Janet. "Gwendolyn has joined up with him! I should have known!"

She halted, surprised. Deep in the room stood Gwendolyn, her own hands raised, her face puckered in a baby stare, as she viewed a long, sallow face whereon lips formed a triumphant smirk. The man wasn't Fernand Zelta, yet he was master here.

Who he was, Janet could not guess any more than could Gwendolyn. It was Bob Osden who ejaculated the name of the brainy plotter whose face, for the first time, seemed to reveal his criminal character.

Bob's tone was a hollow gasp:

"Fitz Jarnow!"

CHAPTER XIX. THE LAST FIGHT

FITZ JARNOW was seated in an armchair like a king enthroned, surveying two prisoners who faced him gloomily from a corner where they stood, disarmed. Those two were Bob and Janet. While Fitz studied them with hardened eyes, his hands were stroking a slender arm that lay across his knees.

The arm was Gwendolyn's. She was seated on a footstool beside the chair, lifting a smile in Fitz's direction. As Fitz's hand reached Gwendolyn's, it felt the pressure of her fingers. He let one arm glide around the blonde's shoulders gave her a tight squeeze.

"You're nifty, kid," said Fitz, looking into Gwendolyn's blue eyes. "I don't blame you for teaming up with Zelta. Anyway, he handed you a phony bill of goods, about being the big noise here. He's just another has-been, like The Shadow!"

Weddleman was tuning in the radio, while Pete Andro weighed a gun, keeping his eye on Bob and Janet.

"Turn off that squawker!" snapped Fitz to Weddleman. "We don't have to know about the Medea. Shag will give us the story when he shows up with the mazuma."

Weddleman cut off the dial. Fitz again turned his eyes toward Bob and Janet.

"So you never went to see Shag," grunted Fitz, as he looked toward Bob. "I ought to have figured you were yellow. Shag was tipped to have you knocked off at the Black Hole. I guess he mistook some other boob for you. Well, you and this dame" he was eyeing Janet coldly "both pulled a boner, counting on The Shadow."

Fitz leaned back, to draw Gwendolyn closer. She gave an appreciative shiver, nestled her face in Fitz's elbow and pursed her lips for a kiss. Fitz gave her one, then tilted his head back.

"First it was Sigmar," he recalled. "He thought he was smart. He was in the spy racket, and he needed somebody to snatch old Christopher Barden. So he came to the joint and talked terms with me. I agreed to it, for twenty grand.

"He told me the whole lay, Sigmar did. That's when I got my big idea. Hearing Weddleman had sold out once, I figured he'd sell out again. I sent Pete up here, like he was to pull the snatch. Instead, he and

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Weddleman got together.

"They took care of old Barden, and the news was piped to Sigmar, by Weddleman, that the job had been pulled. I was to meet up with Sigmar and get the twenty grand; I did, and I croaked Sigmar, to close the bargain."

Fitz's admission of the murder explained something else to Bob. It told why Fitz had promptly loaned him the fifteen hundred dollars. Just by luck, Bob had come into the picture, better than Fitz had planned. Sending Bob to the scene of crime was better than merely letting the police find the promissory note.

It was Fitz who had sent the tip-off to the police. He had also put some mobbies on duty, to make sure Bob didn't get away. When Sigmar's friends, coming to a meeting, had run into a fight with The Shadow, Fitz's thugs had lost their heads and started a later fray.

"I saw what Sigmar didn't see," declared Fitz, proudly. "There was a chance here for big crime, with all those gold-ships coming in. The spy-racket was the blind for it. The Feds got worrying about Zelta, and never thought of me."

Fitz chuckled. In his opinion, Zelta would still be due to take the rap, if the Feds ever caught up with him. He was glad that the spies had thinned out the guards at the castle. More men would be coming in from the Medea job.

"Getting back to you two," declared Fitz, suddenly, leaning forward to glare at Bob and Janet, "I'm going to croak you both! You should be dead anyway, Osden, and this Barden dame you're nuts about can't go back into circulation. She'd yap about her uncle –"

GWENDOLYN was tugging at Fitz's sleeve. Noting the interruption, the big-shot turned his head about. He seemed angry, until Gwendolyn spoke:

"Why croak them? I have a better idea!"

There was a harshness to Gwendolyn's tone that made Fitz listen. Whispering in the big-shot's ear, Fitz heard the girl say something that intrigued him. He nodded.

"For her" Fitz pointed to Janet "while we've got Osden here so he can't stop it. Wait'll I tell them –"

"Let me tell Miss Barden," interposed Gwendolyn, sweetly. "It was my idea, wasn't it?"

"Go ahead, kid. Tell her."

Clenching her fists as Gwendolyn approached, Janet wished she could claw her rival to shreds. She guessed that Gwendolyn had suggested some vengeful torture, that it would be Janet's lot to receive. Janet was ready to undergo any torment that Gwendolyn's spite could have pictured, but she couldn't bear the thought of Bob's misery, when he witnessed the ordeal.

Side-stepping, Gwendolyn placed her lips to Janet's ear and whispered the most amazing thing the girl had ever heard.

"Start to look scared as hell," Gwendolyn said. "I'm with you, but I don't want Fitz to know it. Tip the boy friend off when they're shoving you downstairs. Stall when they get you to the big hall. I'll start shooting from the balcony, and I'll kick a couple of extra guns through, if I get the chance."

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Janet didn't look horrified enough to suit Gwendolyn. Sneaking her fingers to Janet's arm, Gwendolyn gave a sharp pinch, urging her to play the game. The whimper that Janet uttered brought a pang to Bob. He glared at Gwendolyn, as the blonde strolled back to her place at Fitz's side.

"That was dishing it, toots!" approved Fitz. "All right, Pete. Start the pair of them downstairs. I'll go with you."

The procession started. Weddleman didn't join; instead, he went into the laboratory. Fitz beckoned to Gwendolyn.

"Come on, sugar."

"I'll be along," returned Gwendolyn languidly, as she busied herself with compact and lipstick that she drew from a pocket of her polo shirt. "You start the fun, Fitzy. I don't want to be bored watching the preliminaries. Besides" she pouted as she dabbed the lipstick "you want Gwen to look pretty, don't you?"

Before they reached the bottom of the stairs, Janet had whispered word of Gwendolyn's reform to Bob. Mutually, the two prisoners held back when Fitz and Pete tried to force them across the huge hall. Growled threats accompanied the prods of guns, until a voice commanded from the balcony:

"Drop that gun, Fitz! The same goes for you, Pete!"

It was Gwendolyn. She had gathered two forgotten revolvers and was covering a crook with each. Like her tone, her pose was firm, until a pair of hands clamped her wrists from in back. Gwendolyn screeched as the guns were twisted from her grip, to drop to the hall below.

Weddleman had spotted the blonde and trailed her from the control room. Gwendolyn was helpless, but Bob and Janet were springing to claim the weapons that she had lost.

Their desperate attempt seemed suicide, for Fitz and Pete had time to aim before the guns could be reached. Yet Bob and Janet felt that death would be preferable to whatever else the future held.

Guns spoke, the instant that the prisoners began their dash. Two figures hit the floor. Fitz Jarnow and Pete Andro were the pair that sprawled. Fitz was dropped by a shot from the far side of the balcony, Pete by one that came from a doorway in the great hall.

Rising with the echoes of those timely gun bursts came the strident laugh of The Shadow!

THE cloaked avenger was the marksman on the balcony. He had arrived through the passage from the sea-wall promenade. While Bob stared upward, Janet saw the man whose shot had taken out Pete. He was coming from his doorway, the white-bearded man who had found The Shadow in the pit, a few nights before.

Arms extended, Christopher Barden received his sobbing niece. Then Janet, remembering a debt she owed, turned suddenly about to look for Gwendolyn. She heard another shot, saw Gwendolyn break free from Weddleman.

Clutching a wounded shoulder, the smooth-faced technician sagged across the low rail of the balcony and toppled headlong to the stone floor below.

The Shadow had inserted another of his timely shots, thanks to a twist by Gwendolyn, which had turned

Weddleman about.

Battle, however, was not finished. Again, The Shadow's laugh announced its challenge. Reserve crooks heard it as they pounced in from the kitchen. Forgetting the persons in the hallway, they aimed for the black-cloaked figure on the balcony.

Fading along the balcony, The Shadow jabbed bullets from an unexpected angle. Bob Osden and Christopher Barden joined in the fire. Crooks turned in flight, to be met by Barden's faithful men, armed with rolling pins and skillets. They were having their turn at last, and meant to make the most of it.

It wasn't the surge of those rebelling prisoners that caused the crooks to veer. The real factor was The Shadow's fire, which threatened to finish any lingering thugs. Madly, mobsters made for the stairway to the cellar. There, they ran into a bristling mass of guns, that spoke in unison before a single thug could fire.

Guided by Harry Vincent, a squad of Feds had arrived, under the leadership of Vic Marquette. The Feds had obliterated the last crew of mobbies belonging to Fitz Jarnow.

Among the rescued persons in the hallway, Vic Marquette spied Gwendolyn Marcy as she came trembling from the stairway. Her face lowered, the girl spoke her identity, and stretched forth her wrists to receive the handcuffs that were due her for her past misdeeds.

Janet saw the gesture and intervened. She was explaining how Gwendolyn had aided in the crisis. Somehow, Janet understood all that Gwendolyn would have liked to say, but couldn't.

"Carl Sigmar talked her into the spy game," declared Janet. "Gwendolyn felt the lure of it, but when she saw cold-blooded murder in the making, she showed herself true blue. She had nothing to do with Sigmar's death. Fitz Jarnow admitted that murder."

"That's not the count I want her on," returned Vic. "She's charged with aiding Fernand Zelta. We've got the whole dope on what happened last night in Boston; how she acted in place of Zelta, and lined up eight of the most notorious spies in the country, in order to –"

A sibilant tone interrupted. Vic Marquette recognized that whisper. His eyes raised toward the balcony, where Vic expected to see The Shadow.

Instead, the Fed saw Fernand Zelta!

THE face could not be mistaken. In Boston, Marquette had received a photograph of Zelta, bearing the master spy's own signature. Janet, too, knew Zelta by sight and could testify that it was he who stood there.

Before other hands could move, Zelta raised his own. Smoothing them across his face, he obliterated his straight-featured visage. Off went the gray-streaked wig, the putty that gave the nose its shape, together with the false chin that gave the face its triangular effect.

Just as those features received one hand's last sweep, the other hand brought forward the brim of a slouch hat. A lifting arm raised the folds of a lowered cloak. Only burning eyes remained, while hidden lips toned the weird mirth that no one but The Shadow could produce!

The answer struck Vic Marquette with a flash. No wonder recovered plans had found their way to Washington! They were all that Zelta had obtained. Last night's conclave in Boston had not been a conspiracy toward the distribution of military secrets among a selected group of topnotch spies.

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It had been a plan to send those very spies as shock troops against the crooks who guarded Windward Castle; to sacrifice one breed of evildoers against another, that the Feds might enter unopposed!

There was no such person as Fernand Zelta. His personality was a device used by The Shadow to break up espionage in the United States. Through that amazing hoax, The Shadow had contributed a signal service to the government.

Vic Marquette looked at Gwendolyn's wrists, then at the handcuffs. He shook his head.

"I won't be able to oblige you," said Vic. "These bracelets aren't your size, Miss Marcy!"

The Shadow's laugh trailed from the balcony, faded as he left by the passage through which he had arrived, following his speedy trip from sea. The others were likewise leaving the castle of death, out by the route that sided on the cliff.

"No wonder The Shadow kept his eye on me," said Bob to Janet. "He must have had Fitz Jarnow spotted early. That tip-off to the police was pretty near a give-away. So was the mob outside Sigmar's place.

"Fitz had a pile of money that night. Maybe The Shadow figured it came from Sigmar; he'd been checking on the fellow, you know. Most everybody overlooked Fitz, because they were thinking in terms of Zelta. Being Zelta, The Shadow had a different slant."

Janet nodded. She was thinking of how much The Shadow had learned from her before she met him as himself. He had known everything that she discussed with Fernand Zelta, the man who certainly had no country, because he never had existed!

Christopher Barden pointed out the trapdoor as they passed it. He was telling how he had found The Shadow and decided that the cloaked fighter was a friend.

"I had a table knife," said Barden, "that I hoped to use on Louie, the crook who brought my meals. The Shadow gave me a gun in place of it. He shared my cell, and made trips up through the air shaft, and last night he released me.

"I was outside the cell when Louie arrived there. I locked him in the cell which reminds me! I must tell Marquette that Louie is still there. Those bracelets" Barden smiled at Gwendolyn "will be just about Louie's size!"

From the path outside the castle they heard a roar from the broad, flat roof that topped the great hall. Janet leaned her head on Bob's shoulder, to watch the autogiro take off into the clearing sky.

Janet's smile was a farewell to The Shadow, with a wish shared by all who saw that take-off that his success would long continue. For they knew, without a word expressed, that The Shadow was faring on another mission, that would bring new life to those oppressed by crime!

THE END