

The City of Doom

Maxwell Grant

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CHAPTER I. AT THE STEEL WORKS

THICK night engulfed the valley about the town of Hampstead. One area alone showed brilliance; that was the central district of the little city, where rows of street lamps shone and electric signs added their blinking brightness.

Near the town, a few specks of light showed against the hillsides; but beyond was a blanket of blackness that seemed a shroud of doom. A stranger, viewing the town from some near-by slope, could well have pictured the darkness as a monster, about to swallow the city.

Nor would the thought have been too fanciful. Hampstead was a city touched by terror – a town where disaster had already taken toll.

Men who passed upon the streets were melancholy. Smiles were forced when friends exchanged their greetings. Though business was as usual, this was a surface indication only. Secretly, every citizen of Hampstead held a horror of the future.

Out where the railroad line reached the city limits, stood the long, low-roofed buildings of the Hampstead Steel Works. There, quivering light flickered from frosted windows, accompanied by the thrum and clank of

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machinery. The steel plant was working to capacity. The night shift was on duty.

Two men were standing in a little office, staring through the glass panel of a door that opened into the main furnace room. They were watching a crew of men at work – a score of hardy laborers whose faces showed grimy against the ruddy glare from open-fronted furnaces.

One of the observing men was the foreman of the furnace room. His companion was the general supervisor of the steel plant.

"IT'S been like clockwork tonight, Mr. Harlin," declared the foreman, solemnly. "Not a thing to trouble us. Every man's been right at his job."

Harlin nodded.

"I've been watching them, Steve," he told the foreman. "This department is running as smoothly as every other one. But we can't be sure about anything."

"On account of those other troubles?"

Another nod from Harlin. The supervisor pulled a folded newspaper from his pocket and tapped its headlines.

"This town is jinxed," he stated, seriously. "The people here know it. Our local newspapers have tried to softpedal it; but they haven't in other cities. Look at this sheet, Steve."

The foreman took the newspaper, studied it while the supervisor kept steady watch through the window in the door.

"Whew!" Steve's utterance was spontaneous. "They sure made a big howdy-do about those two wrecks in the railroad yards!"

"Why shouldn't they?" demanded Harlin. "Both were unexplainable. One would have been bad enough; but a second one, at the same spot, is ten times worse. Read what it says about the quarry company. They're shutting down."

"Afraid to bring in dynamite," nodded Steve. "On account of danger in the yards."

The supervisor continued his watch, while the foreman devoured more news from the out-of-town journal. Steve was mumbling in surprised tone, half to himself, half to the supervisor.

"Eight men killed in those smashes! We thought it was only three. Here are facts on that boiler explosion at the dye plant last week. Two men died along with the engineer! Say, if this gets out –"

The supervisor snapped a query that interrupted the foreman's muttering:

"Who's on the ladle, Steve?"

The foreman laid the newspaper aside and stared through the square window. A huge device shaped like a mammoth cheese-box was moving slowly through the furnace room, suspended from an overhead track. Workmen had ceased their labors while it approached. Harlin was eyeing the advance of the metal monster.

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"Old Joe Grandy's handling it," declared the foreman. "Best man in the place. Always holds up when he gets close to the pouring platform, so as to check it for himself."

"Good!" approved the supervisor. "Grandy is reliable. Let's go out, though, and watch while he lets the ladle ride."

THE two men stepped from the office. The mammoth ladle halted as they approached it. They saw a stocky, gray-haired man climb down from a perch where the controls were located. Spryly, he stepped to the pouring platforms, which were at the side of the big room.

Checking those platforms was the foreman's job. It had been done; otherwise, no order would have been given for the ladle to make its trip. But old Joe Grandy took nothing for granted. His job was to tilt that ladle when it reached the pouring platforms; to loose tons of molten steel from the great cauldron that he controlled. Old Joe was making sure that the platforms and their troughs were ready.

"Grandy's the right man," affirmed the supervisor, nodding to Steve, the foreman. "We'll put his system in the regulations: Always stop the ladle short of the pouring platforms; make final inspection, then bring up the ladle."

"That's what Grandy's going to do now," returned Steve. Then, with a laugh: "Look how spry old Joe is! Shoving back those fellows who want to boost him up to the controls! He can make the climb himself."

Workers by the pouring platforms had seen the foreman. They were signaling that the second inspection had shown all in order. Others, beyond the pouring platform were chatting as they stood beneath the bulk of the motionless ladle.

"Steve" ripped Harlin, suddenly. "What's making old Grandy wait? Why don't he move the ladle up to the platforms? That molten steel can't wait all night."

"He's ready to move it now," snapped back the foreman. "There he goes, handling the controls. Only five feet more and –"

Steve's voice broke with a gasp. Rooted, he stood goggle-eyed; then his new words came with a terrified shriek:

"Grandy's at the wrong lever! Look out – up by the platforms –"

The cry was too late. Old Grandy had swung away from the levers that controlled the forward motion of the ladle. He had placed his hand upon another rod; he was tugging it. The ladle was tilting; a yawning mouth was opening in its side.

Nothing could have halted the deluge that came. Not even old Joe Grandy; for he, least of all, seemed to realize his mistake. That was evidenced by the fact that his back was turned toward the tilting cauldron, giving him no chance to swing away to the safety of his perch.

Out from the mammoth ladle came a cataract of liquid steel, more terrible than the flaming lava of a volcano. With its first gulp, the surge of molten metal overwhelmed the unfortunate man who had released it. Grandy, a shriek upon his lips, was plucked from the forward edge of his control perch. A bobbing shape in a hissing, metallic wave, the gray-haired man was pitched to the floor beside the pouring platforms.

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As the wave struck, five other men were caught within its path. Roaring, its own weight adding to the quick tilt of the ladle, the molten steel crashed with the power of a Niagara, engulfing the doomed men below.

Not one of the five could scramble to safety. The cries that they managed to utter were brief – a momentary recognition of the quick death which was coming to them.

Steel scorched flesh, withering its victims before their bodies could sense the pain of the terrific heat. A blast of torrid air swept through the huge room, drowning the fumes of the furnaces. Then molten steel was everywhere, pouring, spreading, seeking lower levels while men found their legs and ran shrieking from the monstrous substance that sought them.

STEVE bolted forward. Harlin grabbed the foreman, hurled him back against the office door. There was no help for the men upon the floor, except the aid that they could give themselves. Harlin, above the level of the flow, held his vantage point and shouted advice to the men.

Some heard the supervisor and heeded. They leaped for iron steps between the furnaces; scrambled upward to levels of safety. Others did not hear. Confused, they lost all sense of direction. Harlin saw three more workers go to doom. Spreading steel caught their ankles, seemed to trip them as they howled. They sprawled, splashing, into the hellish river that had gripped them.

A fourth man, farther away, stumbled at the foot of an iron stairway. He could not follow Harlin's call; but a companion heard the supervisor's shout. From the steps, the other worker snatched the last man to safety. The steel lapped the base of the steps; its heat made the ironwork glow and quiver.

The supervisor sagged, weakened by his ordeal. Nine men had perished including old Joe Grandy, whose slip had loosed the molten horror. The liquid metal had reached its limits; it had lapped the fronts of furnaces, found an emergency doorway. But that would be its farthest mark.

Steadying himself, Harlin managed to reach the office. He was looking for Steve, to tell him that the steel would harden. There would be no more human toll; but other loss would prove tremendous. Harlin found the foreman at the telephone.

"I've called for ambulances!" gulped Steve. "Thanks, Mr. Harlin, for hauling me back! I'd most certainly have jumped in there –"

The foreman buried his head in his hands; the supervisor found a chair.

"No use, those ambulances," he choked. "Not even hearses could find work here, Steve! There'll be no bodies from that mess. They were swallowed alive, Steve, lost in that steel! It happened – worse than I feared."

The clang of ambulances was already sounding. The wail of a huge siren was rising from the steel works. As Steve arose and pressed open a window to relieve the stifling atmosphere, he and Harlin could see the lights of automobiles stopping on the highway that led into Hampstead.

Once again, stark terror had found this city of doom. The siren's wail; the clang of bells; the shouts of men outside – all were proclaiming the horrendous news.

Rescuers, yanking open a door, saw the seething spread of steel that glistened in the glow of furnaces. They heard the calls of men who were isolated in spots of safety – shouts that warned them to stay back and let the metal cool.

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The word passed in terrified tones. It stopped the arriving ambulances. It came to squads of men from other portions of the plant and held them, in awed groups, whispering the news of tragedy.

Those whispers reached the space where cars had pulled in from the highway. Breathless men told others of the terror that had struck; how rescue would be impossible for those who had felt the touch of living, burning steel.

WITHIN the window of a coupe, a silent listener caught those tragic mutters. His eyes turned toward the building where the hellish stream had done its work. The driver of that coupe had chanced to reach the outskirts of Hampstead just as the steel plant's siren had broken loose with its banshee screech of disaster.

A lone watcher among the throngs who huddled about the steel works – such was the arrival in the coupe. Yet he, more than any other, held regret for the tragedy that had occurred. He had come to Hampstead with a single mission: to prevent disasters such as this. He had reached the town too late to halt the new stroke of unexplainable deaths.

The silent watcher in the coupe was The Shadow. Master of crime detection, he had divined the presence of an evil, unseen hand behind the horrors which had come to Hampstead.

There was determination in the blaze of The Shadow's steady eyes. This tragedy would be the last. No longer would destruction stalk through the city of doom.

CHAPTER II. FROM THE DARK

Two hours had passed since the catastrophe at the steel plant. Lights were glowing in the large furnace room, where workers were present, using electric drills upon chunks of hardened steel. Outside, the glimmer of flashlights told that guards were patrolling the vicinity of the plant.

There were lights in another building. They came from windows on the second floor and marked the offices of the steel company. There was a downstairs door, where a guard stood on duty, chatting with a companion.

"The big guns is upstairs," informed the guard, in an undertone. "They showed up half an hour ago."

"Listening to Harlin and Steve, are they?"

"Sure. The coroner's there with them. Harlin looked pretty shaky when he went up."

"He ought to. Seeing them fellows get swallowed by that steel must have been kind of tough to look at."

With this comment, the guard's friend started away. The guard called after him:

"See if you can find Travers over by the furnace. Tell him it's time I was off the trick. Have him send over some fellow from his own crew."

Three minutes passed, while the guard paced back and forth in front of the dim light that came from the doorway. There was a stir in darkness close by. The guard wheeled, with the query:

"Who's there?"

"Came over to relieve you," responded a gruff voice. "Mr. Travers sent me."

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The guard did not see the speaker; but took it for granted that he was the proper man. He grunted a good night and walked away from the door. It was not until he had passed a corner that a figure stepped into the light.

That form was cloaked in black. The arrival was The Shadow. He had heard the conversation; he had taken advantage of it. He had bluffed the guard into believing that he was the man sent as relief watcher.

THE SHADOW did not linger at the doorway. He knew that Travers's man would soon arrive. He wanted the new guard to think that the old one had simply gone off duty because his time was up. The Shadow's own work lay elsewhere.

Entering the doorway, The Shadow took to a darkened flight of stairs. He ascended and reached a hallway that showed a narrow shaft of light from a partly opened door. Edging in from darkness, The Shadow saw the interior of an office.

Officials were gathered about a table. With these company men was another whom The Shadow knew must be the coroner. Harlin was seated at the far end of the table. The supervisor looked pale; his voice came brokenly as he spoke.

"That's the whole story!" declared Harlin. "Just as I saw it, gentlemen. Nothing was wrong mechanically. The mistake was a human one; and those kind are bound to happen."

"We have your full report on Joseph Grandy," returned the coroner, fingering a sheaf of papers. "I regard it as thorough, Mr. Harlin. We can accept the statements of the foreman and three laborers that Grandy was in full possession of his faculties."

"The most reliable man in the plant," stated Harlin. "Always sober and conscientious. A loyal fellow, too, old Joe was. He didn't know the slip he'd made; if he had, he wouldn't have been the first to go."

The coroner drew a penciled diagram from the papers. It was a sketch made by Harlin, showing the position of the levers that controlled the big ladle.

"I think that this explains it," decided the coroner, with a nod. "With all his carefulness, Grandy performed certain actions automatically. He was farther forward than he realized. When he reached for the starting lever, he grasped the tilting device instead."

"That's the way I saw it, coroner," assured the supervisor. "The diagram bears out my explanation."

The coroner arose; he put Harlin's report into a briefcase: then passed carbon sheets across the table to the supervisor. Other men were rising; The Shadow saw them pause. One of the officials had a query.

"Tell us this, coroner," he asked, in troubled tone. "Do you connect this accident with the other disasters that have occurred in Hampstead?"

Emphatically, the coroner shook his head.

"But they look like sabotage," persisted the official. "This is the fourth accident; and every one brought heavy property damage along with its toll of life."

The coroner reached in his briefcase and brought out some sheets of yellow paper. He passed them across the table.

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"File those with your own duplicate report," he suggested. "They give the details of the explosion at the dye works, the smash-ups in the railroad yards. Compare them with the disaster here. You'll see that I am right. In not one instance, was there any outside factor.

"I've had lots of experience, gentlemen. Sometimes accidental deaths are uncanny. Like an epidemic, you might say. A year – two years – no trouble; then they hit in a bunch. That doesn't mean a thing, unless there's proof that some one was culpable or negligent. Not one of these cases shows any such indications."

HARLIN had taken the duplicate sheets. The Shadow saw the supervisor place them in a table drawer. Then it was time to step away; for the men were coming toward the door. The Shadow swung to a darkened corner; when the door opened, it moved outward and covered him completely.

Harlin was the last man from the office. He waited while the others went down the stairs to the lighted entry at the bottom. Then the supervisor clicked off the office light. The top landing was dark when he closed the door and locked it. Harlin had no chance to see The Shadow.

Soon after the supervisor's footsteps had faded, a tiny flashlight shone upon the office door. Its glow was but twice the size of the keyhole; but it was sufficient for The Shadow to work upon the lock. A gloved hand introduced a long thin instrument that resembled a pair of pliers. A click came from the lock. The Shadow opened the office door.

Using his flashlight within the office, The Shadow found the drawer that contained the report sheets. He spread the duplicate papers and began a close study of past events in Hampstead. The Shadow soon learned that the coroner's claims were well supported.

The boiler blast at the dye plant had occurred shortly after a routine inspection. The cause had evidently been the failure of a worn safety valve. The engineer had made the inspection himself; he was a man of long service, who would not have omitted an essential detail; nor have been so foolish as to tamper with the machinery.

The first wreck in the railroad yards had occurred when a switchman highballed a shifting locomotive along the main track. The engine had taken the siding instead, mowing down the switchman who stood in its path.

The second wreck had been a brakeman's error. He had been crushed when a string of freight cars crashed into a motionless line of day coaches. In both cases, additional lives had been lost.

Tonight's disaster at the steel plant resembled the others, in two definite ways. First: that no one from outside had tampered with any machinery; second: that old Joe Grandy, like others who had died before him, had been sound mentally and alert in action. Not one of the men who had borne the brunt of disaster could have chosen to make a deliberate mistake.

Behind disasters stood crime, engendered by some master-plotter. A genius of evil was at work in Hampstead. Through some process, this unknown criminal had managed to control the minds of unwitting men. A master of murder and destruction had chosen to work with human tools, of whom old Joe Grandy was the fourth.

The fact that this theory smacked of the incredible was something that gave it strength. There was a reason, however, why The Shadow accepted it immediately. A few days ago, The Shadow had sent a trusted agent to Hampstead to investigate disasters there. That agent's name was Harry Vincent. No word had been received from him since yesterday.

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Harry's disappearance had brought The Shadow to Hampstead. The steel plant disaster, at the very time of The Shadow's arrival, had simply added to the supersleuth's belief that crime stood behind every accident that had struck the city of doom.

EXTINGUISHING his flashlight, The Shadow left the company office. He reached the bottom of the stairs to find total darkness. No guard was present; if one had come on duty, he had gone when the officials departed.

The Shadow reached the highway, crossed it and arrived at his coupe, which he had wisely parked in the shelter of a side road before beginning his investigation. The car was just within the town limits of Hampstead. Ten minutes' drive would bring The Shadow to the heart of the little city.

That short journey was to be fraught with danger. Starting his car, The Shadow swung out to the main highway. He headed townward and came immediately to a quarter-mile stretch where buildings were few. Hardly had The Shadow struck this open space before a rakish touring car roared out from the darkness beside a closed filling station.

Instantly, The Shadow knew what was due. Prowlers had spotted his coupe near the steel plant. They had decided that the car belonged to some independent investigator. They had gone into ambush to waylay the coupe when it arrived.

A machine gun rattled. Instantly, The Shadow veered his coupe from the touring car's path. He swung his automobile into a ditch; let it careen and stop with a jolt, tilted far to the left. The men in the touring car thought that they had scored an instant hit. The rakish machine slowed as it swung toward the halted coupe.

An automatic spoke from the darkness of the ditch, just behind the coupe. The Shadow had dived from the wheel, unscathed. He had waited for close range; his first shot was aimed for the rear door of the touring car, where he knew the machine gunners would be.

A howl answered The Shadow's blast. He delivered a second gun-shot; another yell was the response. The Shadow had winged a second crook.

The touring car shot forward. Its canny driver gave it a zigzag twist, wheeling over so that the bulk of The Shadow's coupe would make the invisible marksman seek a new vantage point. The lights of the touring car blinked off. Its driver, knowing the road, was chancing darkness.

A mocking laugh sounded in the darkness of the ditch, as The Shadow boarded his tilted coupe. Victor in the short-lived fray, The Shadow had gained the proof he wanted. Crime lay behind the disasters in Hampstead – crime so big that it needed murderous crews to back it in a pinch.

This first encounter would bring others. Battles and opposition could produce clues. The Shadow was satisfied that his stay in Hampstead would lead him to a master-villain's lair.

CHAPTER III. THE DEATH THRUST

IT was half an hour before The Shadow reached the center of Hampstead, for he chose a roundabout course that finally brought him to an obscure garage. His purpose was not to avoid a new encounter; he would have welcomed such a fray. But The Shadow knew that there would be no new ambush.

Spies would be the next enemies. They would be watching for The Shadow's coupe, in hope of identifying its occupants. Hence The Shadow chose to enter Hampstead from another direction; to keep his car away from the main streets. He had, moreover, delayed five minutes during his circuit. In that interval he had changed

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the license plates on his coupe.

When The Shadow strolled from the obscure garage, he was no longer clad in black. Street lamps showed him dressed in a dark-gray suit. His features were full and bore little of the hawkish aspect which enemies identified with The Shadow's countenance. The Shadow was carrying a large suitcase, which contained his cloak and hat. He looked like a tourist who had stopped off in Hampstead.

The railroad station was near the garage. An approaching whistle told that a passenger train was due. Picking an obscure route, The Shadow neared the depot and stood by an old freight shed until the train arrived. A dozen passengers alighted; half of them had bags. The Shadow stepped up to the station platform and mingled with the small throng. Two arrivals were going toward an old sedan that served as taxi. The Shadow followed them.

The driver announced that his cab took passengers to the Hampstead House. The two men boarded the car and The Shadow joined them. They rode through the main streets and pulled up in front of a pretentious hotel. If spies were about, they took The Shadow merely for another passenger, who had come into town by train.

The Shadow let the two other men register first. He wrote his own name as "Henry Arnaud," with Chicago as his home city. The name and identity of Arnaud were The Shadow's own device. He used them upon occasion such as this.

THERE was a lone clerk at the desk, and only two bell boys available. This meant a delay in room assignments. The Shadow took advantage of it to note the lobby. He saw no potential spies. It was possible that crooks had decided to head for cover, after their fray. That was not surprising, since they had carried away two wounded men.

As he lingered by the hotel desk, secure in his role of Arnaud, The Shadow was rewarded for his courtesy in letting others register ahead of him. The hotel manager came from a little office, spoke to the clerk in an undertone that The Shadow caught.

"This man in 328," queried the manager. "You're sure that his luggage is gone?"

"Positive, sir!" replied the clerk. "He's jumped his bill, all right! Looks like he went out by the window."

"Three floors down?"

"Room 328 is over the kitchen roof, and that's two stories high, sir. The window was open when the maid found the room vacated. I told her to leave everything as it was."

"Humph! Let that room stay empty. I'll go up and look it over myself in the morning. Give me that fellow's full name and a report on what he looks like. He won't beat this hotel and get away with it!"

The Shadow thus learned new facts concerning his vanished agent. He had already known Harry's room number: 328. He had not known, however, whether Harry had left the hotel openly or been carried away a prisoner. Nor had The Shadow cared to make inquiry. The chance conversation had saved him such a task.

The room to which The Shadow was assigned happened to be on the fourth floor; but at a different side of the hotel than 328. The Shadow spent a short while in his room; then turned out the lights. Any observer would have supposed that he was either going down to the lobby or that he intended to retire. The Shadow did neither.

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From his suitcase, he removed black cloak and slouch hat. He tucked a brace of .45 automatics under the folds of his cloak. After donning thin black gloves, he added a tiny flashlight and a set of picks to his equipment. That done, The Shadow opened the door of the room and squeezed out into the corridor, blocking light from the hall.

There was a stairway leading down to the third floor. It was near Room 428, therefore The Shadow knew that it would offer convenient access to Harry's former room, just below. The stairway was but dimly lighted. The Shadow made a fleeting shape as he descended. At this third floor, he peered along the nearest corridor.

Crooks had captured Harry Vincent. There was a strong chance that they suspected their prisoner to be an aide of The Shadow. That, in itself, could have accounted for the ambush on the room. Crooks would also guess that The Shadow knew Harry's room number at the Hampstead House. They would expect him to visit it. This room might prove another ambush.

THE SHADOW eyed every visible door. From gloom, he had the advantage. The slightest motion would have told him that crooks were keeping watch on 328. No indication came. The Shadow deduced that crooks intended to keep clear of the hotel, particularly since they knew there would be a fuss about Harry's sudden departure.

The Shadow moved out into the corridor, reached the door of 328. He worked smoothly, quickly, with the lock. The key of his own room had given him sufficient idea of what the locks were like throughout the hotel. The door yielded.

The room was almost pitch-dark for it was at the back of the hotel, away from any street lights. The Shadow could feel a breeze from the open window. Approaching, he made out the flat shape of the kitchen roof not far below. There was another building across the street; blank-walled, it appeared to be the hotel garage. Two stories high, the building's roof was on a level with the window where The Shadow stood.

Turning from the wide-opened window, The Shadow moved about the room, blinking his flashlight in evasive fashion. He was looking for spots that might offer clues. His light dabbled the wall with a small, luminous circle; then touched doors, articles of furniture. Finally, it streaked along the floor.

There, The Shadow spied a clue. Straight across from the opened window was a small table that stood against the inner wall of the room, by the head of the bedstead. That table was slightly oblong. Marks in the carpet showed that it should stand endwise, with a short side against the wall.

The table, however, had been moved, to bring one of its broad sides against the wall. The Shadow saw a reason for the new position. Crosswise, the table could cover a greater stretch of wall. It had been placed thus to hide something on the wall.

The logical step was to remove the table from its position. The Shadow turned out his flashlight. His cloak swished in the darkness; but oddly, there was no sound of motion from the table. Once or twice, the flashlight blinked in guarded fashion, that was all. Then came a pause – an interval of fully a dozen seconds.

That time space was a lull before the surprise that came.

A sudden glare filled the room. It was the beam of a brilliant, straight-focused spotlight, coming from the garage roof across the way. Blazing in from darkness, the bright gleam showed the head of the bed; but not the table beside it. The reason was, that the table stood obscured by a crouched shape clad in black.

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It was a sight that some ambushed observer had hoped to see: The Shadow, stooped motionless, in front of that table. Hard upon the blaze of light came another occurrence, so swift that even The Shadow could not have wheeled in time to escape it. A driving object whistled through the window at terrific speed. Like an arrow, it found the cloak between the shoulders; drove to a stop and wavered.

The missile was a knife. It had buried itself full way to the hilt, in the shape beneath the black cloak. Slowly, the stooping form tumbled forward and sprawled in huddled fashion in front of the little table.

As the figure stilled upon the floor, the light from the garage roof was extinguished. Blackness took control along with silence. The death-thrust had been delivered; assassins were departing from the field. Well had they chosen their ambush.

MINUTES passed in the silent hotel room. A flashlight blinked from the corner, following along the floor. It reached the huddled form; a whispered laugh sounded in the darkness. A gloved hand plucked away the knife. It came easily; then the cloak was drawn aside. No knife-thrust had found The Shadow. The only victim had been a pillow from the bed.

From the moment that he had noted the turned table, The Shadow had expected a trap – because of the line to the opened window. He had used darkness to prepare a ruse; and his hoax had worked. The Shadow had tilted a chair back against the table, so neatly that only a scant half inch of chair top prevented the whole chair from toppling. Upon the seat of the chair he had placed a pillow; over it, his cloak, draped to form a shape when seen from without the window. The slouch hat had formed the last touch of deception.

The knife had driven through the back of the cloak; it had cleaved the pillow and its point had penetrated the woodwork of the chair. The force of the blow had been sufficient to make the chair back begin a slide from the table. It was the chair, muffled beneath cloak and pillow, that had thudded to the carpet like a huddling human figure.

Listening from a corner near the window, The Shadow had heard enough sounds when the spotlight was extinguished. He knew that his enemies had abandoned their post. This was his opportunity to finish his investigation.

In darkness, The Shadow moved away the table. He glimmered his flashlight upon the wall. There, in penciled letters on the wall-paper, he read:

R-6384

Had Harry Vincent left that clue? It seemed likely to The Shadow. Why had crooks not erased it? The answer was obvious: they had guessed that the penciled marks would interest The Shadow long enough to hold him at the death spot.

Extinguishing his flashlight, The Shadow replaced the pillow on the bed. He put the chair as it belonged; pressed the table against the wall. Donning cloak and hat, he moved from the room, locking the door behind him. The Shadow went to the stairway, ascended halfway to the fourth floor.

Some minutes later, he heard creeping sounds below. Men were coming up to Room 328. They had a double purpose: to remove a dead body; to erase the marks that lay behind the table. They would be nonplused when they discovered that The Shadow was gone.

The Shadow waited; soon he heard the footsteps return, then scurry down the stairs.

Underlings had gone to report the amazing news that they had found no victim. Promptly, The Shadow descended to the third floor, to find the door of 328 unlocked. Quickly, he pulled aside the table and blinked his tiny light. The number R-6384 had been erased. The visitors had not forgotten that detail. The number was an actual clue.

PAUSING, The Shadow stared toward the window and noted the dim edge of the garage roof. On a straight line with the opened window, it told him another story – regarding the knife-thrust from the dark. No thrown blade could have followed so straight a path. The uppermost point of its curve would have brought it too high to go through the window. The knife had been dispatched by a powerful, muffled air gun.

With this knowledge of a unique weapon in the arsenal of his foemen, The Shadow made his final departure from Room 328. With gliding tread, he returned to his own room on the fourth floor. From the side window, he surveyed the few street lights which remained illuminated at this late hour.

A soft laugh in the darkness foretold The Shadow's next adventures. He had foiled his enemies tonight. His own identity concealed, he would be ready on the morrow. Then would he search for the master of crime, who, like The Shadow himself, was hidden.

Whether or not Harry's lone clue would be useless, The Shadow would not cease his efforts until he uncovered the brain who had made Hampstead a city of doom.

CHAPTER IV. THE MAN WHO RETURNED

THE next day found the town of Hampstead in furor. The disaster at the steel plant had shaken the nerves of the hardiest citizens. Those who had feared the future were looked upon as prophets. Any one who voiced belief in new terror found many listeners.

Hampstead was distinctly an industrial town. It formed the center of a large rural area; and boasted the only factories in the section. It followed that Hampstead was also a railroad center; and the quarries among the neighboring hills gave the city an added importance.

Hence Hampstead depended upon industry; and the threat was therefore the most pressing that the town could possibly encounter.

Today's rumors were unrestricted. The local newspapers had yielded to the strain; they were publishing facts that had hitherto been suppressed. Hampstead realized that a hoodoo lay upon it. That belief was supported by intelligent persons as well as ignorant.

Morning found the dye works closed. Workers had been grumbling ever since the explosion of a week before. The owners had decided to mark time; for they felt that they would be regarded as culpable, if another disaster should occur upon their premises. Already the quarry companies had ceased operations because of the freight yard wrecks. They came out with an announcement that they would bring no explosives into Hampstead until the railroad company could supply a satisfactory answer concerning the freight car smashes.

The steel plant was closed; until the furnace room was put in proper shape, it could not reopen. The officials, when questioned, were unwilling to state when they intended to resume business. Other industries were making a last effort to stem the rising tide of public opposition. Privately, owners met among themselves, to agree that one new disaster would be the last. Should it occur, Hampstead would become a city abandoned by enterprise.

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It was known that certain plants had arranged for police protection. Among these were the Century Chemical Company and the Hampstead Knitting Mills, for they represented the most important industries other than the dye works and the steel plant. The chemical company dealt in dangerous materials; the knitting mills employed hundreds of persons. Both concerns knew that they had much at stake.

Nevertheless, to close down would be folly. No threats had been delivered; nothing suspicious had occurred at either plant. The leaders of industry in Hampstead were determined to hold together for a last effort against the strange jinx that had settled upon the enterprising city.

Nevertheless, late afternoon brought a feeling of dread. The main plants in Hampstead were working overtime. Other tragedies had struck during evening hours. Tonight would be the time for new disaster, should it come.

TO The Shadow, this had been a day of futile effort. In his guise of Henry Arnaud, he had hired a sedan in place of the coupe that he had stowed away. He had driven about Hampstead, passing the chemical works and the knitting mills. He had noted other factories; he had located the city's electric powerhouse. The Shadow had seen no signs of threatening danger.

Nor had The Shadow gained any traces of departed crooks. Covering ground close to Hampstead, he failed to discover any houses that could serve as hide-outs. When he drove back to the hotel at sunset, The Shadow was forced to admit that his quest had been blank. That very fact disturbed him most; for The Shadow, of all persons in Hampstead, knew how real the threat of doom could be.

Street lamps were aglow when The Shadow entered the dining room of the Hampstead House and took a table by the window. Those lights were early; for the sun had scarcely set. Looking across the street at an angle, The Shadow could plainly observe the fronts of pretentious homes that had been converted into apartment houses.

Just as dinner was being served to the guest who called himself Henry Arnaud, a large gray car, a limousine, pulled up in front of one of the apartments. The chromium-plated radiator caught the glow of a street lamp just above. The same illumination shone on the car's license plate. From a distance of some forty yards, The Shadow read the license number: R-6384.

The number was etched in The Shadow's thoughts. He had been looking constantly for some sign of it. That was the number The Shadow had found inscribed upon the wall of Harry Vincent's room.

A chauffeur was stepping from the big car. The Shadow saw him open a door. A stooped man came from the automobile; he leaned upon the chauffeur's arm, then shifted his weight to a heavy cane. The Shadow caught a view of a muffled face; round, blackened spots indicated dark spectacles that the man was wearing.

The chauffeur preceded his master to the apartment house door, rang a bell and awaited a response. When it came, the chauffeur opened the door and held it while the stooped man entered. After that, the chauffeur returned to the car and drove away.

Watching upstairs windows, The Shadow had only a short wait. A light glimmered suddenly from a room on the second floor.

THE SHADOW lost no time in finishing dinner. He went up to his room, packed garments in a small, pliable briefcase and came downstairs again. Strolling from the hotel, he noticed that the upstairs lights were still burning in the apartment across the way.

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Crossing the street, The Shadow calmly approached the door that the bespectacled man had entered. He noted a list of names on the wall mail boxes of the open vestibule. Apartment 2 A bore the name Herbert Prensham; apartment 2 B showed a vacancy.

Both facts were useful. One told the name of the man who had gone up to the front apartment on the second floor. The other indicated an excellent means of entry. The Shadow stepped down to the sidewalk, strolled around the block and came to a narrow alley behind the buildings. He followed it until he reached the house he wanted.

In a darkened space, The Shadow opened his briefcase. He donned cloak and slouch hat; strapped the pliable briefcase under his cloak. Picking an ornamental ledge in the stone wall of the house, The Shadow began an upward climb.

He gripped a fastened shutter beside a first floor window, used it in ladder fashion and reached the second floor. Another ledge gave him a foothold while he jimmied a window in the rear apartment. Swinging over the ledge, The Shadow entered an empty room.

Through darkness, The Shadow reached the outer hall, to find it unlighted. He picked a path along the wall until he arrived at a door which he knew must be Apartment 2 A. The knob turned noiselessly at The Shadow's touch. The door was unlocked; it yielded inward under pressure.

Silently, The Shadow stepped into a passage. At the front were the lights of a living room. Peering from the passage, The Shadow could see that the shades had been drawn. He knew that they must have been lowered during the time that he had been circling the block.

Approaching closer to the front of the passage, The Shadow spied a bent man seated in a large chair, his feet upon a footstool. The man was Herbert Prensham, whom The Shadow had seen alight from the large automobile.

Prensham's face was tilted forward, his chin buried in the collar of a dressing gown. His dark spectacles still covered his eyes. The stooped man was motionless, apparently dozing. His left hand lay limply upon a table beside his chair.

There, also, The Shadow observed a squatly table lamp, with a large, unfrosted bulb upright in the socket. The lamp shade had fallen from place and was lying on the table. Prensham had apparently not noticed it.

No one else was in the room. Unless Prensham himself had risen to lower the window shades, some intruder must have come and gone before The Shadow's arrival. There was something sinister in that possibility – a connection with the cryptic numerals that The Shadow had found in Harry Vincent's room.

The number R-6384 had signified only the license number of Prensham's car. Had Harry left it as a clue to a man whose life was threatened? Danger lurked here in Hampstead; The Shadow was ready for any startling development. The longer he gazed at the slouched, immobile form of Prensham, the more certain he became that the man's lethargy was not normal.

STILL within the darkness of the passage, The Shadow drew an automatic from beneath his cloak. Swinging into the mellow light of the living room, he glanced keenly toward the inner wall, in search of another doorway. There was none. The Shadow had come in by the only entrance.

In his gaze, The Shadow took in the furnishings. They were luxurious. Oriental rugs adorned the floors; chairs and tables were of fine, dark mahogany. Rich tapestries hung from the walls. In that setting, Herbert

Prensham looked pitiful and helpless, as if he – though master of this room – had no ability to appreciate his surroundings.

The Shadow, however, concentrated his gaze upon the man in the chair. Advancing, he studied Prensham, to learn the reason for the man's stupor.

As The Shadow came closer, Prensham stirred. He raised his head, proving that his ears were keen enough to hear the footsteps of the soft-treading visitor. Apparently, Prensham could not see The Shadow through his dark spectacles; for he whined a puzzled query:

"Who's there?"

Motionless, his automatic leveled in his fist, The Shadow gave no response.

"Who's there?" demanded Prensham, his voice testy. "Is it you, Banzarro?"

The Shadow maintained his silence. Prensham's hands came upward. His body straightened as his fingers lifted away the dark spectacles and let them drop into his lap. Simultaneously, the man in the chair delivered a short, musical laugh. His lips produced a gloating smile; his eyes – black in hue – showed an evil sparkle.

With the dropping of the spectacles, the man in the chair had seen The Shadow; but his manner showed that he had expected to view the very visitor whom he saw. His sleep had been feigned; he had waited for this moment to drop away the darkened glasses that amply disguised his face. With the action, the seated man had revealed his identity to The Shadow.

The cloaked visitor recognized the man who called himself Herbert Prensham. Uncannily, The Shadow had suspected danger: that was why he had leveled his automatic toward the man in the chair. The Shadow had anticipated a surprise; yet even he was not prepared for this one. The face revealed to him was one that he had never expected to see alive.

The man in the chair was Doctor Rodil Mocquino, the most insidious foeman whom The Shadow had ever encountered – Doctor Mocquino, the so-called Voodoo Master, whose last reign of crime had been ended by The Shadow. Downed by bullets from The Shadow's guns, Mocquino had last been seen alive when he had plunged, badly wounded, beneath the surface of the Hudson River. (Note: See "The Voodoo Master" Vol. XVII, No.1)

Even to The Shadow, it was amazing that Doctor Mocquino had returned to life. But with the present discovery, The Shadow had gained the end of his first trail. The disasters in the town of Hampstead were explainable, since Doctor Mocquino still remained a living threat.

The Shadow was face to face with the master-villain who had brought terror to this city of doom.

CHAPTER V. THE STALEMATE

"I HAVE awaited you."

Doctor Mocquino spoke the words in musical tone. His manila-hued face was smiling; his dark eyes flashed in friendly fashion. Without moving from his chair, the one-time Voodoo Master gestured with his open right hand.

"Be seated," he invited. "We have much to discuss, you and I."

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Mocquino was pointing to a chair between himself and the window. The Shadow kept his eyes toward the Voodoo Master; his gun, in his right hand, was leveled with his gaze. Using his left hand, he drew the chair toward himself, then sat down facing Mocquino.

The Shadow had placed himself at a slight angle to Mocquino's right. The unshaded lamp upon the table was so placed that it stood almost in line with The Shadow's gaze. Mocquino flipped a switch in the base of the lamp, using a single finger.

Instantly, there came a result that showed why the Voodoo Master had lowered the window blinds. The unfrosted bulb delivered a blinding brilliance. Its light was of the most startling sort, a pyrotechnic display within a rounded bowl of glass. Every possible color of light burst loose with dazzling blaze. Like sparks from bursting fireworks, the colors sparkled soundlessly within the bulb. They darted everywhere, those sparks, changing their flashes with kaleidoscopic speed.

The Shadow sat riveted, his eyes upon the startling display. Doctor Mocquino's right hand had come upward; his fingers had promptly replaced his spectacles over his eyes. Thus he escaped those blinding flashes that burned before The Shadow's gaze. Mocquino's laugh was harsh, its musical tone ended. The Voodoo Master deliberately pulled the little switch; the dazzle faded from the blazing bulb. With both hands, Mocquino removed his glasses and spoke to his cloaked visitor.

"You are helpless!" jeered the Voodoo Master. "You, too, have experienced the blinding glare that the others received! You have gone through the ordeal that causes men to see the things that I command! You are in my power! Rise; stand silent; then receive my bidding!"

The Shadow came to his feet while Mocquino chortled. The Voodoo Master's gloat ended a moment later. The Shadow did not stand his ground; instead, he advanced straight forward. The muzzle of his automatic pressed toward Mocquino's eyes. Above the gun, the astonished Voodoo Master saw a blazing gaze, unaltered by the dazzle that The Shadow had faced.

"Speak, Mocquino!" ordered The Shadow. "Tell of the crimes that you committed; of the evil that you intend! I am the one who holds command!"

THE SHADOW had met the Voodoo Master's test. Whatever its effect upon others, the blazing bulb had failed to stagger The Shadow.

Mocquino's face showed huge surprise; his lips were scarcely able to deliver a snarl. It was rage, however, not fear, that had struck the Voodoo Master.

"You command me to speak," mouthed Mocquino. "Listen, then, and hear the facts you came to learn! I brought them here, the men I needed. I let them see the blazing bulb. It left them dazzled, ready for my command.

"While each man sat dazed, I told him how he was to ignore his duty. Each went his way, remembering his experience, like something from a dim past. Each sought to recall what had happened. Memories jogged them at the proper moment; the exact time that I had named."

The Shadow thrust his automatic beneath his cloak; it was a gesture of his contempt for Mocquino's power. He needed no more information regarding the system that the Voodoo Master had employed.

A master of hypnotic influence, Mocquino had applied it to the accomplishment of crime, through men who served as helpless instruments. All hypnotism being dependent upon the full concentration of the person

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subjected to it, Mocquino had devised the sparkling bulb as a mechanical way of forcing fixed vision. Through the dazzling effect of myriad colored sparks, he had jolted each victim into a state of temporary bewilderment.

That done, he had assigned each a task. The engineer at the dye plant had been told to release the safety valve on the boiler, when he made inspection. Switchman and brakeman both had been instructed to signal locomotives onward; then stand in the engine's path.

Old Joe Grandy had responded to an impulse given him by Mocquino; he had handled the wrong lever at the given moment, when he stood upon his perch beside the ladle of molten steel.

In each case, Mocquino was a murderer. The Voodoo Master had purposely sent his hypnotic victims to their own destruction. He had hoped to do the same with The Shadow. He had failed. His own statement had been forced from Mocquino's reluctant lips.

More was required. Mocquino heard The Shadow's voice, with its commanding tone:

"Proceed! State the crimes that you have planned for the future!"

Mocquino's teeth gritted. His clawish hands clutched the arms of his chair. Despite the steadiness of The Shadow's gaze, Mocquino rallied.

"I have told enough!" he retorted, harshly. "You caught me by surprise, when you met the ordeal that I gave you. I have told of past crimes; I shall not speak of future!"

THE SHADOW'S right hand whipped from beneath the cloak. Again, Mocquino was confronted by the leveled muzzle of an automatic that threatened to burn a message of instant death. The Voodoo Master glared savagely; then managed to deliver an evil smile.

"Why should I speak?" he queried, his voice regaining its smooth, insidious tone. "You cannot afford to kill me when you know the facts that concern your agent, Harry Vincent. He is my prisoner – he and others who tried to block my path! There are five of them in all. My death will mean theirs!"

"I took the precaution to place them where escape is impossible. Their time of death has been set every twelve hours. Each time that the execution is due, I postpone it. Should I die, there will be no one to countermand the order.

"Kill me if you choose. By doing so, you will give the death warrant for men whom you have come to save. Moreover, my future crimes are scheduled. They will proceed like clockwork; for my subordinates are men who will not fail in obedience to my given commands."

Mocquino's tone had regained its strength. The Shadow knew that the Voodoo Master spoke the truth. Forced to accept the issue as it stood, The Shadow thrust his automatic out of sight. Calmly, he took the chair that he had left. Mocquino's eyes gleamed with malicious pleasure.

"You have decided wisely," remarked Mocquino. "My threat failed; yours did likewise. That brings a situation that I have long desired; one wherein we can speak freely. I have hoped for such a meeting. My wish has at last been granted."

The Shadow made no comment. He preferred to let Mocquino talk. The Voodoo Master relished the situation. He continued:

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"Some time ago, I formed a cult of faithful followers, worshipers of voodoo rites, through whom I sought wealth. You uncovered my headquarters, aboard an old ferry boat in the Hudson River. Single-handed you defeated my followers; I plunged overboard, wounded.

"There were police boats all about, and other craft besides. One was a small tug manned by a handful of my reserves, under the command of my most trusted lieutenant, Banzarro. They brought me aboard; they carried me to safety, and recovery."

Smiling, Mocquino began to stroke his chin. He showed no fear of The Shadow; instead, he studied his visitor with a gaze that showed admiration. Mocquino seemed to consider The Shadow as a foe who could put his schemes to future tests. It was plain that the Voodoo Master enjoyed crime and relished opposition.

"I have decided," announced Mocquino, "to attempt a gigantic experiment upon the human race. All people are alike, whether savage or civilized. In tropical countries, a master of voodoo – like myself – can gain a host of followers. The same can be accomplished here in the United States.

"Except for one factor." Mocquino leaned forward and wagged a bony finger as he made the proviso. "The influence of the machine age must be destroyed. To implant the principles of voodoo belief upon a community, that place must be cut off from the world.

"I have chosen this city of Hampstead as my experimental field. Already, I have wreaked destruction; industry is ready to abandon the town. One more catastrophe will produce the final result. Its factories closed, Hampstead will become a city shunned by enterprise!"

MOCQUINO paused, hoping to see the effect of his words. The Shadow gave no visible sign; yet through his brain was flashing the full thought of the future. Outlandish as Mocquino's hopes might seem, the consequences were tremendous.

Steadily, invisibly, Doctor Mocquino would become the absolute ruler of a detached community. Strange cults were not uncommon. Voodoo rites, with their appeal to superstitious minds, could gain strong roots if planted in suitable soil.

The Shadow's thoughts turned to the immediate future. One fact was certain: in his effort to extend his strange scheme, Doctor Mocquino intended to continue with his strokes of crime. Lives were at stake, like those at the steel plant. In addition, Mocquino held prisoners – men whose lives The Shadow must save. If anything could be done to forestall Mocquino's present plans, that course must be learned.

Mocquino was guessing at The Shadow's thoughts. With a smile, the Voodoo Master himself presented new possibilities.

"We are at stalemate," purred Mocquino. "Suppose that we begin our game anew. Banzarro failed twice last night; first, when he sought your life with guns; second, when he missed his knife-thrust. I failed tonight, when my color light proved insufficient to overcome you.

"I have no other moves; but I do intend new crime. As I have stated, it will proceed without me; and at the same time, my prisoners will automatically die. Should I be allowed to go my way, I shall proceed with crime; but the prisoners will live. So long as I am free, there is no reason for their death."

Mocquino paused; then added: "I shall find the new game interesting. So much so, that I may become negligent at times, merely to add new zest. That may interest you, particularly since you also enjoy adventure. There will be crime tonight, within the next few hours. You will find it intriguing if you seek to prevent it.

Suppose I state my terms."

THE SHADOW remained as motionless as a statue. His attitude was unflinching; but that did not disturb Mocquino.

"You will leave here," proposed Mocquino, "and travel to the city limits, in your coupe. Banzarro will see you before you reach the steel plant. There will be no ambush: I do not care to sacrifice more men in futile effort."

Mocquino's words, dryly uttered, proved that the Voodoo Master was keen enough to recognize The Shadow's prowess. That made him doubly dangerous. Mocquino had dropped all over-confidence. His present plan, though boldly put, was actually a desperate bid for freedom.

It depended entirely upon The Shadow, and Mocquino knew it. If The Shadow himself had a deep plan that would be sufficient to offset Mocquino's threat of automatic crime, there would be no chance for the Voodoo Master. Knowing this, Mocquino added a promise.

"The prisoners will live," he insisted. "They will be the prize at stake. Our new game will begin from the moment that you have again passed the city limits. It will end only when either you or I have won a final conflict."

Leaning forward, Mocquino waited expectantly for The Shadow's answer. It came by action, instead of word. Rising, The Shadow turned toward the door. His cloak swished, as he stepped to the passage. Mocquino heard the closing of the door to the hall.

Slowly, the Voodoo Master approached a window and raised one lowered shade.

Minutes passed before a sudden gleam adorned Mocquino's evil confidence. The sight that produced that evil gloat was the passage of a coupe that rolled along the main street in front of the Hampstead House. The Shadow, like Mocquino, had accepted the fact that the game had reached a stalemate.

The Shadow was driving to the city limits, prepared to begin a new game against the evil plotter.

CHAPTER VI. CRIME TO COME

IN his departure from Mocquino's, The Shadow had accepted the only alternative. Past experience had told him of Mocquino's craftiness; events in Hampstead had proven that the arch-plotter was more formidable than ever.

Mocquino had proposed a fresh start in his duel with The Shadow. As stakes in the game, Mocquino had promised the lives of Harry Vincent and other prisoners. Mocquino would adhere to his promise; but not because of any mercy in his nature. The insidious Voodoo Master totally lacked that emotion.

Mocquino's purpose was to stir The Shadow to frenzied action; to bring him into the open. Once on the offensive, The Shadow would be forced to discard certain protective measures. Mocquino, always ready to deliver a death-thrust, might find an opportunity to end the career of the only living foe whom he feared.

The Shadow had accepted Mocquino's terms for the same reason. He knew that the one way to deal with Mocquino was to thwart him at every turn; to meet his schemes as they came. If foiled, Mocquino would increase his own efforts at evil action. He, too, could become unguarded.

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All the while, however, Mocquino would keep his prisoners alive. The Voodoo Master knew that those captives were human bait; that their welfare was essential. As long as The Shadow knew that they lived, he would press his activities without pause. Sooner or later, so Mocquino hoped, The Shadow would be worn down. When that time came, Mocquino could strike.

There was only one choice for The Shadow. That was to keep constantly upon the move; to challenge Mocquino to the utmost.

Driving toward the city limits of Hampstead, The Shadow reviewed these prospects. All the while, he was watching the road with caution. Somewhere along the route, he would pass a hiding place occupied by Mocquino's chief lieutenant – the man whom the Voodoo Master had called Banzarro.

There was a chance that Banzarro would strike from ambush, despite Mocquino's declaration to the contrary. This was one point upon which the Voodoo Master could not be trusted. The Shadow's impression, however, was that Mocquino would prefer to depend on future strategy, rather than order his underlings to attempt another attack of a type at which they had previously failed.

THE SHADOW'S surmise proved correct. He reached the city limits unchallenged. There, he wheeled his coupe about and started back toward the center of town. Choosing a side road, he swung from the main highway and threaded his way into the city. He reached the obscure garage near the railroad station.

For this journey, The Shadow had used his former license plates. He changed them again, in the garage; there were no employees on duty to observe the action. Wearing his garb of black, The Shadow departed by a side door. He picked his way through darkness, and came again to the converted house where Mocquino's apartment was located.

This time, The Shadow chose another mode of entry. He picked a loose grating at the side of the house, removed it and dropped into the cellar. In his departure from Mocquino's apartment, he had observed the location of stairways; hence he had no difficulty in reaching the ground floor. There was a light in the hall, but The Shadow took a darkened flight of steps at the rear. He went up to the second floor.

All the while, The Shadow exercised full caution. He knew that Mocquino might expect him to return. This house offered many lurking spots for would-be assassins. But The Shadow banked upon one factor that was definitely a part of Mocquino's policy. The Voodoo Master was dealing in hidden, mysterious crime. Therefore, Mocquino would seek to avoid any commotion that would cause the public to guess that crooks were in Hampstead.

Last night's thrusts proved this fact. One had been made upon a lonely stretch of road; the other had been a quick, silent stab from darkness.

The Shadow expected, moreover, to find Mocquino gone; but he was not entirely set for the surprise that he received when he opened the unlocked door of the voodoo doctor's apartment. Lights were glowing from wall brackets. In the living room; the illumination showed complete vacancy. Stepping in from the passage, The Shadow stood in the center of complete desertion.

During the scant half hour since The Shadow's departure, Mocquino had accomplished a complete removal. Every item of furniture was gone. including the table lamp and its special bulb. Bare floors sounded hollow beneath The Shadow's tread. Blank walls gaped where gorgeous tapestries had formerly hung. Mocquino had left nothing except the few lights in the wall sockets, to let The Shadow see what had been accomplished.

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The Shadow had already decided that Mocquino must have some stronghold outside of Hampstead, but within easy reach of the city. Such a place would be needed as a hide-out for thugs who served under Banzarro. That stronghold could also serve as a prison for Harry Vincent and the other captives. It was obvious that Mocquino had chosen the place as his own headquarters for the future campaign.

For the present, The Shadow had no intent to take up Mocquino's trail. He was sure that the search for the stronghold would be a long one. If he made it his immediate objective, he would lose a greater opportunity. Crime was due again in Hampstead. It would come tonight, as part of Mocquino's strategy. The Shadow's immediate purpose was to gain some clue to the next step in Mocquino's campaign.

A BRIEF search through the living room showed nothing of importance. The Shadow went through the little passage and used his flashlight in a darkened rear room. Here, again, was vacancy. The Shadow moved through to another room. His flashlight, glowing on the floor, showed streaky scrapes that had been made when a piece of furniture had been moved. From the marks, The Shadow knew that the object had been either a table or a desk.

The corner baseboard was warped. Its lower edge was fully a quarter inch above the floor. A tiny strip of white showed from the space. Stooping, The Shadow plucked and drew out a small, square piece of paper. It was a page torn from a memorandum pad. Apparently it had been tossed toward a wastebasket, only to flutter to the floor instead. Sliding under the baseboard, the paper had remained unnoticed.

On the square sheet was a penciled scrawl. The Shadow read the notation:

Thursday, 9 p. m. Dynamo room at powerhouse.

This day was Thursday. The Shadow's watch showed half past eight. Thirty minutes until the designated hour. The Shadow had found what seemed to be a promising clue to Doctor Mocquino's next crime: some deed of destruction that concerned the local powerhouse. Yet, in that written notation, The Shadow saw one item that savored of truth; another that bore falsehood.

The Shadow remembered the penciled marks on the wall of Harry Vincent's room. Whether Harry had written that number, R-6384 or whether some one else had scrawled it at Mocquino's order, it had certainly been left with a purpose. That clue had brought The Shadow to Mocquino's apartment, where the Voodoo Master had sought to overpower him with the brilliant hypnotic bulb.

Similarly, this new clue was a plant. The Shadow knew that Mocquino himself had slipped it beneath the baseboard. Mocquino had expected The Shadow to find it; to take the tip and go to the local powerhouse at nine o'clock.

The true statement on the sheet of paper was the one that concerned the time. Something was due to happen tonight, at nine o'clock. The false item was the mention of a place. When crime struck, it would not occur at the powerhouse. Mocquino's purpose was simply to decoy The Shadow to the wrong spot.

CRIME due at nine. Crumpling the piece of paper, The Shadow stood in darkness, considering the situation. Whatever Mocquino planned, it would certainly be a disaster as great as the catastrophe at the steel plant. There were only two other plants in Hampstead where so huge a tragedy could be duplicated.

One was the Century Chemical Company, with its dangerous type of manufacture; the other, the Hampstead Knitting Mills, where hundreds of workers were employed. On the surface, the choice was equal; The Shadow could reach either place by nine o'clock. But if he covered one, he could not protect the other.

Minutes of silence lingered; then came a whispered laugh amid the darkness. A swish betokened The Shadow's departure. The master investigator had chosen his next destination. The Shadow knew that Mocquino had certainly planned disasters at both the chemical plant and the knitting mills. One would strike tonight; the other would come later.

Mocquino's campaign of horror followed one definite system; to make it most effective, each disaster needed to be greater than the one before. Comparing the chemical plant and the knitting mills, The Shadow chose the one that best fitted the natural progression of Mocquino's evil plans.

Undeceived by the Voodoo Master's fake clue, The Shadow was setting forth to deal with coming crime.

CHAPTER VII. AT THE CHEMICAL PLANT

THE Century Chemical Company occupied a stretch of isolated ground just west of Hampstead. There was good reason for the remote location. The chemical plant produced highly inflammable materials, and the fire hazard was too great for other buildings to be built in the same locality.

The plant consisted of three sections, all housed in the same building. First, the portion where incoming shipments were stored; then the main laboratory where the chemicals were manufactured; last, the storeroom that held the finished products.

Upstairs were offices; most of these were over the storeroom, for it had a low ceiling and there was plenty of space above. Of the sixty employees who worked at the plant, nearly forty were engaged in actual manufacture; most of the others belonged in the upstairs offices.

In their inspection of the plant, officials had marked one danger spot. That lay between the large laboratory and the last storeroom, where the finished chemicals were kept. Fire was always a menace to the laboratory; but the workers were trained to meet it. All inflammable materials were removed as soon as manufactured. The important precaution, therefore, was to keep a fireproof barrier between the laboratory and the storeroom.

This had been effectively arranged. When trucks were wheeled from the laboratory, they followed a slight downward slope and stopped at a steel door. When that barrier was opened, the trucks entered a vestibule, with another steel door ahead. The man in charge of the doors closed the outer one; then opened the inner, so that the trucks could be wheeled through to the storeroom at the end of the downgrade.

Thus there was never an open channel between the laboratory and the storeroom. Fire in the laboratory could not spread; nor could an accident in the storeroom produce disaster in the laboratory.

A FULL shift of workers were in the laboratory on this particular night. A clock by the outer door showed the time as five minutes before nine. Near the door was a small lunch counter; there, a man in overalls was gulping down a cup of coffee before going on duty.

Another worker, wheeling a handtruck in from the inbound shipment room, stopped to nudge the coffee drinker.

"Hello, Danny," greeted the man with the truck. "Whatta you need a cup of Java for? So's you can stay awake on that soft job of yours?"

Danny finished his coffee and grinned.

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"Hello, Pete," he returned. "Kiddin' me, eh? Well, it takes brains to handle them control levers when the trucks go through the doors. More brains than shoving a truck."

"I'll be off this trick next week," growled Pete. "They're putting me in the shipping department. Well, Danny, they're waiting for you over in the control room. So long, old scout!"

"Wait a minute, Pete."

Earnestly, Danny gripped Pete's arm and drew the truck pusher to one side. In an undertone he put a query:

"You're a pal, Pete, ain't you? One guy that I can count on?"

Pete nodded.

"There's something I gotta ask you about," continued Danny. "You remember last Monday night? Were we together anywhere?"

Pete shook his head.

"Tuesday was my night off," he stated. "I was working here, Monday. Only –"

Pete paused suddenly. His eyes were half closed.

"Only what?" queried Danny, anxiously.

Pete opened his eyes and blinked.

"What were you asking about Monday for?" he demanded. "Give me the lowdown, Danny."

"I haven't got time, Pete." Danny shifted as he spoke. "I gotta get over to the control room."

"It wasn't that maybe you'd forgotten something?" insisted Pete. "Like where you'd been at, on Monday night?"

It was Danny's turn to blink. His face showed worry. Pete had guessed the secret that Danny had been anxious not to let slip. Pete knew it; he was quick to reassure his pal.

"Listen, Danny," confessed Pete; "it hit me funny, you asking about Monday night. I was kinda worried the same way; thinking about where I'd been Tuesday."

"You mean it's kind of hazy, Pete?"

"Yeah. I wouldn't have mentioned it to nobody. Not even to you, Danny, except because of what you just said. Seems like I got a telephone call, asking me to come somewhere; and I went. That was right after dinner, Tuesday. I remember coming home at ten o'clock, telling the folks I'd been to a movie. But I must've sat right through the picture without even looking at it –"

"It's the same with me, Pete! Monday night I was somewhere. Nobody at home asked me about it; but they said something about my hitting the hay at eleven o'clock. I thought I'd turned in around nine. There's a couple of hours, Pete, that I can't account for!"

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"That's why you asked me if I'd seen you Monday?"

"Yeah. It makes me feel creepy – like I was trying to remember something I'd dreamed, and couldn't!"

"Same with me, Danny. I keep thinking about it –"

A voice was calling for Pete's truck. The two men ended their confab. Pete shoved his truck off through the laboratory. Danny crossed the floor and reached an inner corner. There he stepped into a small control room, where a man was seated in a chair beside two levers.

Danny took over the controls. The other worker departed by a door that led into a darkened passage. Mumbling to himself, Danny mulled over the event that he had discussed with Pete.

MECHANICALLY, Danny looked toward the big clock at the front of the laboratory. Its hands showed nine o'clock. A shudder came to Danny's shoulders. The man looked about, he had a feeling that eyes were watching him. Vainly, he stared at the darkened passage near the control room. While he gazed, he heard a shriek that made him swing about.

The cry came from the laboratory. From the open front of the control box, Danny saw Pete stumbling beside his truck. Pete was holding a large bottle that he was about to load. Some one had shouted a warning when Pete stumbled. As Danny stared, Pete struck the edge of the hand truck and the bottle shot from his grasp.

It crashed squarely into the contents of the half-loaded truck. As the bottle shattered, chemical solution splashed upon loaded boxes. There was a puff; a flash of flame. The truck was ablaze.

Workers scrambled from their benches. In the excitement, one over-turned a large beaker.

New puffs sighed from the workbench. Flames sizzled, while a bell clanged furiously from the end of the room.

Trained to quick response, workers could have met the emergency, had it not been for Pete. On his feet beside the truck, the fellow went berserk. He wanted to get the truck away; he chose the easiest direction. With a shove, Pete propelled the blazing load straight down the ramp that led to the storeroom. The truck jammed to a stop against the steel door that led to the protective corridor.

In a sense, Pete's move had served well. He had at least shoved the truck away from the workbenches, to a place where it could be easily handled. The steel door was a fireproof barrier; the flames could not penetrate it. But Pete's move led to another – one that came from Danny.

Deliberately, the man in the control box grasped the first lever and tugged it. The steel door slid upward. While maddened workers dashed across the laboratory, the blazing truck slid down through the passage to the storeroom. A thump announced its arrival at the second steel door.

Shouting men were leaping to reclaim the truck. Others were staring toward the control room, astounded by Danny's action. None were close enough to stop the next move. With the same slow move that he had used before, Danny gripped the second lever. His hands started its pull, to release the lower door and let the truck roll through to the storeroom, where stacks of inflammable merchandise awaited removal.

Only an instantaneous intervention could forestall Danny's unexplainable move. That intervention came.

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A BLACK-GARBED form launched from the darkened passage wherein Danny had suspected watching eyes. A long, cloaked arm sped forward. Gloved, viselike fingers clutched Danny's hand, wrenched the man's grip from the control lever.

Eyes staring straight ahead, Danny emitted a snarl like that of a trapped beast.

Spinning about, Danny saw The Shadow. An expression of fierce rage came over Danny's face as his eyes met the burn of The Shadow's eyes. Like a mechanical figure, a human automaton controlled by a distant brain, Danny sprang upon the cloaked intruder. Clawing furiously, he tried to tear The Shadow away from the control lever. Danny's brain could concentrate upon one purpose only: to gain again the lever and complete his act of destruction.

The Shadow's tall form bobbed backward, yielding to the madman's thrust. Danny shot one hand to the lever; but he was too late to perform the deed he wanted. A gloved fist zoomed through the opening that came when Danny dropped his arm. The Shadow's punch found the workman's jaw.

Danny slumped to his chair; his head tilted forward. His hand lost its clutch upon the lever. Other workers were almost to the control room. The Shadow sidestepped to the outer passage. He was watching when men arrived to find Danny in his chair.

The whole laboratory was filled with fading fumes. Special fire equipment had smothered the flames at the benches. A squad of workmen had headed for the passage leading down to the storeroom. There, they squashed the fire from the blazing truck.

As Danny came groggily to life, he looked from his window to see men hauling the extinguished truck up from the lower door.

The Shadow could view Danny's profile. He saw the awed expression that was flickering on the man's face.

Slowly, dimly, Danny was realizing what he had done. Thought of the averted havoc left the man shaky. Danny looked about hopelessly, as if wondering how to explain matters. Luck was with him. His fellow workers knew him for a man of coolness; they made their own interpretation of Danny's actions.

"Smart work, Danny!" approved one. "You had us guessing when you yanked that upper door. Then we caught the idea. You wanted to let that truck ride down into the passage, to get it away from the laboratory."

Danny nodded weakly.

"Sure!" put in another man. "You knowed that the second door would stop it. It was a cinch, putting out the fire on the truck down there in the passage."

"Some of the fellows got excited," added the first speaker. "Thought maybe you'd gone goofy, Dan; that you was going to pull the second door. I knowed different."

"Sure!" concluded the second man. "Your hand wasn't even on the second lever when we got here, Danny. You looked kind of weak, but I don't blame you. This box was a bad spot to be in, Danny."

A BIG bell was clanging, calling for men to return to work. Danny straightened in his chair. The others left; but after their departure, a lone worker sidled into the control box. It was Pete. The Shadow watched him motion to Danny.

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"I – I musta gone bugs, Danny," confided Pete, in a whisper. "Something sort of hit me – like from that dream I had on Tuesday night. When I started to load that big flask on the truck, it was like my feet stumbled over each other. I sorta saw myself pitching the bottle on to the truck –"

"Don't tell me any more, Pete," put in Danny, his tone awed. "Something clicked back to me when I saw it happen. You shoved the truck against the first door – remember? It was like a picture I was waiting for, out of a dream!"

"I yanked that first door open. When the truck slid down. I made a grab to pull the second door. Don't ask me why. All I know is somebody – or something came crashing in and stopped me. The boys think I did something smart; but I didn't, Pete. I was goofy, that's what!"

Shakily, Danny mopped his brow with a big handkerchief. Pete gave a departing whisper:

"Keep mum, Danny; that's what I'm going to do. Nobody's blaming us. I'm not worried, neither. It seems like my bean has sorta cleared."

"Same here, Pete. I'm just jittery; but it won't stick with me. I'm through bothering my noodle about where I was on Monday night."

Danny steadied in his chair. Pete edged from the control box. The Shadow moved away through the outer passage. His work was completed; he had spoiled Doctor Mocquino's scheme. Wisely had The Shadow picked the chemical plant as the place where crime was due. Here, Mocquino had hoped to send some fifty persons to destruction, reserving the knitting mills for a rarer and greater disaster.

In Pete and Danny, The Shadow had observed two men who had come under the Voodoo Master's evil power. Mocquino had decoyed them to his apartment; there, he had jolted them with his hypnotic light. Upon each man's brain he had impressed a future action, each to make an individual blunder at the hour of nine, on Thursday night.

Like others before them, both Pete and Danny had responded. They had mechanically performed their teamwork in accord with Mocquino's nefarious desire. The Shadow had stopped the menace; Mocquino's influence was ended, so far as those men were concerned.

Still, The Shadow saw more work ahead tonight. Outside the chemical plant his whispered laugh was barely audible in darkness. An unseen traveler in the night, The Shadow was choosing a trail that he knew might lead to Mocquino's new lair.

CHAPTER VIII. AT THE POWERHOUSE

FIFTEEN minutes after his departure from the chemical plant, The Shadow arrived near the Hampstead powerhouse. From the protecting darkness of an old empty house, he surveyed the squarish building that supplied the city with electricity. Motionless, The Shadow watched for signs of prowlers near the powerhouse.

In his past experience with Doctor Mocquino, The Shadow had learned that the Voodoo Master's strokes were double-edged. Any false trail that Mocquino offered would be beset with hazards. The Shadow's knowledge of Mocquino's ways explained the present situation.

Mocquino had planned disaster at the chemical plant; another crime of the sort that would seem accidental. In order to draw The Shadow from the place where scores of workers were slated for doom. Mocquino had

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planted the memo pages with its mention of the local powerhouse.

Another rogue would have been satisfied with the plan of drawing The Shadow to the wrong spot. Not Mocquino, however. He picked nothing at random. Since there was a chance that The Shadow would come to the powerhouse at nine o'clock, it followed that Mocquino would be prepared to trap him at that hour.

Mocquino had henchmen – many of them – with Banzarro to command them. None of these underlings had been near the chemical plant; it was Mocquino's policy to keep them well away from any spot of scheduled disaster. The powerhouse, however, was a blind. It was likely that Banzarro and his crew would be here.

By this time, Banzarro's men would have closed in, on the chance that The Shadow was inside the powerhouse. They would be set to trap him when he emerged. In fact, Banzarro might even have kept the cordon loose in order to let The Shadow enter. Therefore, the present advantage lay with The Shadow. If Banzarro and his crew were close about the powerhouse, he could surprise them by coming inward instead of outward.

ADVANCING from his position, The Shadow began a circuit of the powerhouse. The building was square-walled and compact in construction; the space about it was darkened and offered every opportunity for The Shadow to approach. In his circling, The Shadow chose a course that was somewhat spiral. Always, he was coming closer to the building itself.

At no spot did The Shadow discover any signs of lurkers. During his final circuit, he could almost touch the walls of the building, yet there was no stir to mark the position of hidden enemies. All that The Shadow could detect was the steady thrum-thrum of dynamos within.

There were frosted windows, barred with crisscross gratings. From these came dim light, enough to betray any men who might have chosen the window spaces as hiding places. There was only one door; it, too, had a frosted-glass panel. The Shadow's inspection proved that none of Mocquino's followers were hereabouts.

The Shadow considered another possibility – one that he had hitherto regarded as secondary. Mocquino could have ordered Banzarro to drop the ambush soon after nine o'clock, because of the expected disaster at the chemical plant. Mocquino might have considered it bad policy to have any of his men too close to Hampstead when excitement reigned there.

If such was the case, Banzarro and his men would have left the vicinity of the powerhouse before The Shadow's arrival. The silence about the square-walled building certainly indicated that something of the sort had occurred. Nevertheless, The Shadow did not intend to depart until he had made a through search of the premises. The only area that still remained was the interior of the powerhouse itself.

Stopping at the glass-paneled door, The Shadow performed his evasive move of entering without betrayal. He pressed against the narrow space between the edge of the panel and the door frame. He inched the door inward, so slowly that its appearance scarcely changed. One arm above his slouch hat, he blocked all passage of light. Squeezing through the partly closed door, he let the portal close as slowly as it had opened.

There were other doors inside; all opened from a small central corridor. The Shadow tried each barrier in turn. All were locked, until he came to the last one at the end of the passage. It opened when The Shadow pulled it; light from below showed a short flight of steps that led down into the dynamo room. The rhythm of the powerful machinery was more audible than before.

The Shadow reached the bottom of the steps. There, he observed four huge electric generators set in a row. The two that were closest to The Shadow were in motion. Through the grayish centers of the massive

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revolving wheels, The Shadow could see a wide space of floor; then the other two dynamos.

The second pair of machines were not in motion; but The Shadow saw that they soon would be. There was an engineer in charge, with an assistant. The two men were preparing to change the dynamo. Apparently, half past nine was the time set for that operation.

WHILE The Shadow waited at the bottom of the stairs, he considered the possibilities that this powerhouse might offer to Mocquino's schemes. It seemed likely that Mocquino had made arrangements to take over the powerhouse, if needed; for by stopping the dynamo, he could deprive Hampstead of electric current. Such action, however, would be of no value in itself. It could serve only as some device to aid another scheme.

Destruction in the powerhouse would not appeal to Mocquino. While the Voodoo Master had declared war on machinery, he wanted to spread terror with his strokes. The sacrifice of human lives was a vital part of Mocquino's campaign of horror. The elimination of a mere two men – the engineer and his assistant – would hardly be worth Mocquino's while, particularly since the size of his disasters had increased.

The time would come when Mocquino would choose to strike without self-concealment; but that time would not be tonight. It would come only when Mocquino had gone the limit in his present campaign. The Shadow had already recognized Mocquino's methods when he ignored the Voodoo Master's invitation to visit the powerhouse at nine o'clock.

The thrum of dynamos was increasing. The big wheels had begun to move at the far end of the room. Their massive spokes became blurred, as they advanced to full speed. Then there was a slowing of the generators nearer to The Shadow. Soon those wheels had stopped. The routine changing of the dynamos was accomplished.

The engineer was coming toward the stairs. The Shadow saw a set-in corner close at hand; he stepped quickly toward it and glided from view before the engineer arrived. Listening, The Shadow heard the man's footsteps pound the stone stairs. The engineer was taking a short spell off duty, leaving his assistant in charge.

The Shadow remained in his corner, intending to wait until the engineer returned. Suddenly, there came the sharp ring of a bell, shrill above the humming of the dynamos. The Shadow peered forth and watched the assistant engineer answer a telephone that was fastened to the wall.

Completing a brief call, the assistant looked about and stroked his chin. The man had evidently received a request to meet some one outside the powerhouse. He had a chance to leave for a short while, since the engineer was absent. The assistant was considering what risk there would be if he temporarily neglected his duty. He decided that the dynamos could run smoothly enough without attention. Hurriedly, the man came across the room and ascended the stairs.

THE SHADOW was alone below. This was his opportunity to look about the dynamo room; to find whether or not Mocquino's false message was entirely a hoax. Moving out from his corner, The Shadow passed the first two dynamos, studying the stilled wheels as he came close to them. He reached the center of the dynamo room.

That middle space formed a broad, cement-floored passage between the two sets of generators. Its walls were recessed; and, for the first time, The Shadow saw that each contained a door. The Shadow tried one door; then crossed the space between the dynamos and tested the door opposite. Both barriers were locked. Where they led was a matter that concerned The Shadow; for he saw at once that they offered special exits from the dynamo room.

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With one gloved hand, The Shadow produced a set of picks. He paused before attacking the first door; he turned to observe the rear set of dynamos that were whirling at full speed.

As he made the turn, The Shadow suddenly sensed danger. It was amazing that he detected it, for his closeness to the dynamos made it almost impossible for The Shadow to hear other sounds. Nevertheless, his trained ability at sharp hearing was sufficient for the emergency.

Not only did The Shadow catch the sound; he identified it as a footfall. More than that, he detected its exact direction – from the stone stairs that led down from the upper floor. The Shadow's hands swept beneath his cloak; they whipped forth bearing automatics, as The Shadow swung to a position where he could see past the stopped dynamos.

With his quick move, The Shadow had caught a new intruder unaware. Halted at the foot of the stairs was a stocky, evil-visaged man, whose darkish features showed a fang-toothed grin. The Shadow sighted an ugly, pug-nosed face; above it a spread of greasy black hair.

No introduction was necessary. The Shadow knew this intruder for Banzarro. He saw the weapon in the Voodoo Master's lieutenant's square-fingered hands. Banzarro was clutching a gun that looked like a large air rifle; to it was affixed a gleaming knife blade.

AS Banzarro stopped short, his weapon only half raised, other faces bobbed up behind him. Banzarro was backed by a squad of henchmen; these hard-faced servants of Mocquino were brandishing revolvers. They, like Banzarro, were covered by The Shadow's guns. Through his wary shift, The Shadow had caught the foemen in a cluster. Their only hope at that moment was a mad dive back to the cover of the stairs. Had any member of the crew begun to lift a gun, The Shadow would have poured quick bullets into the massed group. He withheld his fire only because his enemies stood motionless.

Even Banzarro was rigid. The pug-nosed lieutenant showed an angry leer; then uttered a harsh cry. Instantly, the situation changed. In that moment, The Shadow realized that he should have shown no quarter to Banzarro and his halted mob. Banzarro's shout was a signal.

Two doors burst inward; they were the doors on each side of the space where The Shadow stood. Each opening revealed a trio of vicious-faced henchmen – other minions of Mocquino who had been hidden within the powerhouse itself.

The trap had closed. The Shadow was faced by foemen from three sides; enemies who covered every exit. Behind him, on the fourth side, were spinning dynamos; beyond them a blank wall that offered no escape.

Doctor Mocquino had returned to his policy of massed attack against The Shadow; but the Voodoo Master had waited until his cloaked opponent had entered a snare that promised death!

As proof of Mocquino's confidence that victory was his, The Shadow heard a burst of jangled laughter from the stairway where Banzarro and his clustered men were boldly springing forward, raising their guns despite The Shadow's coverage, knowing that he could risk no battle with them while he was flanked from both sides.

There, on the steps, stood Doctor Mocquino; he had crept down behind Banzarro's halted group. In his bony hand the Voodoo Master clutched a leveled revolver, ready to fire the first shot at The Shadow.

Death to The Shadow! Mocquino was positive that it would be delivered. The Voodoo Master had come to be present at the kill!

CHAPTER IX. THE LOST TRAIL

THE scene had changed with suddenness. One instant, The Shadow held the bulge. The next second had faced him with a three-way attack. Mocquino's quick appearance at the stairway had supported Banzarro and the others when The Shadow covered. The Shadow's enemies had staged the unexpected.

In performing their sudden move, those foemen had gained the confidence which The Shadow had so recently held. They had caught the lone fighter in their toils. Had they been dealing with any but The Shadow, Mocquino and his men would have delivered death with ease. But The Shadow also starred in producing the unexpected; even when he had no time to prearrange a plan.

Before Mocquino could fire the opening shot, The Shadow sprang his surprise. It seemed a futile one; on that account, it was the best move he could make. Instead of wild attack; instead of holding ground, The Shadow took to what seemed blind flight. He whirled about, dived wildly for the blank space beyond the two revolving dynamos at the rear of the room.

Mocquino fired; his shot was wide. Though the Voodoo Master was something of a marksman, he had not counted on a fading target. Nor had Mocquino forgotten a previous battle with The Shadow. He knew The Shadow's speed with the trigger, and was taking no chances against it.

Other guns barked hard upon Mocquino's. They, too, were hasty and belated. Had The Shadow kept on to the blank wall, bullets would have reached him. Instead, The Shadow sidestepped just past the first of the two rear dynamos; he dived between the big revolving wheels just as the better-aimed slugs were dispatched in his direction.

Mocquino shouted a harsh order; it was echoed by Banzarro. Underlings closed in; those at the front spread to pass the motionless dynamos; those at the sides crowded in from their doorways. All could see The Shadow. He was behind the first wheel in the set of revolving dynamos. The speed of the wheel was so terrific that its massive spokes were invisible. The Shadow stood framed in a grayish circle.

MOCQUINO'S henchmen paused, seeing their enemy trapped. Banzarro shouted again, from the front of the room. His leering subordinates paused; Mocquino nodded approval while Banzarro stopped at the huge axle of the first dynamo; the nearer of the two wheels that were standing still. His body covered behind an upright spoke, Banzarro leveled his air gun, looking for a chance to pick off The Shadow.

Banzarro preferred this weapon of his. It had failed at the hotel; he saw a chance to use it here. The best marksman in all Mocquino's tribe, Banzarro considered it his privilege to down The Shadow. Through the spokes of the halted wheels, Banzarro saw The Shadow beyond the grayed center of the whirling generator. The Shadow was almost motionless. Banzarro clicked the trigger of his odd gun.

The knife whizzed through space, driving straight for its target. It glimmered in the air; then whirled with a sudden clatter and clashed the ceiling, to rattle finally against the floor.

Above the pur of the far dynamos, came a laugh of challenge. Banzarro voiced an oath.

The knife had been stopped by the spokes of the speeding dynamo. That grayish barrier in front of The Shadow had been like a shield of steel against Banzarro's blade.

The reason for Banzarro's failure dawned upon Mocquino and his followers. The Voodoo Master gave a shout. His men aimed their revolvers toward the whirling wheel and fired shots at an angle. Bullets clicked harmlessly. They, too, were deflected by the broad spokes of the speeding wheel. The Shadow's laugh rang

out again.

Banzarro started to gesture and shout. Mocquino gripped his lieutenant's arm; talked to him with a bland smile.

The lieutenant then went past the stationary dynamos. He spoke to his subordinates, motioned them to the center space between the two sets of wheels. Formed into a glaring line, the ruffians faced The Shadow. He was less than a dozen feet away, looking straight through the whizzing haze of spokes that separated him from the foes who outnumbered him. Through that almost invisible shield, The Shadow could count ten faces.

Banzarro was by the wall, ready to yank a switch that controlled the dynamo. He stopped as he heard Mocquino call. The Voodoo Master was reminding him to start the front dynamos; then stall the rear ones, These generators supplied all of Hampstead with its electricity, Mocquino did not want the town to know that there had been trouble at the powerhouse.

The front dynamos moved. Banzarro laid his hand upon the switch that controlled the wheel which protected The Shadow. Banzarro grinned as he realized what was coming. The big wheel would slow; his men could open fire as a squad. It would be death to The Shadow.

BEYOND the grayish spoke-barrier, The Shadow was holding leveled guns. His fingers moved suddenly; the big automatics gushed flame, straight through the revolving dynamo. Wild shouts sounded from the men clustered there

Banzarro stopped, rigid, staring as he saw two henchmen stagger, A third went down; the others began to scatter. In some amazing manner, The Shadow was shooting bullets through the spokes that had stopped every previous shot! Those automatics had blasted with machine-gun speed. They were gone beneath The Shadow's cloak; he was whipping out another brace of weapons. Two foemen alone had stood their ground, struck with the thought that if The Shadow could fire through the dynamo while it maintained full speed, they could do the same.

They were right. The Shadow had simply seen the weakness of the whirling barrier. It had stopped Banzarro's knife, which had only an air gun's impetus. It had stopped bullets also; but only when they had been fired from an angle. The spokes in the dynamo wheel were broad. That was why they had served against the angled fire.

But The Shadow had pumped bullets straight through, taking advantage of the thinner edges of the spokes. Some of his shots had been deflected; others had not. The bullets that had gone through had served their purpose. Three of Mocquino's ten were down; five were in flight. The two who hoped to copy The Shadow were too late. Each was a target for an automatic. The Shadow was already firing from his second set of guns.

One man sprawled; the other staggered but managed to run for safety. Banzarro was swept back by the wild rush of his own squad. The five who led the flight had not paused to consider facts. They thought The Shadow held a curse over them; that his bullets could ride where theirs could not. Superstitious servitors of Doctor Mocquino, these ruffians had been taught to believe in the incredible. Their training was working against the Voodoo Master this time.

Banzarro wheeled about, alone, clutching his useless air gun. He changed his plan of stopping the rear dynamos. He pulled the switch that controlled the front ones, anxious to leave matters as they were. He saw The Shadow leaping out to the side of the dynamo that protected him. The Shadow was deserting that safety in order to get Banzarro. Wildly, the ugly faced lieutenant followed the course of his fleeing henchmen.

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Mocquino was at the stairway, trying to rally the unscathed five. They were turning about, ready to obey, when Banzarro came hurtling toward them. Wildly, the henchmen forgot Mocquino's order. They sprang in a mad mass for the stairs, carrying, the shouting Voodoo Master with them. Banzarro added his weight to the drive. The whole group plunged upward, with Mocquino helpless in his effort to stop their flight to safety.

SHOTS ripped from the dynamo room. The Shadow was delivering final bursts of gunfire to speed the flight. He knew that his cartridges were exhausted; that his plight would be a bad one if the fleeing men returned. Mocquino knew it, also; that was why The Shadow kept to the pursuit. Taking to the stairs, he reached the top just as the surging mass of men went through the outer door. The Shadow had no bullets left; but Banzarro, looking backward, saw him aim. Unarmed except for his knifeless, one-shot air gun, Banzarro dived outside with the others.

Fleeing crooks reached their cars. They started off into the night. Mocquino was in the second of two touring cars, rasping savage orders to Banzarro, who was at the wheel beside him. The Voodoo Master wanted his lieutenant to take a twisting course; to let the car ahead make its get-away.

This time, Banzarro obeyed. He sped the touring car around a corner, swinging in back of a deserted house.

As the machine roared past, lights blinked suddenly from a parked coupe. The second car started forward. Crooks had crossed The Shadow's path; he was again in pursuit.

Cars wheeled wildly toward the outskirts of Hampstead. While Banzarro handled the touring car, taking every twisted route that came, Mocquino leaned from the side, glaring back at the coupe. The Voodoo Master emitted a sudden hiss. He had guessed why The Shadow had not opened fire. The touring car had passed him just as he reached his coupe. The Shadow had not gained a chance to reload his automatics. Mocquino guessed, though, that The Shadow would manage to refill those guns while on the move. That was the reason for Mocquino's hiss.

Banzarro heard the order; he jammed the brakes. Mocquino fired point-blank as the coupe took the corner that the touring car had passed.

The Voodoo Master's shots had accuracy; they cracked the windows of The Shadow's car. The coupe performed a wide skid, ripped through a hedge and halted at a tilt. During the wild maneuver, a popped report betokened a bursting tire.

The touring car was roaring away as The Shadow fired.

Unable to stop the Voodoo Master's escape, The Shadow leaped from the coupe and made a hurried tire change. The trail was temporarily lost; the only course was to get back to the powerhouse and capture some of Mocquino's wounded henchmen.

The coupe limped when The Shadow reversed it through the hedge. It jolted along slowly as he retraced his steps.

NEARING the powerhouse, The Shadow halted. He saw a man entering the building; it was the engineer's assistant. Dropping from the coupe, The Shadow waited until the man was inside; then he followed. At the bottom of the stairs, The Shadow stopped, expecting to see the powerhouse employee gaping at sight of men sprawled on the floor by the dynamos.

Instead, the assistant was back at his post. No one else was in the dynamo room. Mocquino's henchmen had again demonstrated their well-drilled ability. Among the wounded, at least two must have had strength

enough left to drag the others out. Perhaps a small crew of reserves had arrived to aid them. Whatever the answer, the work had been done.

The rear dynamos were purring smoothly. The floor was free from bloodstains. Bullet nicks in the wall were meaningless; for the surfaces were already rough and irregular. Time lost by The Shadow had produced another closed trail.

Once again The Shadow, in order to reach the Voodoo Master and rescue the prisoners whom the master villain held, faced the problem of divining Doctor Mocquino's next move.

CHAPTER X. THE NEW OBJECTIVE

MORNING dawned brightly in Hampstead. It brought good cheer to those who lived in the city of doom. At last, the jinx had lifted. Fear and pessimism were temporarily banished.

A night had passed without new havoc. That fact was a pleasing one in itself; but there was stronger cause for the confidence that the citizens felt. The news was out concerning the brief fire at the chemical plant. Every one was filled with enthusiasm for the manner in which the blaze had been handled.

There was another side to the wave of confidence that had gripped Hampstead. It showed one thing clearly: that the citizens realized they had need for courage. Persons who had kept their fears to themselves were talking freely at last, for they felt that menace was ended. That, in itself, was a bad sign. It meant that optimism had risen under pressure.

Should new disaster befall in Hampstead, its damage would be double. Not only would it produce its own destruction; it would also drop the present spirit of confidence to a lower level of despair. The jinx was gone; people openly rejoiced in that belief. They did not realize that for the first time it was unanimously agreed that there actually was a mysterious menace over Hampstead.

Only The Shadow could interpret the false hopes of the Hampstead citizens. Only he knew the real menace that existed. Even more than before, The Shadow saw how useless it would be to inform either the public or the law concerning Doctor Rodil Mocquino.

Tales of the Voodoo Master would be ridiculed, particularly since they involved two new heroes such as Pete and Danny. While those two were keeping much to themselves, even they did not recognize Mocquino's existence. The Voodoo Master's hypnotic influence had passed, so far as they were concerned. No matter how hard they taxed their brains, they would never remember the details of their separate visits to Mocquino's abode.

Along with his vanished henchmen, Mocquino had taken the automobile in which The Shadow had first seen him. The Shadow had checked upon the license number R-6384, only to learn that it belonged to an ancient roadster that had been consigned to a junkyard more than a month ago. Obviously, Mocquino had obtained a pair of discarded license plates and had put them on the big car which he himself used.

The Shadow remembered that car well. It was a long, gray limousine, as fine a machine as any in Hampstead. The Shadow had noted every detail of the car when he had seen it from the window of the hotel dining room. He had made casual inquiries at local garages; no one knew of the limousine. Some had remembered seeing it about town; but none could name the owner.

AFTERNOON found The Shadow seated in the lobby of the Hampstead House. He had spent the morning in and out of town, looking for any trails that might lead him along Mocquino's path. The Shadow was sure that

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the voodoo doctor was not far distant; but the hill district about Hampstead was too extensive to be covered by a quick search.

One possible method had occurred to The Shadow; that was to use an airplane as he had done on previous occasions. In this case, however, it was unwise. Hampstead, though otherwise progressive, was lacking in an airport. Planes were seldom seen near the town; there were no through air routes. Any plane that The Shadow might use would be noted at once by some of Mocquino's spies.

So far, The Shadow had managed to protect completely his guise of Henry Arnaud. That was a vital point in his campaign. It enabled him to keep as completely hidden as Mocquino. Only by using the Voodoo Master's own methods could The Shadow hope for success.

The Shadow had come to a definite conclusion regarding Mocquino's future plans. He was sure that the Voodoo Master would forget last night's failure. To offset the disaster that missed, Mocquino would simply proceed with the next one that he planned. Such a stroke would hit Hampstead harder than ever.

Mocquino would also use his previous system. For every disaster, he had coached a hypnotized victim in advance. He would have one for tonight; and The Shadow knew where destruction would be due to strike. The marked place would be the Hampstead Knitting Mills, largest of all the local industries.

Crime could be averted only by an inspection at the mills, plus a search for the man whom Mocquino had chosen as a tool. Both of these steps were difficult ones. Unlike the steel works and the chemical plant, the knitting mills had no danger spot; it was impossible, therefore, to recognize immediately the sort of stroke that Mocquino might intend. Moreover, the knitting mills had hundreds of employees. To find the one Mocquino had swayed was a long task.

Soon after three o'clock, The Shadow strolled from the lobby of the Hampstead House. Passing as Arnaud, he hailed one of Hampstead's improvised taxis and gave the driver a destination. The car started on its route. After several blocks, The Shadow inquired about the location of the knitting mills. The driver gave it, stating that the mills were in a direction almost opposite the one they had taken.

"Drive me out to the mills," ordered The Shadow. "I want to handle some business there, before it is too late."

They reached the mills at half past three. The plant was a large one, sprawled over a few acres of ground. The Shadow alighted at the office entrance; he noted several salesmen going in and out. Visitors were frequent at this busy plant. An extra one would not attract suspicion, even if Mocquino did have spies present.

Entering, The Shadow wrote a message on the back of a card that bore the name of Henry Arnaud. He asked for James Chadron, the president of the plant, and learned that Mr. Chadron had just returned from a vacation. The Shadow's card was sent into the president's office. Very soon, word came through to usher Mr. Arnaud into the office.

The explanation was simply that The Shadow had mentioned the name of a prominent woolen manufacturer in the note that he had written. He had worded the message so that James Chadron would believe him a close friend of the man whom he had named. The Shadow found a warm reception awaiting him in consequence.

CHADRON, a puffy, portly man, was inside the door, waiting with extended hand. He wheezed an immediate greeting:

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Arnaud! So you're a friend of Louis Gathrop! That means you're my friend, Mr. Arnaud! Sit down – have a cigar! Plenty of time for a chat with you!"

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The Shadow accepted an expensive perfecto. As soon as he and Chadron had lighted their cigars, The Shadow spoke in a slow, steady tone:

"I have something important to discuss with you. Mr. Chadron."

"Word from Gathrop?" queried Chadron. "He had a message for me? Odd that he didn't wire me –"

"He could not have done that. Nor did he think it wise to write. He wanted me to convey this matter personally."

"No trouble has come to Gathrop, I hope –"

"None at all. He is concerned about you, Mr. Chadron."

"About me? Why business is at top! Working overtime –"

The Shadow shook his head.

"I refer to recent disasters here in Hampstead," he declared in an undertone. "They must not be discounted, Mr. Chadron. They are a real threat! Louis Gathrop recognizes it; so does every one outside of Hampstead."

Chadron shifted in his chair. His face became troubled.

"I know it," he admitted. "The matter has been worrying me all day. I have just returned from my vacation, to run right into the middle of this business. You are right, Mr. Arnaud; it may be serious. Yet I cannot see how this plant can suffer. We do not have the dangers that were present at the others."

"You have checked on everything?"

"Absolutely! I could show you through the plant, Mr. Arnaud, only that might be unwise. Suppose" – Chadron paused to glance at his watch – "suppose that you leave here with me. Come out to my house for dinner. I live a dozen miles away from Hampstead. My car will be here shortly. We can go then. At home, I have diagrams, blue prints, everything that pertains to the plant and its machinery."

Chadron had accepted The Shadow without question. The Shadow's best course was to accept the invitation. He did so; and the mill president seemed pleased. Beaming, Chadron changed the subject; he began to ask questions about his old friend Gathrop. The Shadow was well provided with facts that concerned Gathrop. As they talked, Chadron became more and more pleased. Four o'clock had arrived when a secretary entered and interrupted with the statement:

"Your car is here, Mr. Chadron. It is at the rear door."

Chadron arose. "Let us go, Arnaud," he suggested. "On the way out, we can glimpse a few floors of the plant."

THE route that they took led past the doorway of long rooms, where scores of workers were busy at looms and other machines. The Shadow noted lines of steadily moving belts connected to overhead rollers. Each room was cramped; filled with masses of machinery and workers who were almost elbow to elbow.

At one door The Shadow saw a locked transformer box, that served the room within. He observed the same arrangement at each succeeding workroom. Then Chadron reached the last stairway; he and The Shadow

descended to step outdoors where a large car was waiting in a narrow driveway.

A chauffeur was standing, holding the rear door open. For a moment, The Shadow's eyes shone with a brilliance that seldom showed with the guise of Arnaud. The light faded almost instantly. The Shadow boarded the car with Chadron and settled leisurely back into the cushions as the chauffeur took the wheel.

In one quick flash, The Shadow had recognized the unexpected. Singularly, he had come across a clue at the time when he had least been likely to find it. A clue to Doctor Mocquino; an unmistakable one.

This car that The Shadow had entered was gray. It was a limousine. The chauffeur's face – his uniform were instant reminders. This automobile that belonged to James Chadron was the very machine from which Doctor Mocquino had alighted outside the apartment house across from the hotel in Hampstead!

CHAPTER XI. THE SHADOW AT DUSK

JAMES CHADRON was silent as the limousine rolled toward his country home. The knitting mill owner had exhausted all questions concerning Louis Gathrop, the man whom he supposed to be a friend of Henry Arnaud's. As for matters at the mill, Chadron preferred to discuss them after they reached his home.

The Shadow, too, was silent. His eyes were straight ahead, as if looking toward the road that the car was following. Actually, The Shadow was studying the rear-vision mirror, catching frequent glimpses of the chauffeur's face. Five minutes of this convinced him of one important point: whatever the connection between this car and Doctor Mocquino, it concerned Chadron's chauffeur alone; not the mill owner.

The shiftiness of the chauffeur's eyes, the occasional twitches of his lips were visible in the mirror. The Shadow knew that the man was burdened with some secret. Whether or not the chauffeur would discuss the subject was something that The Shadow intended to find out later.

The car was swinging along a rough road, heading toward a valley between two hills. As they turned to the right, the car jolted. Chadron emitted a grunt; then spoke testily to the chauffeur.

"Why did you bring this car, Wishart?" demanded the mill owner. "It does not ride as well as the sedan."

"The mechanic had finished with it, sir," returned the chauffeur, half turning his head toward the rear seat. "I thought that it would be in good condition. What is more, sir, I had some packages to deliver in Hampstead – ones that Mrs. Chadron sent. This car was roomier than the sedan, sir –"

"That's enough, Wishart. The packages were large ones, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then they explain why you brought the limousine."

There were a few minutes of silence; then Chadron turned to The Shadow.

"This limousine is a white elephant," declared the mill owner. "I purchased it a year ago and brought it out to my estate from New York. The car is too large and unwieldy for the roads in this section of the country. It broke a spring the first day we started into Hampstead.

"Then there was trouble with the generator. I scarcely used the car for six months. Soon after Wishart became my chauffeur, the car broke a rear axle. That was being repaired when I went away on my vacation."

"The car was repaired in Hampstead?"

The Shadow spoke the question casually. Watching Wishart, he saw that the query had no effect on the chauffeur.

"No," replied Chadron; "we sent the car over to Newburg, some miles from here. There is a better mechanic there. By the way, Wishart, when was the job completed?"

"Only this morning, Mr. Chadron." replied the chauffeur. "The car was brought over from Newburg."

The Shadow knew that the chauffeur's statement was incorrect. Yesterday, the limousine had been used by Doctor Mocquino in Hampstead. In fact, The Shadow had reason to believe that it was in this very car that the Voodoo Master had made his rapid departure from the city of doom.

The repair job had certainly been completed some time ago; early enough for Harry Vincent to spot the limousine while it was in Mocquino's service. At that time, the car had been bearing the false license plates, as it had last night. Moreover, The Shadow was positive that Wishart had been Mocquino's chauffeur.

Wishart had lied. The question was whether or not the chauffeur's falsehood was intentional. There was a chance that Wishart – like other persons – had been a victim of Mocquino's hypnotic influence. Yet the odds were equal that the chauffeur might be a paid underling in the employ of the Voodoo Master.

THE big car took to a side road, curved beneath the looming bulk of a high hill and entered a broad gate. It followed a driveway and pulled up in front of a large mansion. The Shadow alighted with Chadron, who dismissed the chauffeur. The Shadow watched the limousine swing past the house and roll into a four-car garage.

Chadron's house seemed gloomy when they entered it. The sun had settled beneath the huge hill that flanked the large estate. There was a servant in the darkened hall; Chadron told him that there would be a guest for dinner. Then the mill owner led The Shadow to a secluded room at the side of the house. Turning, on the lights. Chadron displayed a desk and file cabinets.

"We have everything here, Mr. Arnaud," he declared. "Even to models of the latest machinery in use at the plant. These blue prints" – he brought an envelope from a cabinet – "show the complete arrangements of our electric installations. Here are plans of the entire plant; also lists of the employees, with their full records."

The Shadow had seated himself at the desk. He took the envelopes as Chadron extended them. As The Shadow spread papers on the desk, Chadron smiled wisely.

"I have assumed, Mr. Arnaud." he stated, "that you are an expert in these matters. Though you have not declared yourself to be a special investigator, the circumstances of your visit have caused me to believe that you are one."

The Shadow delivered a slight smile. Looking up, he nodded; then went back to work. Chadron took a chair beside the desk. As The Shadow made quiet queries, Chadron answered them.

The Shadow looked up from a set of diagrams. He had completed a thorough survey; he noted that darkness had settled meanwhile. Pointing to the diagram before him, The Shadow made comment.

"All of your machinery," he stated, "is geared to a low current. I observe that each circuit is controlled by a separate transformer."

"That is correct, Mr. Arnaud."

"Your current, of course, comes from the local powerhouse –"

"Yes. That is why the transformers are necessary."

The Shadow nodded. He had seen the transformer boxes outside the large rooms with their long rows of steadily humming machines.

"Suppose," suggested The Shadow, "that there were no transformers to reduce the current. The effect, as I see it, would be chaos. Machines would speed up; flywheels would be loosened; belts would snap. The damage would be instantaneous and tremendous! Hundreds of workers would be trapped at their looms!"

CHADRON'S pudgy face showed horror; then the expression faded. The mill owner tapped the diagrams and smiled.

"For a moment, Mr. Arnaud," he declared, "I was so frightened that I was ready to call that plant and order it to shut down before the night shift. But you have overlooked the one point that provides against such disaster. There is no possible way to remove the transformers. Should they burn out, the current would cease. There would be no disaster."

"Some one could cut off the transformers."

"Not without deliberate intent. The boxes are locked; there are twenty of them altogether. That would require twenty men, all provided with keys for the boxes. Only one man has those keys; he is the plant supervisor."

"Richard Lassman," read The Shadow, referring to the lists. "He is scheduled to act as supervisor tonight."

"Lassman is one of our oldest and most trusted employees," declared Chadron. "But granting that he did, by some quirk, pull the switch of a transformer. Even then, there would be no damage. Other men are close at hand, inspecting each room at the time when the supervisor examines the transformer box for that particular unit of machinery."

"They would notice the speeding of the machines. They would immediately offset Lassman's action. The machinery would be shut down; any excitement would be confined to one room alone. No, Mr. Arnaud, such disaster could not occur. I can assure you of one thing: half past nine – the time of the inspection – is the safest moment during the entire evening."

STUDYING Lassman's record card, The Shadow considered Chadron's statement. The mill owner was right; yet The Shadow still saw the transformers as the only danger. He noted that Lassman's duty ended at ten o'clock. Rising from the desk, The Shadow spoke to Chadron.

"I shall not stay for dinner," he remarked quietly. "Instead, I should like to be present at the plant. If you will give me a personal pass, Mr. Chadron, it will serve me."

For a moment, Chadron hesitated. He had gained his only moment of suspicion. If danger existed, it seemed unwise to allow a stranger to visit the knitting mills. Thinking over The Shadow's visit, Chadron realized that he had accepted him on his own word alone.

Then came an afterthought. The Shadow had pointed out the only possible danger. Certainly he would not have done so had he held any interests other than those of preventing crime. Chadron sat down at the desk

and wrote out the required pass.

"It is half past six," he remarked. "I shall have Wishart take you to the knitting mills in my coupe."

"To Hampstead would be better," stated The Shadow, quietly. "I can go out to the mills later."

"Of course," agreed Chadron. "That would be preferable. One moment, Mr. Arnaud, while I call up the garage."

Chadron reached for a telephone on his desk. The Shadow stopped him.

"A quiet departure would be best," he told the mill owner. "I noticed a side door as we came through the hall. Suppose that I go to the garage, instead of waiting for the car to come to the front."

"But Wishart will want to hear the order direct from me."

"You can give it over the telephone while I am on my way to the garage. I should like to reach Hampstead as soon as possible. That will save time."

"Of course. Very well, Mr. Arnaud."

CHADRON shook hands at the door of the room. Crossing the darkened, deserted hall. The Shadow reached the outer door. He saw the lights of the garage, less than fifty feet away. With quick stride, he followed the grassy edge of a gravel walk.

The door of the garage was drawn slightly back. The Shadow entered the lighted space where the big limousine was parked alongside a coupe and a sedan. He saw a small door at the back of the garage; half opened, it showed a lighted room. The Shadow heard Wishart's voice; the chauffeur was talking over the telephone.

"Certainly, Mr. Chadron..." Approaching, The Shadow heard Wishart's half of the conversation. "Yes. I can have the coupe ready in a few minutes... Very well, sir. I shall look for Mr. Arnaud..."

Wishart hung up the receiver. He turned about, his lips twitching. Evidently the chauffeur was troubled by this new development. First there had been the questions about the limousine; now a dinner guest was going back to town. Wishart mumbled to himself as he stepped toward the door that led out to the main room of the garage.

Then the chauffeur stopped with a blurted gasp. On the threshold of the doorway was the man whose arrival he had not yet expected. Keen eyes burned in the chauffeur's direction – optics that shone from the face of Henry Arnaud. Those blazing eyes transformed The Shadow's visage.

Had Wishart encountered The Shadow cloaked in black he could not have been more terror-stricken. The Shadow's fierce gaze made up for his drab attire. His eyes carried the accusation that made men of evil quail. Wishart stood rigid.

That instant told its story. Wishart was no mere victim of Mocquino's hypnosis. Chance had served The Shadow well. He had trapped one of the Voodoo Master's own henchmen.

The Shadow was prepared to gain the facts he wanted. From Wishart's lips, he would learn the location of Doctor Mocquino's lair.

CHAPTER XII. DEATH'S TRAIL

THE room where The Shadow had confronted Wishart was the workshop of Chadron's garage. The room was equipped with benches and tables; tools lay strewn about, except in the nearest corner which was bare only for a battered table that supported the telephone.

The Shadow had entered by the only door. The opposite wall was blank; but far to one side was a wide, opened window, which might have served Wishart as an emergency exit had the chauffeur expected this encounter.

The room was illuminated by a single brilliant light bulb that hung from the ceiling. The glare upon Wishart's face showed the man's features more plainly than had daylight. Previously, The Shadow had noted a certain shrewdness in the chauffeur's expression. That glossy look had changed.

Eyes beady, lips drawn, Wishart resembled a human rat. Cornered, he squirmed; his hands seemed itchy for action, yet all the while he showed a preference for flight. Once his tenseness had ended, Wishart snarled. He made a sudden shift in the direction of the window. As The Shadow blocked him with a quick stride, Wishart darted a look toward the door.

The Shadow had picked a midway position. He was ready to seize the chauffeur, no matter which way the fellow turned. Wishart backed toward the corner where the telephone stood. Almost there, he sprang to a workbench and snatched up a huge monkey wrench. With livid face, he swung his arms blindly in The Shadow's direction.

A gripping hand caught the chauffeur's arm, stopping the drive of the heavy monkey wrench. An elbow jabbed a back-arm stroke, upward to Wishart's chin. Catching the man just above the neck, that short blow crippled him.

Wishart gurgled; staggered backward against the table in the corner. He lost his hold on the wrench; a twist of The Shadow's hand dropped Wishart to his hands and knees.

The rat-faced chauffeur turned yellow.

"I'll – I'll talk!" he gulped. "Don't sock me! I'll spill it all – about the dirty business! All about –"

Wishart stopped short, trying to hold back a name.

"Doctor Mocquino!"

It was The Shadow who supplied the name of the Voodoo Master. Wishart stared; his eyes blinked. He did not recognize the name. The Shadow gave another:

"Herbert Prensham!"

Wishart nodded. In gulping tones, he talked.

"THAT'S him!" asserted the chauffeur. "The guy that had the apartment down in Hampstead. Herbert Prensham – but it's not his own moniker. I don't know him by any other, though. I'm giving that straight!"

The Shadow's eyes were steady upon the kneeling chauffeur. Wishart recognized that further talk might help him. In hurried phrases, the chauffeur gave his confession.

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"He called me up, Prensham did. About a week ago." Nervously, Wishart tried to tell his whole story at once. "Said he knew Mr. Chadron. Wanted to see me. I went down there. Prensham let it out that he was a big-shot. Knew a lot about me, he did. About my doing time once, in a State penitentiary. Something that Mr. Chadron didn't know.

"Prensham wanted me to get a car for him. That's why I used the big limousine. I dug up some auto tags off an old junker. Put them on instead of the regular plates. Prensham told me to do it. I was scared – honest –"

"By his offer of money?"

Wishart winced at The Shadow's sharp query. Knowing the ways of Doctor Mocquino, the wealth of the evil Voodoo Master, The Shadow was confident that more than mere threats had urged Wishart to become Mocquino's tool.

"How'd you get wise to that?" gasped Wishart. "About the dough that Prensham slipped me?"

"Name the amount," returned The Shadow.

Wishart hesitated; then saw it was no use to lie.

"Two grand," confessed the chauffeur. "Half of it when I saw him the first time. The rest after –"

Again, Wishart broke. The Shadow supplied the finish of the statement.

"After you learned the sort of crime in which your new friend specialized."

Wishart nodded feebly. The Shadow's knowledge was uncanny. Wishart did not realize that The Shadow had penetrated deeply into the schemes of Doctor Mocquino, alias Herbert Prensham. Considering Mocquino's dealings with Wishart, The Shadow had naturally assumed that the Voodoo Master would require the chauffeur's silence. Mocquino was the sort who would pay well for such service.

More than that, The Shadow saw another use to which Mocquino had put Wishart. Not only had the Voodoo Master known about the chauffeur's past; he had probably recognized that Wishart was still a crook at heart. As Chadron's chauffeur, Wishart would know facts about the town of Hampstead. It was likely that Mocquino had found him a valuable source of information.

The steadiness of The Shadow's gaze made Wishart guess that his inquisitor had divined the truth. Wildly, Wishart began a protestation of innocence.

"I – I didn't know what was due!" he claimed. "The trouble at the steel works – the terrible accident at the chemical plant –"

QUICKLY the chauffeur tried to check himself. He had made a slip. There had been no actual disaster at the chemical plant. Wishart's reference showed that he had known that crime was scheduled there.

Steadily, The Shadow's eyes focused closer to those of the cowering traitor. The Shadow was pressing Wishart's fears. He knew that the man had more to blab; but statement of that fact was unnecessary. Through action, alone, The Shadow was forcing Wishart to a point of final confession.

"I'll tell you where the big-shot is," promised Wishart hoarsely. "I took him out to the place where he keeps his crew. They've got prisoners there – in the old house where they are. It's two miles north of the Denbury

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road first turn to the right after the forks. Maybe you've heard of the house. It's an old joint that looks like a castle. They called it 'Myram's Folly' – after the guy who built it."

The Shadow had not heard of Myram's Folly. But he had long since come to the conclusion that Mocquino's hideout must be some isolated house, reached only by a back road. The wooded slopes and valleys near Hampstead had many such buildings, relics of the days when there had been no through highways in this region.

The Shadow was ready to proceed with a simple plan. He would have Wishart drive him to Hampstead and lead the way from there. Wishart could drive Chadron's car, while The Shadow followed in his own. Knowing that he was trailed by a master of vengeance, Wishart would be too yellow to attempt any deed of treachery.

Slowly, The Shadow stepped back and motioned for Wishart to rise. The chauffeur came to his feet; lips twitching, he faced The Shadow. Standing between Wishart and the window, The Shadow motioned toward the door. His gesture indicated that the chauffeur was to precede him out into the garage proper.

Wishart began to nod; then stopped. With hoarse outcry, he began a sudden protest as he faced The Shadow.

"I won't talk!" voiced Wishart. "I don't know nothing, I tell you! You can't make me talk! I never met this doctor guy – never even heard tell of him –"

Instantly, The Shadow spun about. He had caught the reason for Wishart's change of front. Staring past The Shadow, Wishart had seen someone at the window of the little workshop.

The chauffeur had recognized a peering face. The Shadow knew that a menace had arrived.

AS he swung, The Shadow grabbed Wishart and sent the chauffeur sprawling to the cover of a workbench. Still spinning, The Shadow continued toward the door, reaching it at the end of his rapid whirl. His entire move was one continuous action. As he reached the doorway, The Shadow was facing toward the window.

There he saw vacancy, backed by darkness. The outside watcher had dropped away. Quickly, The Shadow snapped an order to Wishart – to stay in his spot of safety. The chauffeur, however, had other hopes. He saw an open path to the window; he believed that he could take it and elude The Shadow. He was a double-crosser, this yellow crook, ready to forget any promise.

Leaping from the cover of the workbench, Wishart took two long strides toward the window. As he sprang in that direction, a muffled, sighing sound came from the outer darkness. There was a whistle through the window, accompanied by a glimmer from an arrowlike missile.

Wishart jolted upward as he took his third long stride. A gasped cry broke from the chauffeur's lips; clutching air, Wishart staggered backward, lost his balance and flattened, face up, upon the floor.

From the darkness, The Shadow heard a quick scramble; then the thud of an automobile door, accompanied by the pur of a motor. The car was starting from an obscure lane beyond a hedge that ran parallel with the garage.

Wishart lay motionless, dead. His assassin was gone; but The Shadow knew the murderer's identity. The killer was Banzarro; the proof was the handle of a knife that projected from Wishart's breast. Amid the outside darkness, Banzarro had been ready with his powerful air gun. Again, Mocquino's lieutenant had lost his chance to down The Shadow with that weapon.

Thwarted by The Shadow's quick twist for cover, Banzarro had reserved his single shot for another victim. Wishart had leaped squarely into the path of Banzarro's aim; the murderer had fired a knife—thrust straight to the chauffeur's heart. Banzarro had decided to eliminate the one man who could serve as an informer. Mocquino needed Wishart no longer; Banzarro had seen to it that The Shadow would learn no future facts from the chauffeur.

Wishart's lips were rigid. They had ended their twitches forever. Those lips, however, had spoken in response to The Shadow's urge. They had named the location of Doctor Mocquino's headquarters. Though death had ended the chauffeur's confessions, The Shadow had gained the final trail.

CHAPTER XIII. MYRAM'S FOLLY

STANDING in the doorway between the workshop and the garage, The Shadow listened to the trailing fade—out of Banzarro's motor. After that sound had ended, silence reigned complete. Neither Wishart's last cry nor the departure of Banzarro's car had attracted attention in Chadron's house.

Alone on the scene where death had struck, The Shadow was confronted with a problem. That concerned Wishart's body. Once found, it would cause inquiry. James Chadron, when questioned, would remember that Henry Arnaud had been the last person to see the chauffeur alive.

That was a fact that could not well be eradicated. The simplest way to handle it would be to erase the character of Arnaud altogether. By such procedure, The Shadow would have full leeway to move against Doctor Rodil Mocquino. Since there would be no trail to Arnaud, it would not matter if the law blamed him for Wishart's death. The character of Henry Arnaud was purely a fictitious one that offered no lead to The Shadow himself.

The Shadow chose the simplest and most effective course. He left Wishart's body where it was. He turned out the light in the workshop; he went into the garage and did the same. Sliding the outer door open, The Shadow boarded the coupe and drove from the garage. He rolled slowly past Chadron's mansion.

To all appearances, Wishart was setting out for Hampstead with Henry Arnaud as his passenger. It would take half an hour for the coupe to reach the little city; another half hour for Wishart's return. It was obvious, therefore, that no one would wonder about Wishart until an hour had passed. The Shadow had all the time that he required.

All the way into Hampstead, The Shadow was alert. There was always a possibility of ambush, where Doctor Mocquino was concerned. Though The Shadow believed that Banzarro had headed back to the headquarters at Myram's Folly, he was not certain on that point. His vigilance did not lessen until he had actually arrived in Hampstead.

There, The Shadow parked Chadron's coupe on a side street. Leaving the car, he strolled to the Hampstead House and went up to his room. Using the guise of Arnaud for the last time, The Shadow packed; came down to the lobby and checked out. Carrying his suitcase, he walked to the garage where he had stored his own car. A few minutes later, he was driving along the main street of Hampstead, bound toward the Denbury road.

THE main street was ablaze with lights; long lines of blinking bulbs had been strung from lamp posts. People were plentiful; store fronts were lighted. The Shadow saw large banners and sparkling lights that advertised a double feature at Hampstead's largest motion picture theater. Already crowds had formed a line in front of the box office.

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Pulling into a corner gasoline station. The Shadow ordered the attendant to fill the tank. That done, the man began to wipe the windshield. In the fashion of a chance visitor, The Shadow inquired:

"What is all the celebration tonight?"

"Sort of general enthusiasm," chuckled the attendant. "People hereabouts have been feeling kind of glum lately. On account of some pretty bad accidents that have hit Hampstead. They sort of think the jinx is through. That's why ever body's turned out tonight."

The Shadow dropped the subject of the celebration. He inquired if he happened to be headed toward Denbury; the attendant told him he was. The Shadow then made guarded inquires concerning Myram's Folly, found it had been built by an old judge, who had died thirty years ago. The place hadn't been lived in since, and was watched over by a caretaker.

The Shadow thanked the attendant in the casual tone of Arnaud. He paid for the gasoline and drove from the filling station. Soon The Shadow was riding along the Denbury road.

Near the forks, The Shadow stopped. He donned cloak and hat of black. This was the attire that he intended to wear until his work was completed. He had finished with the role of Arnaud; even at the filling station, The Shadow had kept his disguised features from view.

With two sets of automatics beneath his cloak, The Shadow drove past the forks. He found the road to the right; took it and continued with dimmed lights until he reached a clearing in the woods. He was one and seven-tenths miles from the beginning of the road; here was a suitable spot to leave his car. Driving over the chunky ground of the clearing, The Shadow parked beneath the shelter of silent trees.

Extinguishing the lights, The Shadow stepped from the coupe. He groped to the road, followed it farther inward. There was light enough to pick the path; for an early moon had risen and the whitish rays filtered through the upper boughs of trees. Only the road showed splotches of moonlight. The woods themselves were like looming walls, waiting to engulf any unwary person who might step into their blanketed area.

To The Shadow, those woods were welcome. They offered a vantage spot any time that he might choose to seek it.

FOLLOWING the old road, The Shadow reached a spot where moonlight revealed a pair of huge stone gate posts. Each was surrounded by a battered, crouching lion. One of the stone beasts was tilted on its pedestal. The moonlight showed a name chiseled in old English letters, upon one gate. The Shadow read the dim name of "Myram."

Moonlight showed that the stone gates were flanked by a wall, also of stone. This barrier probably girded the entire estate. The posts, themselves, were barred by a rusted iron gate. Half off its hinges, the barrier offered no obstacle.

The Shadow approached; he managed to wedge the big gate inward, although the task was more than a one-man job. Stepping through the opening, The Shadow forced the gate back to its former position.

Trees still shrouded the stony road that now served as a driveway to a house somewhere in the woods. From Wishart's confession, from the filling station attendant's talk in Hampstead, The Shadow was confident that he had reached the actual headquarters of Doctor Rodil Mocquino.

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It was after eight o'clock; but there was time for the campaign that The Shadow intended. As he glided along the curving stretch of driveway, the cloaked investigator summarized his findings and his plans.

Danger threatened at the Hampstead Knitting Mills. Although The Shadow had found no weakness in the management of that plant, he felt sure that Doctor Mocquino had discovered one. Granting that point, The Shadow had decided that trouble might come at half past nine, when Richard Lassman, the night supervisor, began his tour of inspection.

Therefore, The Shadow had planned to be at the knitting mills at that time, coming there openly, if necessary, in the guise of Henry Arnaud. Circumstances had caused The Shadow to alter that intention. Banzarro's murder of Wishart had forced The Shadow to abandon his role of Arnaud.

Coming here to Myram's Folly, The Shadow saw a better opportunity. By a meeting with Doctor Mocquino, he would have a chance to block off disaster at its source. If he could deal with Mocquino within the next hour, The Shadow would still have time to drive back to the Hampstead Knitting Mills and be there at half past nine. A road that skirted Hampstead offered a short-cut to the mills.

The Shadow believed that Mocquino would expect him to concentrate upon the knitting mills; then seek the Voodoo Master's hide-out afterward. By learning of Mocquino's presence at Myram's Folly; by coming here first, The Shadow saw opportunity to take Mocquino by surprise.

Though deep in these thoughts. The Shadow was watching the curving driveway ahead. He saw trickles of moonlight; he edged closer to the trees at the side of the old driveway. Stealthily, invisibly, The Shadow came to the inner fringe of the woods. He stopped upon the edge of a large, irregular clearing. There, beneath the dull glow of moonlight, The Shadow viewed a most remarkable old mansion.

THE building was in the center of the clearing. It was constructed in sections – some of stone, other portions of wood. The front of the edifice looked like a colonial mansion. It had pillars; but they were small ones. Once white, the pillars were weather-beaten and looked tawdry, even in the moonlight.

The driveway went past the front of the mansion and any one approaching the home from that direction might have accepted it as an old colonial homestead. But The Shadow's view, from the side, enabled him to see the many styles of mongrel architecture that had been added to the original portion of the house.

Directly in back of the colonial section was a Mid-Victorian annex that was built in garish style. It had a square-shaped room that formed a fourth floor above the three-story building. The square room had windows in every wall; all of these were heavily shuttered. Above the square room was a broad roof, the size of the room itself. This was girded by a solid wooden railing, four feet in height.

There were other extensions of the house, all unsightly. They had been connected to form an almost solid building. In one rear corner was the most curious part of all. Old Judge Myram had not stopped with a Mid-Victorian addition to a colonial mansion. He had finished with walls of gray stone; above these he had added a roundish tower that looked like the turret of a castle. It rose two floors above the house roof and was topped with odd-shaped battlements that were considerably higher than the Mid-Victorian tower in the center of the building.

The Shadow could picture but one reason for this unsightly pile. The builder had probably intended to study the completed effect of each section; then rid himself of the composite eyesore by tearing down the portion that he liked least. After that, new wings could have been raised to conform with the section of the house that remained.

Apparently the castlelike portion of the house had been prompted by the fact that a small pond stretched from the rear of the building and continued as a moat on one side. The Shadow could see the stretch of water that shimmered in the moonlight, just behind the rear wall of the massive house.

Such speculations, however, did not concern The Shadow long. One feature of the building was all that interested him: that was some mode of entry that could be accomplished without observation. To The Shadow, Myram's Folly was important only as the lair of Doctor Rodil Mocquino.

CHAPTER XIV. THE PURPLE LAIR

UNTIL his arrival at Myram's Folly, The Shadow had followed the simple process of performing the most direct action that offered. Through that policy, he had arrived quickly at Doctor Mocquino's headquarters. The most obvious step would be to choose the shortest route into the house itself – with the exception of the front door, which would naturally be guarded.

The Shadow, however, decided against quick entry. He knew that Mocquino's henchmen were many. He could picture patrolling groups, keeping constant eye on spots where intruders might try to enter. The Shadow's choice was the most difficult one; for that would mark an unguarded place.

One portion of the building filled the bill. That was the high, castellated turret at the rear. It could not be reached directly without crossing a stretch of water. Therefore, The Shadow chose a roundabout course.

He circled along the edge of the clearing, swinging past the extent of pond behind the house. Following almost to the front of Myram's Folly, The Shadow paused on the far side. The house stood between him and the moonlight. The bulk of the building shaded a direct approach.

Like a ghost come to haunt the monstrous building, The Shadow approached the front corner. He could see a portico beneath the pillars; the space was flooded with moonlight. The Shadow observed three automobiles parked in a cluster. He recognized the rakish touring car in which he had last seen Doctor Mocquino.

Edging to the side wall, The Shadow glided toward the rear of the house. He came to the forward end of the moat, which was nothing more than a slimy ditch dug frontward from the pond. There was space between the moat and the wall. Clinging to that precarious fringe, The Shadow continued his rearward course.

He came to the stone-walled extension that was topped by the castellated turret. The stone was dark, untouched by moonlight. It was rough; it offered projection for gripping hands, space for toe-holds. Clutching the wall, The Shadow began an upward course. Black against the wall, he remained invisible as he climbed like a human beetle.

The Shadow's climb was comparatively easy until he reached the tower. He encountered difficulties, but slits in the stone of the tower aided him. Climbing farther, he found the crenelles of the battlement. Hunching himself up from the darkness, The Shadow rolled over the edge and lay flat upon a rounded roof.

THE moonlight showed The Shadow's cloaked form clearly; but no observers could have seen him. Not only was The Shadow above the level of the square room that topped the center of the house; he was also hidden by the irregular wall that girded the small turret.

Here, as he had hoped, The Shadow discovered a trapdoor. Lying flat, he produced a compact jimmy. Prying in expert fashion, he loosened the fastenings that held the trapdoor from beneath.

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Once inside, The Shadow lowered the trapdoor above him. He risked a flashlight's blink, keeping the rays almost covered by folds of his cloak. The beam showed the top step of a spiral stairway.

Descending, The Shadow found no further use for his light. The stairs were revealed at intervals by streaks of moonlight that came through slits in the wall. There were eight of these slits; two for each quadrant of the rounded tower.

At the bottom of the steps, The Shadow expected a door. Instead, he saw an unclosed exit that formed a dull frame against the dim lights of an inner, third-floor hall. Stepping into the corridor, The Shadow noted shuttered windows at the ends.

Obviously, wherever rooms or halls were lighted, windows were kept covered so that Myram's Folly would retain its abandoned appearance. Visualizing the composite house as he had seen it from the outside, The Shadow remembered a stretch of blocked windows on the second floor, directly beneath the square, Mid-Victorian tower.

The Shadow wanted to reach that portion of the house; for there he believed that he would find Mocquino's own sanctum. To arrive at his destination. The Shadow chose darkness instead of the lighted hallway. From that moment on, he began one of the most fantastic trails that he had ever undertaken.

THE various portions of the house had been built upon different levels, probably from separate plans supplied by different architects. There were short flights of steps in every hallway; rickety doors offered access to deserted rooms. Moving from one apartment to another, The Shadow followed a maze-like course through the side of the house that was toward the rising moon.

The whitened gleam, coming through grimy windows, was sufficient for The Shadow to trace the route he wanted. At intervals, however, he paused to step behind open, badly hinged doors or to linger in some cobwebbed corner. Each halt came when The Shadow heard the shuffle of footsteps or caught the sweeping flicker of an approaching flashlight upon the floor.

Soon after a shuffling guard had passed a room where The Shadow lingered, the cloaked invader emerged into a hallway. There, the moonlight from an end window showed a stairway down to the second floor. The Shadow descended; he was greeted by a lighted hall below. Stopping in the gloom of the stairs, he looked along the passage.

It was deserted; there were rows of doors on both sides. One door attracted The Shadow's immediate notice. It was new, and made a strong barrier. It had evidently been put in place since Mocquino had occupied this strange house.

Advancing, The Shadow reached the door. Edging close against the portal, he tried the knob. It yielded. The Shadow inched the door inward and peered into a tiny anteroom that was dimly lighted and backed by purple curtains.

For a moment, The Shadow paused; then, from a turn in the hallway, he caught the sound of footsteps. The Shadow's only course was to glide from view. He opened the door farther, stepped silently into the anteroom and closed the door behind him.

Gripping an automatic, The Shadow listened just within the door. He was ready to slide behind the barrier if the arriving man opened it; should he encounter the guard, quick fray would be necessary. As The Shadow listened, the footsteps went past the door and faded in the hallway. Need of battle was ended. The Shadow still had opportunity to continue his stealthy search. He had need of speed as well. The Shadow had used up

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valuable time in his foray into the heart of Mocquino's own domain. The purple curtains promised new discovery. Still gripping his automatic, The Shadow approached the curtains and spread them far enough to peer through.

Beyond the curtains was mellow light that displayed a room of barbaric magnificence. The walls were draped with hangings of a royal purple hue, broken only by grotesque designs in gold. Depicted on the walls were hideous figures, all in golden pattern. Some were dwarf-like shapes, lifesize, with glaring faces, fanglike teeth, claws that served for hands. Others were tigerish beasts that gaped with yawning jaws so lifelike that no observer would have been astonished if they had emitted snarls.

There were snakes upon those purple drapes – golden serpents with venomous fangs and twisted coils. They were as lifelike as the beasts; they looked ready to writhe and raise their heads to hiss.

The room was a fiend's nightmare. No sane man could have stood long, imprisonment within its walls. The Shadow could remember another such room that Doctor Mocquino had owned in the past. That had been a room hung with crimson, where captives lost all time sense under the glare of ruddy lights. But this purple room, with its walls that seemed alive, was a greater and more vivid threat than any that Mocquino had formerly owned.

At the far end of the room was a dais; that platform was carpeted in purple. Upon it stood a throne-like chair of ebony black, with gold designs on the arms. The chair was upholstered in purple that matched the velvet of the walls. Each arm formed a miniature lion's head in gold. Beside the throne was a high pedestal, also of ebony. Its top was square and deep.

Upon the pedestal stood an object that The Shadow had seen before. This was Mocquino's hypnotic light. The unfrosted bulb was mounted in a squatty lamp base that formed a coiled figure of a lizard. With spread jaws and extended tongue, the golden lizard was as lifelike as the other ornamentations in the room.

Behind the throne were golden curtains, that formed a relief against the purple walls. Viewing them, The Shadow understood the purpose of the apartment. It was Doctor Mocquino's throne room. The Shadow recalled the Voodoo Master's boasts of grandeur; the promise that some day he would rule over hordes of superstitious followers.

A whispered laugh crept weirdly through the curtained throne room. That subdued taunt foretold The Shadow's purpose. The Shadow had found Mocquino's purple lair. The room had become The Shadow's own base of operations.

Within this hideous room, The Shadow planned to learn Mocquino's schemes; then seek the Voodoo Master in person, to finish his present career of crime and evil.

CHAPTER XV. THE PATH BELOW

FROM the moment when he had reached the center of Doctor Mocquino's throne room, The Shadow had taken definite interest in one particular object that stood in the purple lair. That was the ebony pedestal beside Mocquino's throne.

The pedestal was the size of a low table. Its single leg was large and square-shaped. The top of the pedestal resembled a box, its depth almost as great as its other dimensions. That fact indicated that the top was some sort of a receptacle.

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Approaching the pedestal, The Shadow discovered that the lizard lamp base was not a permanent fixture. A cord ran from it to the floor. Lifting the lamp, The Shadow rested it upon Mocquino's throne and began an inspection of the pedestal. Fingering the under edge, he discovered a slight separation in the woodwork.

Carefully, The Shadow probed for a hidden spring. The pedestal was like a Chinese puzzle box, dependent upon a secret catch. The Shadow found a section of wood that gave under pressure. There was a muffled click; the top of the pedestal slid to one side. Pulling it farther, The Shadow saw the space within.

Indirect lights that shone from corners of the curtained room supplied sufficient glow for The Shadow to discern the contents of the pedestal box. There was a folded sheet of heavy paper that lay beside a thin, leather-bound book. The Shadow unfolded the heavy paper; standing beside the purple throne, he studied diagrams that were inked upon the sheet. They represented plans of this mansion. Shaded portions represented the parts of the house that Mocquino had occupied for his headquarters.

On each floor, The Shadow noted stairways. He discovered – as he had supposed – that the Mid-Victorian square tower in the center of the building served as an observation post. In addition, he learned a fact that interested him even more. One diagram showed the basement of the building. The cellar space was marked off into little rooms.

Those could be Mocquino's dungeons, where Harry Vincent and others lay prisoners. The Shadow had not forgotten the men whom he had come to rescue, the human stakes whose lives depended upon the outcome of his duel with Mocquino. Studying stairways and halls, as depicted in the diagrams, The Shadow chose a definite route to the cellar. That done, he folded the paper and replaced it in the pedestal.

OPENING the leather-bound book, The Shadow scanned written statements that pertained to the Voodoo Master's recent crimes. Moving through the pages, he came to one that bore the entry he wished to see. In bold hand, Mocquino had written these cryptic statements:

Knitting Mills

Richard Lassman

Control switch C

10:15 P. M.

The first two items were obvious. Mocquino actually intended destruction at the knitting mills; and Lassman was the hypnotized dupe who had become the Voodoo Master's tool. The reference to "Control Switch C" was something, however, that did not conform with facts that The Shadow already knew. In going over papers with Chadron, The Shadow had studied every phase of mechanical methods that concerned the knitting mills and their operation. He had seen no reference to any control switch that bore the letter "C." Turning farther in the book, The Shadow discovered listings that gave an answer to the riddle. They read as follows:

Control Switch A – Outer door.

Control Switch B – Alarm lights.

Control Switch C – Power transformer.

Control Switch D – Hampstead Theater.

Control Switch E – Hampstead House.

Control Switch F – Powerhouse.

Control Switch G – Time fuse.

As he studied these items, The Shadow grasped the full significance. A and B meant apparatus that operated here in the old mansion. Control Switch C, however, referred to an outside matter. Mocquino had found some way to tap the power line leading into the Hampstead Knitting Mills.

The "power transformer" must mean one of Mocquino's own. It explained how the Voodoo Master intended crime tonight. His transformer had been placed to intercept the current to the mills. It was cutting down the flow of electricity, taking the burden from the regular transformers in the mills.

When Lassman made his nine-thirty inspection, he would simply switch off the transformers at the mills. The action would cause no havoc; therefore, it would pass unnoticed by others who were inspecting the looms and other mechanism. Lassman would lock the transformer boxes and go his way. The simple reason why no trouble would occur was because Mocquino's outside transformer would still be in operation.

At quarter past ten, after Lassman had gone off duty and would be back in his own home, Mocquino would swing Control Switch C. The outside transformer would quit. Full current would travel through to the mills, producing a simultaneous effect in every machine room. Looms would speed; flywheels would ride free; belts would snap. Complete chaos would engulf the hundreds of night employees.

The disaster would prove the greatest that had yet struck Hampstead. Its cause would never be discovered. Lassman could not be blamed; for all would happen after he was elsewhere, with a complete alibi. Every one would concede that the supervisor could not be responsible for a sudden failure of transformers forty-five minutes after inspection time. As Chadron had told The Shadow, those transformers could do no worse than burn out, and thus cut off all current.

Chadron, however, had never dreamed that a master transformer had been implanted outside the mills to take over the work of the inside equipment. The Shadow had not divined the existence of such a device; although he had gained the conviction that Mocquino somehow intended to nullify the regular transformers. At last, The Shadow had the answer.

THE discovery simplified The Shadow's task. It meant that he could handle everything here in Mocquino's own domain, without returning to the mills. It also gave him three quarters of an hour longer in which to work. At present, it was nearly nine o'clock. The Shadow would have until quarter past ten.

In items D, E, and F, The Shadow saw new evidence of Mocquino's machinations. There was only one sort of damage that the Voodoo Master could hope to deliver at the theater, the hotel, and the powerhouse. That would be destruction through explosion. It was apparent that Mocquino had mined the three structures named; that when he pulled the switches, he would blast the buildings sky-high. Tapped wiring; dynamite planted in basements: high-speed fuse attached to the hidden bombs – those items could have been arranged long ago.

When would this destruction come?

The Shadow could give the answer. The explosions would follow the disaster at the knitting mills, probably within a half hour. Mocquino would destroy the theater while it still had a capacity audience. The hotel would go up soon afterward. Last of all the powerhouse, to cut off lights and leave the wrecked town in darkness.

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The last on the list – Control Switch G – unquestionably referred to this very mansion. The time fuse was an emergency device. Through its use, Mocquino could dynamite Myram's Folly. Such would be his course if he discovered that his lair was known. The purpose of a time fuse was important: it would allow Mocquino and his henchmen time to pack up and leave before the house was wrecked. The blasting of Myram's Folly would cover Mocquino's trail; the Voodoo Master, ever elusive, could move to a new hide-out.

AS he began to turn farther in the book. The Shadow heard a slight sound that indicated an opening door. It came from beyond the curtains on the other side of the room: those drapes through which The Shadow had entered.

Instantly, The Shadow replaced the book in the pedestal, along with the folded diagrams that he had already put there. With his right hand, he slid the pedestal top shut; with his left, he swung the lizard lamp base and its dazzle bulb from the throne to the tabletop.

With the same motion. The Shadow faded behind Mocquino's purple throne. His cloaked form dropped, merging with the darkness of the door. The golden curtains behind the throne parted at the bottom. Their upper borders scarcely rustled as The Shadow moved into a darkened space behind them.

The cloaked investigator was just in time. Rising behind the golden curtains, The Shadow peered between them to view a man who had entered the room from the other side. It was Banzarro; the ugly faced lieutenant was carrying his powerful air gun in the crook of one arm. He looked straight toward the throne as he entered.

Pausing as if he expected to see Mocquino, Banzarro waited a few moments; then shrugged his shoulders and turned about. As he went tack to the purple curtains, his weapon swung into clearer view. The Shadow saw a long-bladed knife projecting from the end of Banzarro's gun.

The fact that the lieutenant had come inside, bringing his gun with him, was proof that he had merely arrived to deliver a routine report. Not finding Mocquino, Banzarro was going back on outside duty.

Another fact was evident. Banzarro had access to the purple throne room. That explained the reason for the diagrams and the book that were hidden in the pedestal. Banzarro was schooled to carry on with Mocquino's schemes, in case the Voodoo Master should be absent. So, perhaps, were others. Mocquino had spoken facts, when he had announced that his evil would continue whether he lived or died.

A SLIGHT thud told that Banzarro had departed beyond the anteroom door. The Shadow remained behind the golden curtains; but he risked a flashlight, knowing that he was free from observation. The rays showed that he was in a small space between the curtains and a wall. It had a door of its own – one that probably served Mocquino when he wished to enter.

That was not all. Against the wall The Shadow saw an insulated board. Upon it shone a row of glittering switches, each marked with a different letter. Beside the last switch – G – was a clock dial marked off in minutes. It was designed to set the time fuse.

Hinged above the switches was a metal panel, with overlapping edges. It was held upright by a catch. Once lowered, it would cover the switchboard. The Shadow saw three spring locks attached to the panel: each with a keyhole. If Mocquino chose to cover the switches, he could do so by simply swinging the metal panel downward. It would lock automatically; only Mocquino could open it afterward, unless Banzarro or others were also provided with keys.

A few moments ago, The Shadow had held the opportunity to drop Banzarro with a single pistol shot. He had spared the evil ruffian simply because he had not wanted to start action too soon. Similarly, The Shadow had

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a present chance to put Mocquino's switchboard out of commission, from A to G. Again, he refrained from action. The Shadow wanted to leave no evidence that he was present in Myram's Folly.

With more than an hour ahead of him, The Shadow could let such deeds wait. There were prisoners below, including his own agent, Harry Vincent. The first task was to release those captives; to gain them as allies in the work that was to come. For The Shadow could foresee hard conflict before he settled scores with Doctor Mocquino.

Stepping through the golden curtains, The Shadow crossed the throne room. He put away his flashlight; moved through the purple exit and reached the outer door of the anteroom. With hand on the knob, The Shadow paused. He was sure that he had heard a sound from the depths of the throne room. Stepping back, The Shadow peered between the drapes.

Across the room, he saw the golden curtains part. Into view stepped Doctor Mocquino, clad in a purple robe with sleeves and borders of golden braid. The Voodoo Master had come through the doorway that The Shadow had seen beside the switchboard.

CALMLY, Mocquino seated himself upon the throne. His hand rested upon the ebony pedestal, fondling the golden lizard that served as lamp base. Upon the Voodoo Master's countenance appeared a benign smile, that The Shadow knew to be more dangerous than a leer.

To Doctor Mocquino, human lives were trifles. He relished the part that he played in their destruction. He was looking forward to the deeds that were scheduled for tonight, patiently awaiting the time when his plans would mature.

Hand beneath his cloak, The Shadow gripped an automatic. Again he paused, to let the .45 slide back into the deep pocket that served as its holster. As he had spared Banzarro, so did he decide to let Mocquino live. Even the death of the insidious Voodoo Master could not serve The Shadow at this moment.

Henchmen would respond if they heard a single shot. Mocquino's death would madden them. Some would battle The Shadow, while others would reach the helpless prisoners in the dungeons. The captives would die before The Shadow could reach them. Therefore, Mocquino must wait.

Leaving the Voodoo Master to his thoughts of crime, The Shadow glided noiselessly across the anteroom. He reached the outer door, opened it so silently that even Mocquino's keen ears could not detect the sound. Edging out into the hallway, The Shadow found it clear. He closed the door as softly as he had opened it; then glided to the nearest stairway.

The Shadow was taking the path that led below. Venturing alone through this stronghold peopled with Mocquino's minions, he was choosing a swift but dangerous task: the release of the prisoners to whom Doctor Mocquino had allowed life only while he still sought to balk The Shadow.

All depended upon this present mission. If it succeeded, The Shadow would hold power equal to Mocquino's, within the Voodoo Master's own fortress!

CHAPTER XVI. MONSTERS OF DOOM

THE SHADOW'S course was clear until he reached the ground floor. There, he found immediate need for caution. At the foot of the stairs, he heard the pacing that indicated one of Mocquino's patrolling henchmen. Swiftly, The Shadow drew back to semidarkness; clung close to a wall while the man passed.

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The patroller was a squatty, dark-faced rogue, who looked ugly enough to be a cousin of Banzarro. He was clad in rough clothes; from his belt extended the heavy blade of a knife, which The Shadow recognized as a machete. Squinty eyes glanced toward the stairs; they failed to detect The Shadow. The patrolling henchman continued on his way.

Following the hall, The Shadow chose a path through a darkened room. He found a closed door; he opened it and peered into another corridor. There he saw another of Mocquino's minions standing by a doorway. This fellow was taller than the rogue who had passed The Shadow; but he was of similar appearance. He was wearing a dirk at his hip; but The Shadow also saw the handle of a revolver projecting from the man's jacket pocket.

Like the first patroller, this henchman failed to detect The Shadow's approach. After a few moments, the man went along his route. The path was clear to the last flight of stairs.

From his close-up view of Mocquino's watchmen, The Shadow had observed that they were the sort of servitors upon whom the Voodoo Master had always depended. They were imported killers, brought from tropical lands. Their presence here explained, in part, why Mocquino had chosen so isolated a hide-out. The Voodoo Master knew that his dark-visaged followers would excite attention, unless kept under cover.

Such men served as the inside guards. There were other rogues outside, under Banzarro's lead. Among them, The Shadow was positive, were thugs recruited from American cities. Such crooks could move about more freely; they would also prefer guns to knives. They had proven that fact in their combats with The Shadow.

Though the inside guards, with their knives, would prove more dangerous in hand-to-hand combat, The Shadow preferred them on the present occasion. He knew that a forced encounter could be made a silent one. Confident on that point, he proceeded more rapidly. He found the stairway that he wanted; he made a swift, but silent descent.

NEAR the bottom of the steps, The Shadow paused. Directly ahead was a door; in front of it stood another of Mocquino's men. A ceiling light showed the rogue's sallow face, his shocky, jet-black hair. Short, but wiry of build, the guard was also one who preferred a knife. His dirk rested in a leather sheath that hung at his right hip.

The sallow guard did not note The Shadow's approach. He was busy, for the moment, rolling a cigarette. The Shadow watched the process; saw the sallow man fish in his pocket for a match. Finding none, the guard grumbled under his breath; then turned to the door and gave four quick raps.

The door opened inward, cautiously. The guard thrust his face through the aperture; spoke a few words. Finally he emerged, bringing a few matches in his hand. The Shadow heard him speak to some one on the other side of the door.

"Bah, Toussant," snarled the guard. "Why is it not important that I should call you when I need a match. You have nothing to do in that cave of yours! When I give the signal, it is for you to answer!"

Slamming the door himself, the guard stepped away from it. He struck a match to light his handmade cigarette. As the flame flickered beneath the sallow face, The Shadow glided forward.

The guard was alert. He sensed The Shadow's approach. He flicked the match away, gave a sudden snarl as he looked toward the stairs. The Shadow lunged. The guard saw the sudden surge of blackness and made a quick grab for his knife. He managed to wrench the dirk from its sheath.

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Then The Shadow was upon him. Bare-handed, the cloaked battler smashed down the guard's raised left arm. With a quick grab, The Shadow caught the hand that was beginning a knife-thrust. For a moment, he grappled with the guard; then gained a jujitsu hold.

The next effect was terrific. The light form of the wiry guard buckled upward. The Shadow spun the man in mid-air; then released him. Flat on his back, the rogue struck the floor. He lay stunned, almost paralyzed by the jolt that he had received.

Looking about for a place to stow his prisoner, The Shadow saw a space beneath the stairs. He carried the man there; bound his arms with the belt that the fellow wore. Ripping lining from the prisoner's jacket, The Shadow used it for a gag. There was a broken barrel in the corner. The Shadow wrenched away a wire hoop, used it to bind the sallow guard's ankles.

RETURNING to the door at the foot of the stairs, The Shadow gave four quick taps. A few moments passed; the door moved inward. Shoulder first, The Shadow bashed the door wide open. He flung himself into the space beyond and swung quickly about to meet the man whom he knew must be behind the door.

Here was a dingy, stone-walled passage, lighted by dim bulbs set in the wall. The glow showed Toussant. The Shadow had staggered the inner guard by the quick smash against the door. Nevertheless, in Toussant, The Shadow was due to meet a most formidable antagonist.

Floundered against the wall, Toussant formed a gigantic figure. He was fully six feet eight in height; his physique was proportionate. Though dull-faced, Toussant showed himself quick of action. He rallied as The Shadow spied him. With a terrific spring, the giant came leaping forward.

Huge arms flayed forward. Hamlike hands gripped for The Shadow's throat. In a trice, the cloaked battler was confronted with a situation that he had scarcely foreseen. The Shadow had expected fight from Toussant; but he had not guessed that the man would possess such formidable proportions. By choosing hand-to-hand conflict, The Shadow had gained chance for a silent struggle; but such advantage was offset by the size and power of the combatant who loomed upon him.

Had The Shadow tried to elude Toussant's grip, he would have failed. The giant's drive was too quick; his arms and hands were too long and powerful to escape. Instead of wresting away, The Shadow let Toussant's clutch take hold. Then within the gripping circle of the giant's arms, The Shadow drove forward.

A cloaked shoulder pounded the pit of the giant's stomach. Toussant doubled backward; The Shadow's surge thrust the huge man against the door. The barrier swung shut. His back against it, Toussant recovered. His fingers had slipped from The Shadow's throat; but he had gripped the cloaked arms below. With a mammoth heave, Toussant sent The Shadow rolling to the floor.

Grimly, The Shadow had gripped Toussant's arms. In sprawling, he took the giant with him. They rolled across the stone floor. As The Shadow tried to twist away, Toussant at last gained a throat grip with one mammoth hand. His other arm girding The Shadow's body, Toussant steadied to drive his opponent's head against the wall.

One such smash would have been The Shadow's finish. Toussant had the strength to crack a skull with such a stroke. His own arms trapped in Toussant's girding grip, The Shadow's plight seemed hopeless, at least to Toussant. One of The Shadow's hands was jammed beneath his cloak – a fact that made his cause look even worse. But The Shadow's hand was busy. Upon it rested his salvation in this fray.

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As Toussant shouted a fiendish laugh, he started his forward thrust. Simultaneously, there was a muffled report from within the folds of The Shadow's cloak. Toussant's laugh changed to a high-pitched shriek. The giant's arm quivered. It did not complete its thrust. Huge fingers loosened; slow, like an overbalanced tower, Toussant swayed and sprawled headlong to the floor.

His collapse revealed a curl of smoke wreathing at the spot where he had been. That coil of smoke came from The Shadow's cloak.

The Shadow had managed to twist a .45 toward Toussant's body. With a jab of the trigger, he had dispatched a bullet to the giant's heart; Toussant was dead. The Shadow had passed the last of the guards who blocked the path to Mocquino's dungeons.

THE SHADOW was panting; wavering, he slowly recovered from the effects of the clutching fingers that had temporarily choked his throat. Stepping past Toussant's prone form, The Shadow followed the passage toward its inner end. There he found a vaulted opening that led down a short flight of steps to a corridor that ran at right angles to the passage that Toussant had guarded.

The Shadow remembered the diagrams in Mocquino's throne room. All the small rooms opened from that inner, lower corridor. There, The Shadow would find the prisoners behind their bars. With Toussant dead, there would be no one to interfere with the rescue that The Shadow intended.

There was a glow from the lower corridor; dim, like the lights in the passage where The Shadow stood. About to descend the steps, The Shadow noted a sudden blink ahead. He stopped short; turned about.

The lights in his own passage were blinking also. Instantly, The Shadow remembered the instructions in Mocquino's book. Control Switch B: the alarm lights. Some one had learned of trouble here below. Either The Shadow's fight with Toussant had been heard; or the bound outside guard had been found beneath the stairs.

Whichever the case, the result was the same. Word had been carried to Mocquino's purple lair. The Voodoo Master had pressed Control Switch B. Everywhere, lights were blinking the emergency signal. Soon Mocquino's minions would converge upon this spot.

Gripping a pair of automatics, The Shadow started for the outer door of the passage. He had wanted to avoid this conflict until later; but his only course was to begin battle. At least, The Shadow had gained a vantage point that would help his plans. By holding this passage, he could also protect the prisoners, for he would be between them and all incoming invaders.

By reaching the door, The Shadow could first offer resistance on the stairs; then withdraw, if necessary, to the passage. Since the door was his immediate objective, he headed for it rapidly. Before he reached it, the door burst inward.

STOPPING short, The Shadow stood face to face with six blocking enemies – men whose faces and attire were as strange as any that he had ever seen. Each antagonist was brawny; all bore a marked resemblance. Dark of features, glaring of eyes, they faced The Shadow with fixed expressions.

Each foeman wore a helmet with raised visor. Each was equipped with a steel breastplate that resembled Roman armor. For weapons, the six held upraised sabers. They stood like waxen figures, as if awaiting a command that would bring them to life.

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Instantly, The Shadow recognized the nature of these foemen. They were zombie – human machines who lacked will of their own. Well did The Shadow know that the zombi lore of Haiti was pure superstition; that the belief that dead bodies could be brought to life had never become a proven fact.

But The Shadow knew the ways of Doctor Mocquino. He knew how the Voodoo Master could take living victims and make them appear as zombie. These were former henchmen who had incurred Mocquino's displeasure. The Voodoo Master had forced them to face his brilliant, dazzling light of many colors; not once, but often. Through such regular treatment they had become the equivalent of zombie. They were shock troops, entirely at Mocquino's call; fighters who would battle like machines, never stopping, even though threatened by instant death.

Their visored helmets; their heavy breastplates, were thick enough to stop pistol bullets. Equipped with such armor, each fighting zombi would come forward, flaying with his saber until too crippled to proceed. Unless they could be stopped before Mocquino arrived, these monsters of doom would become a hideous menace.

The Shadow leveled his automatics straight for the rows of glaring eyes. His move was too late. From the stairway beyond the zombie came the sound of a fierce hiss. Arms raised mechanically, at the very instant when The Shadow aimed his automatics. Hands slapped the sides of helmets; visors clicked down, covering the faces of the six foemen.

A musical laugh sounded from the stairs; the melodious tone was tinged with an insidious note. Beyond the zombie, The Shadow sighted a figure in a purple robe. Doctor Mocquino had arrived in time to give his order. The Voodoo Master was ready to launch his steel-clad monsters of doom against The Shadow!

CHAPTER XVII. THE SNARE BELOW

BRIEF moments would have sufficed The Shadow in his attempt to down Mocquino's inhuman warriors; but those moments were denied. The zombie had heard the Voodoo Master's hiss. They had obeyed the order to prepare. All that they needed was another signal to advance.

Mocquino alone could give that command. Knowing it, The Shadow tilted an automatic farther upward; he jabbed quick shots at the stairs. Again, Mocquino was too quick. With his hiss, the Voodoo Master had leaped forward. His purple clad figure dropped from view just as The Shadow fired.

At the bottom of the stairs Mocquino was protected by the massed bodies of his zombie. Clustered in the doorway, those six saber-armed fighters formed a solid phalanx. There was no space through which The Shadow could stab new bullets.

A fierce cry from Mocquino; a harsh order in some unknown tongue. The zombie heard it; they recognized their master's wish. With martial stride, the six stepped forward, spreading to form a fanlike rank in the wider space of the passage. Sabers lifted, they closed upon The Shadow.

As the zombie closed upon him, The Shadow did not retreat; nor did he open fire. Instead, he sprang directly into the closing circle, under the very weapons that gleamed from upraised arms.

Instantly, the zombie halted. Mocquino had trained them to strike when they closed with a foe. Arms began their saber strokes.

Those arms were met by hands that carried steel. Swifter than the mechanized warriors, The Shadow had begun strokes of his own. His arms flayed above his head; his fists drove his heavy automatics straight for the sabers and the hands that gripped them.

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Clanging one saber at the guard, The Shadow knocked the weapons from the zombie grasp. With backhand upswing, he struck a descending forearm to ward off another fighter's blow. Twisting, dropping back, The Shadow dropped his hand to the floor. Coming up with his other arm, he used the barrel of his second automatic to meet the sharp blade of a saber that was cleaving straight for his head.

The zombie were breaking rank. Twisting about, The Shadow threw his back against the wall. He clamped one foot upon the saber which the first zombi had dropped. Beating back two attackers, The Shadow made a side swing with his arm and sent his right-hand automatic scaling along the passage, clear to the arched opening that led to the dungeons.

That gun would be safe there – ready, later when The Shadow needed it. For the present, The Shadow wanted another weapon; one that he had a chance to gain. Dropping to the floor, he grabbed the saber which he held beneath his foot. Swishing away, he grasped the handle with his right hand. The zombi who owned the weapon had already clutched the blade. The Shadow's tug took the saber from the zombi's grasp.

Hands streaming with blood, the zombi lurched forward. Though weaponless, though wounded by the slither of the blade, he intended to fight until death.

THROUGH his lunge, the zombi served The Shadow.

One swinging saber had just slashed The Shadow's sleeve. Another was driving downward with a truer stroke, when the weaponless zombi jostled the one who sought to cleave The Shadow's skull. The stroke was diverted as The Shadow whirled away. Retreating a few paces along the passage, The Shadow was ready for his attackers. He had only five saber bearers with whom to deal.

Moreover, The Shadow had a saber of his own; and with that weapon, he held an unexpected advantage. The zombie were cluttering forward, swinging their sword arms. The Shadow, slowly retreating, had assumed a fencer's pose. His right arm was extended; his hand used its saber like a fencing foil. His left was ready with its automatic. The time would come when he could use that weapon.

Framed in the outer doorway, Doctor Mocquino leered with rage. He had not anticipated this situation. He foresaw that his zombie would fail to reach The Shadow with their blades. In mechanizing these henchmen, Mocquino had deprived them of all human emotions. They lacked cunning, just as they had no fear. They were trained for close-range battle; they would advance until they gained it. That type of fight would be impossible while The Shadow parried with his saber. Not one of the five zombie could get within arm's length.

Only the sixth zombi, weaponless and bloody-handed, could manage an approach. Having no saber, he kept marching forward, clutching at The Shadow. Each time he came close, The Shadow shifted to deliver a left-hand, backswing stroke with his automatic. Each crash found the visor of the zombi's helmet, jolted the stupid monster and stopped his brief advance.

With clenched fists, Doctor Mocquino snarled from his doorway. Clashing with the zombie, The Shadow heard and saw the Voodoo Master; he took quick aim and fired with his .45. A side-stepping zombi blundered into The Shadow's path and took the bullet against his breastplate. Saved from The Shadow's quick shot, Mocquino took to cover outside the doorway.

DESPITE his superhuman efforts, The Shadow was losing the advantage. He had backed far along the passage. His limit would soon be reached. Though tireless, The Shadow knew that his enemies were the same.

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Death to the zombie was The Shadow's only course. Such death, when delivered, would be merciful. Long under Mocquino's hypnotic sway, these creatures could never be brought back to a state of individual intelligence. They were no longer human; nor could they ever be again.

In his parries, The Shadow had discovered the system of the strokes delivered by the zombie. Their mechanical motions were uniform. In meeting the strokes, The Shadow was making a regular round, always ahead of each expected blow. Mocquino has seen that from his doorway; on that account, the Voodoo Master had delivered his snarl.

Twisting his position, The Shadow found that the zombie followed. He shifted; two enemies ran afoul and their saber blades clashed. The Shadow dodged both strokes; drove straight in on a zombi who had completed a swing. With a thrust of his own saber, The Shadow stabbed the point between the close bars of the zombi's helmet visor.

Jamming his shoulder against the mechanical fighter's breastplate, The Shadow gave a forceful pry. His thrust ripped the helmet upward, clear of the zombi's head. Twisting away from the glaring face, The Shadow warded off a pair of saber strokes; pressing back against the wall, he thrust his saber point into another visor and served the second zombi as he had the first.

The first of the two unhelmeted zombis was again upon The Shadow, coming from an angle which cut off retreat. The saber arm was swinging from above the glaring face. Another fighter, this one with a helmet, was beginning a saber stroke.

Lunging from the wall, The Shadow jabbed his automatic straight at the zombi who wore no helmet. As he pressed the trigger, The Shadow swung his saber to ward off the other zombi's blow.

Both moves sufficed. The Shadow's gun blast dispatched a bullet through the unprotected zombi's brain. The killer sagged, a glare still on his face. His body clattered to the floor; his arm never completed its saber stroke. Simultaneously, The Shadow had blocked the other slash.

Swinging back toward the steps to the dungeon, The Shadow turned suddenly to meet the second zombi whom he had deprived of a helmet. He fired another straight shot to stretch this adversary on the stone floor.

Passing the guard of the nearest zombi, The Shadow made another of his expert visor thrusts. Off bobbed a helmet; even before it clattered upon the floor, The Shadow delivered a close-range bullet that destroyed this adversary.

MOCQUINO had heard the shots. Venturing a quick look from the doorway, the Voodoo Master saw the climax. Three of his zombie were flattened upon the floor. Above the motionless, steel-breasted forms, The Shadow was handling the last two saber bearers.

A helmet popped off as Mocquino stared. An automatic thundered. Clanging, a zombi hit the floor, his steel breastplate adding new echoes to the clatter of his helmet.

Sabers flashed as The Shadow parried with the last of the pair. Then came a thrust; a helmet jounced upward and an automatic tongued its doom. Clear at the rear of the passage stood The Shadow, triumphant.

Suddenly, a darkish form lurched up from the floor. It was the sixth zombi; following in the wake of those whom The Shadow had dropped, this forgotten battler had stumbled upon a saber. He still wore a helmet, this zombi; swinging his fresh blade, he was blindly charging upon The Shadow, undeterred by the fate that had overcome five battlers before him.

The Shadow met the lunge; parried and stepped back to gain a position from which he could stab the zombi's visor. The backward pace was one too many.

It brought The Shadow over the top sill of the steps that led down to the dungeon corridor. The cloaked fighter lost his footing; before he could regain it, the zombi was upon him. Clutching the monster's bloody hand, The Shadow went sprawling to the stone floor below, carrying the zombi with him.

Mocquino heard the clatter and dashed madly through the passage. He reached the steps, to see The Shadow rising from beside the zombi's body. Twisting away, The Shadow had let the steel-weighted monster strike head foremost. The crash against the stone below had broken the zombi's neck. The Shadow, however, was only halfway to his feet when Mocquino reached the steps.

Grabbing at an iron ring that projected from a stone wail, the Voodoo Master tugged. There was a clatter from above; with a terrific clash, a steel gate dropped within the archway, at the very top of the steps. Never pausing, Mocquino wheeled about, to dash for the safety outside the front door of the passage, where The Shadow's bullets could not reach him.

Doctor Mocquino had offset The Shadow's victory. The cloaked warrior had slain the Voodoo Master's zombis, only to be snared in the trap that lay below.

CHAPTER XVIII. THE NEW MENACE

IT was six feet to the top of the stone steps. Jarred by the fall, The Shadow was slow to gain a position behind the barred gate. He had plucked up the automatic that he had tossed down the steps; he was ready to add Mocquino to the list of casualties. He arrived too late, however, to find the Voodoo Master.

Stopped by the steel gate, The Shadow found it a most formidable obstacle. Not only was the gate a heavy one; it had dropped between two portions of the archway. There was no way to attack the barrier; its bars were too close to do more than wedge a hand through.

The dim passage showed the sprawled bodies of the zombie. Mocquino had picked a route between them and had gained the cover of the outside door. He had pulled the door shut after him; but it was not quite closed. As The Shadow stared, with automatic leveled, the tones of the Voodoo Master echoed to his ears.

"Seek the prisoners!" issued Mocquino's snarled challenge. "Rescue them! Bring them past the barred gate! Do so, if you can!"

A pause; then a gangly sneer that betold Mocquino's belief in the strength of his snare. Then, in harsher tone, Mocquino added:

"You have slain Toussant and my zombie – but you can thank them for your plight. It took their full strength to raise that gate to its position. To lift it, you will require the power of seven men.

"When you are free, you will find me in my throne room. Perhaps you may arrive in time to witness the completion of my schemes. But I warn you, unless you reach me before the appointed moment, you shall never again interfere in my plans!"

The outer door slammed shut. Mocquino was gone from beyond it.

THE SHADOW lowered his automatic. Eyeing the gate, he recognized that Mocquino had spoken actual facts concerning it. Its weight was certainly sufficient to tax the strength of Toussant and the six zombie.

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Plainly, The Shadow saw what Mocquino's course would be. It would not be long until quarter past ten. At that time, the Voodoo Master would operate his control switches. First would come the havoc at the knitting mills; then destruction of theater, hotel and powerhouse. Finally, Mocquino's tone had told The Shadow, this fortress would also be destroyed.

Mocquino would have no further use for Myram's Folly. His move would be to pack his belongings; set the time fuse and depart with his henchmen. Knowing Mocquino's speed at such transfers, The Shadow could foresee that the time interval would be short. Its exact duration was unimportant, however. The Shadow, even in his present plight, was determined to be free of this pit before Mocquino began his first operations.

Hundreds of lives were at stake. Actual massacre was scheduled for the town of Hampstead. The Shadow alone could avert the slaughter that threatened the city of doom.

To avert it, The Shadow must leave this trap. He must bring a band of followers with him. Therefore, the first step was the rescue of the prisoners. The Shadow knew that they would be comparatively few in number; certainly less than half a dozen. Otherwise Mocquino would fear that they could lift the steel gate, copying the former example of Toussant and the zombie.

Mocquino certainly felt no fears. As proof of his surety, he had removed all guards from below. That was good policy on his part. Having witnessed the slaughter of his zombie. Mocquino was too wise to put other henchmen within range of The Shadow's guns. The steel gate might bar progress; but it offered loopholes for The Shadow's weapons.

Knowing that the outer passage would be clear, The Shadow moved down to the bottom of the steps. The corridor below was lighted; The Shadow looked for the dungeon doorways. He still saw a chance to free himself and the prisoners – to escape the fate of living entombment that Mocquino hoped to bring by blasting the walls of Myram's Folly.

Four doorways greeted The Shadow's gaze. Each was fronted with steel bars. Each dungeon was dark; but as The Shadow gave a commanding whisper, a face appeared at the one gate. The Shadow recognized Harry Vincent. Approaching, he spoke to his agent.

"How many are here?" queried The Shadow. "Who are the other prisoners?"

"Five," replied Harry. "Two are caretakers who belonged here. Another is a man who had some trouble with Mocquino. There are two others who landed here in their car, taking the wrong road by mistake. They are in the last cell –"

Harry's voice broke off. A sudden, gushing sound had started in the darkness of his dungeon. Harry pointed downward, indicating—steps upon which he stood. His eyes were wild.

"The sluices have opened!" he exclaimed. "Mocquino promised us that such would be our death! The water pipes are large; one in every cell."

THE SHADOW understood. The dungeons were below the level of the broad pond in back of the large house. So was the corridor wherein The Shadow stood. Cells would be flooded first; then the corridor. Mocquino was not waiting until his departure to destroy the prisoners.

The Shadow looked for the lock on Harry's cell. The agent shook his head; Harry's well-molded features looked weary and hopeless.

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"These bars are not doors," stated Harry. "They are solid gratings. Mocquino's men fixed them in place with stone and mortar."

Stepping back, The Shadow studied the bars. Harry was right; Mocquino had placed these prisoners in cells where he intended them to stay forever. Though they had been fed and well-treated, they had known that doom would be their lot.

Yet, in permanently sealing the cells, Mocquino had not gone to great labor. The stone walls of these cellar archways were old and crumbly. Holes had been driven into one side of Harry's door; bars had been inserted there. The other side of the doorway had been torn down, so that the bars could be swung inward. After that, new stone had been mortared into place.

There was no use to attack the new masonry; it was too solid. The old stones, however, told their own story. Since one side of the doorway had been broken down, the other side could be similarly handled. The Shadow saw spaces where cracked mortar had fallen loose.

"I've worked on the stones," began Harry. "But without tools, I couldn't move –"

Harry stopped as The Shadow swung away. Over by the spot where the dead zombi lay, The Shadow stooped and picked up two sabers. One was the weapon that he had used; the other was the sword that the last zombi had carried on his fall.

Coming back to the cell, The Shadow thrust one weapon through to Harry. Keeping the other, he rammed its sharp point between two stones. Jabbing, prying, The Shadow began to loosen the masonry that held one end of the bars.

Harry cooperated from his side. One stone fell under The Shadow's efforts; it struck the steps by Harry's feet, bounced down into the dungeon and splashed into a six-inch depth of water. The gushing pipes were still at work, steadily flooding the dungeons.

There were clangs at the doors of other cells. Prisoners, excited by the inpouring torrents, had roused to hear the noise of rescue. They were shouting for aid. It was due to come.

The Shadow pried away another stone; Harry chiseled one loose, higher up. Finding a deep cavity for his saber, The Shadow gained a powerful leverage and broke away the intervening chunk.

Shoulder against the bars, The Shadow shoved back and forth. Harry supplied added effort. The barrier swayed; its own weight served to crack other sections of the decayed masonry. At last, as The Shadow tugged, Harry fought frantically outward. The bars ripped away; Harry sprawled to the stone of the corridor.

HARRY splashed water as he came free. The tide had risen to the top of the inner steps upon which he had stood.

The Shadow passed the sabers to his agent. In response to a quick command, Harry hurried the weapons to the next cells and passed them through to eager prisoners within. Coming back to the cell that he had left, Harry found The Shadow wrenching one of the loosened bars. It came free from its cross-fastenings; The Shadow passed it along to Harry, who carried it to another prisoner. This new implement was better than the sabers.

Within the next four minutes, every prisoner had a tool with which to smash at the weak side of his cell door. The Shadow had a bar of his own; so did Harry. The water had reached the corridor; its torrent seemed

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swifter than before. But The Shadow had found the way to defeat disaster.

Stones were clattering; barriers were yielding. One row of bars came down from the doorway where two prisoners were confined within. Eagerly, these rescued men joined in the outside work. Stones cracked; bars twisted. The third door fell. With the water knee-deep, the fourth barrier crashed, releasing the two last men.

Wearied prisoners stood gasping, until one saw the steps up from the corridor, with the formidable gate beyond. That upper archway was new, it had been specially installed by Mocquino. There was no way of smashing the masonry that surrounded the big gate.

The other prisoners stared. They recognized that their combined strength would be insufficient to hoist the gate that had taxed the gigantic Toussant and the six inhuman zombie. Not including Harry, these prisoners were but five in number; and they were wearied. Even if The Shadow could exert the strength of two Toussants, his crew could not perform its part.

Not by mere brawn alone – but The Shadow saw opportunity for an added measure. It was one that Mocquino had not considered; for the Voodoo Master had not supposed that his dungeon doors could be shattered and their bars transformed to implements of labor.

To Harry and the other rescued prisoners, The Shadow issued this command:

"Gather the largest stones. Take these to the gate."

THE ex-prisoners obeyed. Each groped in the water that surged about his knees and found solid stones from the shattered doorways. Harry remembered one that had rolled down into his dungeon. He ducked below the surface of the water to get it. Others copied Harry's example.

Dripping as they brought the last large stones, the eager men found The Shadow on the topmost step by the big gate. He was holding the steel bars battered from the prison cells. As the men laid the stones beside him, he supplied each with a rod. Taking a bar of his own, The Shadow wedged it under the space formed by the lowest crossbar of the gate. The others did the same.

Standing on the dry step just below the top, The Shadow brought his bar down upon one of the raised stones. The bar became a lever; the stone served as the fulcrum. All were ready; The Shadow called for downward pressure. Together, the prisoners leaned upon the bars.

The long leverage brought an instantaneous result. Groaning, the steel gate went a full foot upward. The strength of the combined crew had gained double its normal lifting power.

Strongest of all, The Shadow held his weight upon his lever while he ordered a weaker man to wedge stones beneath the gate. That done, The Shadow piled smaller stones on larger, to gain a closer, higher fulcrum. The aiding men worked quickly, performing the same action. Again, the leverage was applied in unison. New stones there stacked upon the ones that already held the gate.

The water was almost to the top step. Further leverage was impossible with the slippery footing; but no more was necessary. The two-foot space beneath the gate was sufficient. Shoulders first, The Shadow wriggled through between the two pairs of supporting stones. He was on his feet, an automatic in his hand, watching the far door of the passage as the rest came through.

Meeting no challenge, The Shadow ordered his followers to arm themselves with sabers that lay scattered beside the dead zombie. He had his extra automatics ready to pass to others, if they encountered groups of

Mocquino's henchmen; but for the present, The Shadow held his own weapons. He had reason to believe that he would need them later. Hence he preferred, if possible, to keep his own men armed with swords instead of guns.

For The Shadow planned more than mere escape. In his release of the prisoners, he had accomplished his first objective in less than the time required, thanks to the stout cooperation that the men themselves had given.

There was still an interval wherein The Shadow could accept Doctor Mocquino's ironical invitation to meet him in the purple throne room. Within that space of time, The Shadow hoped to save the city of Hampstead from the doom that Mocquino intended to deliver.

CHAPTER XIX. DISASTER'S HOUR

THE SHADOW expected encounter with Mocquino's henchmen. It came soon after he and the prisoners had escaped the Voodoo Master's snare. Hastening through the passage where five dead zombies lay, The Shadow wrenched open the outer door. He stopped short, blocking the six men who were behind him.

Harry Vincent, at the head of the former prisoners, saw why The Shadow had halted. Coming down the stairs from the first floor were two of Mocquino's inside guards, probably, bound for a last inspection of the cellar.

Both were armed with two weapons: revolver and knife. Each chose differently, when they sought to deal with The Shadow. One man raised his gun; the other whipped the knife from his belt. The Shadow, one hand still on the doorknob, jabbed two quick shots.

He dropped the man with the revolver before the ruffian could fire. The other hurled his knife just as he received The Shadow's bullet. Staggering as he finished his throw, the knife hurler never found his mark. Dropping back, The Shadow flipped the door half closed and stopped the blade in flight. The knife stopped in the woodwork.

The blade had traveled too high to strike The Shadow; he made his quick move with the door to protect the men behind him, for the arching knife was curving downward as it struck.

The Shadow started for the stairs while his enemies were still tumbling toward him. Harry, close behind his chief, grabbed up the revolver which the first sprawled man had dropped. One of the caretakers snatched the gun from the second foe's belt. Two of The Shadow's followers were supplied with revolvers, instead of sabers.

In the first-floor hallway, The Shadow encountered four more of Mocquino's men, who had converged there when one had called out the news of shots below. The Shadow opened with quick fire; Harry and the caretaker joined immediately. This skirmish was a short one. Three of Mocquino's minions flattened; the other dashed away to give the alarm.

This produced two more guns for The Shadow's followers. The Shadow passed one of his own automatics to Harry; ordered him to give his revolver to the fifth member of the band. All were now armed. In quick tones, The Shadow gave a final command. Even as he spoke it, lights began to blink. The alarm had reached Mocquino's lair.

LEADING the way, The Shadow cut through to the front of the house, following a route that he knew from Mocquino's diagrams. His purpose was twofold: first, to beat back Banzarro's outside band; second, to make Mocquino think that the fight was confined below.

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His order to his followers was a simple one. They were to drive outward, with Harry Vincent at their head, while The Shadow remained within the house.

None was to return to Myram's Folly, once they had left it.

The Shadow was the first to reach the massive front door. None of Mocquino's men had arrived to block the path. Opening the door, The Shadow swung halfway through; then dropped back. His action was perfectly timed for the stroke that he expected.

A missile whistled through the air; it struck the door frame by The Shadow's shoulder and quivered there. The object was a knife, fired from Banzarro's air gun. Mocquino's lieutenant had seen The Shadow, had started to fire, then altered his aim as the cloaked target disappeared. He had pressed the trigger too late.

Banzarro had fired from some spot of darkness. There was no gun flash to betray his position. The Shadow, however, had a better line on where Banzarro lay. The instant after the knife struck, The Shadow clamped his hand beside it, let the muzzle of his automatic lie straight along the handle of the knife. With that, The Shadow pressed the trigger.

The big .45 ripped its return message to Banzarro. A howl from the darkness marked The Shadow's hit of an unseen target. The Shadow had remembered the knife that Banzarro had fired into the room of the hotel in Hampstead. He knew the dead line on which these blades could ride. Deliberately, The Shadow had made himself a target for Banzarro, that the assassin might dispatch an indicator to mark his position. The knife had served The Shadow; not Banzarro. The Shadow's aim was sure, the moment that he chose the line of the knife handle.

SWINGING back into the hallway, The Shadow pulled the door wide. Harry Vincent was awaiting the move; he dashed outside, with five followers behind him. Wild shots began as Harry and the former prisoners passed the portico. Banzarro's men were opening up with their revolvers.

From the doorway, The Shadow opened a short barrage, picking the spots where guns sputtered.

Harry and his men were opening quick fire. Spurred by the advantage that The Shadow had given them, they were pursuing the outside horde. Though outnumbered two to one, Harry's stout band had the edge; for their opponents were in flight. Inspired by The Shadow; anxious to serve the superman who had saved them, the released prisoners were not to be stopped.

Within the house, The Shadow closed the door. A strange lull had fallen. The front stairs – short route to Mocquino's lair – remained deserted. Wisely, The Shadow chose another course. He hurried through the ground floor, found an obscure stairway and ascended to the second floor. He reached the hallway that boasted one new door: the entrance to Mocquino's lair, by way of the anteroom.

Only for a moment did The Shadow slow his progress; that was while he opened the door. He made that action silent so not to warn Mocquino, should the Voodoo Master be within. The door opened, The Shadow did not stop to close it after he had entered. He surged through the anteroom, past the purple curtains, into Mocquino's royal-hued throne room.

The golden curtains at the far wall had been drawn apart. There, by the mellow light, The Shadow saw Mocquino. The Voodoo Master was at his switchboard; the gloat upon his face showed that the time for disaster had arrived.

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BOTH of Mocquino's clawlike hands were ready. His left grasped Control Switch C, prepared to cut off the transformer that intercepted the power line between the powerhouse and the knitting mills. His right hand, as eager as his left, clutched two switches at once. They were D and E; if pulled, they would produce instantaneous explosions at the theater and the hotel, in the very heart of Hampstead.

The Shadow had arrived at precisely quarter past ten. Stopping short in the center of Mocquino's throne room, he delivered a burst of sinister laughter that halted the motion of the Voodoo Master's hands. The Shadow's challenge was a wise one. He had seen the clutch of Mocquino's claws. Bullets could not stop the Voodoo Master's intended deed. Mocquino could pull the switches as he fell.

Turning as he heard the laugh, Mocquino saw The Shadow. His glaring eyes spotted an aimed automatic; keenly, Mocquino saw the mark to which the gun pointed. It was his own right hand – the one that was ready to deliver an electric current to the distant dynamite charges.

Quickly, Mocquino yanked his hand away. His action was instinctive. The Shadow fired; Mocquino snarled triumphantly and yanked the lone switch that his left hand held. In the same move, the Voodoo Master dived for the exit from the space behind his throne.

The Shadow sped forward. He had tricked Mocquino, without giving the Voodoo Master time to pause and realize it. Had The Shadow aimed for Mocquino's heart, the fiend would have tugged all the switches. By picking Mocquino's right hand, The Shadow had given his enemy an option.

Letting the explosions wait until later, Mocquino had managed to complete his first objective. He had pulled the switch that would wreck the knitting mills, at the precise time that he had prophesied. Pressed by The Shadow, Mocquino had taken to flight, forgetting that his one deed could be offset.

At the switchboard, The Shadow seized Control Switch C and pressed it upward. Through his own knowledge of Mocquino's device, he was quick enough to avert the disaster that had been started. The Shadow's move restored the operation of the transformer outside the mills.

MILES away, the effect of those moves was felt. At the knitting mills, a sudden roar had greeted workers at their looms. Machinery had begun to speed. Employees had leaped from their benches, shouting in terror as huge wheels wobbled; while belts began to snap. For a moment, destruction had been on its way. Then, only brief seconds later, chaos ended. Machines had speeded up, threatening horror, at Mocquino's tug of the switch. They had slowed, found stability, when The Shadow had thrown off the extra load of power.

Had Mocquino pressed the other switches that he had first handled, his move could not have been rectified. By outguessing the Voodoo Master, The Shadow had prevented even greater destruction than that which threatened the knitting mills.

Crowds in the theater and hotel at Hampstead would have perished without a warning, had Mocquino had his way. As it was, The Shadow's action had saved those threatened hundreds without giving them a single inkling of their danger.

The Shadow's next duty was to prevent any possibility of Mocquino again operating the switchboard. Reaching above the control switches, The Shadow released the metal panel that was hinged to cover the switchboard. He paused as he noticed Control Switch G and the clock dial beside it. Quickly, The Shadow set the dial for ten minutes; then pulled the switch. He was allowing time for his own departure; also relying on the probability that Mocquino would remain longer in Myram's Folly.

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That done, The Shadow pulled down the panel. As soon as the latches clicked, he bashed the locks with a gun handle. No key could open those locks; if Mocquino should return, he would try vainly to raise the panel. Given half an hour, Mocquino might manage to jimmy the locks. But Mocquino would not have a half hour. Ten minutes would be his greatest limit.

At the end of that period, Myram's Folly would go up in thunder. The Shadow had set Mocquino's own time fuse to destroy this useless structure. There was no need to follow Mocquino, to rout him from some hiding place. The Shadow's own course had become departure; to join Harry and the rescued men before the blast went off.

The surest course was back through the throne room, out by the hall. Combat en route did not seem a great threat to The Shadow. He had already quelled Mocquino's scattered henchmen whenever he had met them.

With surety that he could clear the way, The Shadow started through the throne room. He stopped as he reached the throne itself.

Purple curtains ripped away from the doorway at the anteroom. Revolvers bristled, glimmering, from the hands of a dozen foemen. Mocquino's henchmen were here in greater number than The Shadow had known. Summoned to one duty, they had arrived en masse to block The Shadow. Glaring faces, leering lips; these told of the confidence that inspired Mocquino's horde.

No lone fighter could hope to survive a battle with that throng. The Shadow had nullified Mocquino's hour of disaster; he had averted doom that threatened hundreds of helpless victims. Mocquino would never have a chance again to deal the destruction that he wanted.

Probably, the Voodoo Master had realized it. Therefore, he had chosen a course which pleased him equally. He had hurled his henchmen to a final thrust. The Shadow, himself, was the victim whom Mocquino sought.

This was Mocquino's challenge. The Shadow, though he had saved the lives of hundreds, was faced by death from a firing squad. The Shadow was trapped within Mocquino's purple lair.

CHAPTER XX. DEATH'S HARVEST

HALTED between Mocquino's purple throne and the ebony pedestal beside it, The Shadow stood half crouched. He was at bay; his foemen recognized his plight. The Shadow was too far forward to escape through the golden curtains. The throne could not serve him as a shield. Bullets from revolvers would rip through woodwork and plush, if The Shadow chose such a refuge.

Mocquino's henchmen had spread in the same fashion as the zombie. The Shadow faced them with a lone automatic; his weapon was not even raised. Beneath his cloak he had another brace of guns; but he would never have time to draw them. For he was faced by vengeful marksmen, who would fire as one. Unlike the blundering zombie, these henchmen were not mechanical in action.

Individually, they feared The Shadow. In a horde, they lost their dread because of numbers. Once a single trigger finger tugged, all would follow. The only factor that stayed the assassins was the motionless position of The Shadow.

They knew the fallacy of quick aim, did these killers. They welcomed the pause that gave them a chance to steady and level their revolvers. They were ready to fire before The Shadow could move his gun hand.

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They saw The Shadow's gun fist loosened; clad in a thin black glove, it seemed helpless. They spied a tremble of the gun hand; it was matched by a twitch of the other gloved fist. His fingers shaking as if seized by a palsy, The Shadow let his free hand steady upon the ebony pedestal.

Suddenly, the tremble ceased. Free fingers moved; a sharp click sounded. With it, the purple-walled room was filled with spontaneous light. The Shadow was gone, hidden in a protecting glare. In his place was a dazzle of tremendous light that came in vivid colors from a rounded cage of glass.

The Shadow had pressed the switch at the base of the lizard lamp stand. He had snapped the current into Mocquino's high-powered bulb. The Voodoo Master's own device was loosened, shooting the instantaneous flashes of brilliance that could overpower all who faced it – excepting The Shadow and Mocquino himself.

WITH wild shouts, Mocquino's henchmen dived for the cover of the purple curtains. They knew the power of that light; how Mocquino used it to turn sane men into zombie. With one mad surge, the entire dozen took to the anteroom not waiting to fire a single shot.

Nor did The Shadow wait. The instant that he clicked the switch, he made for the golden curtains – on the chance that some adversary might sizzle a pot shot in his direction. Though he could resist the glare himself, The Shadow – like others – was unable to discern objects beyond it. He did not care to waste wild shots. His plans were already made; there were less than ten minutes for his departure from Myram's Folly.

Cutting out through Mocquino's own exit, The Shadow was confronted by a trio of Mocquino's reserves. They were at the end of a hallway; they opened fire suddenly, but not in time. The Shadow was swinging for cover as they attacked. Springing to a doorway, he heard a sharp snarl from beyond the marksmen. Mocquino, himself, was stationed with that protective trio.

Jamming a door inward, The Shadow cut through a darkened room. He came out into another hall; made for a stairway, only to reverse his course. Four more enemies had bobbed in view; they were from the crew that had invaded the purple lair. Safely away from the sparkling light, they had again become maddened, desperate fighters.

The Shadow delivered quick shots from a doorway. One enemy sprawled; the others took to the stairway that The Shadow wanted. Knowing that attack upon that ambush would be futile, The Shadow took to the other end of the hall. More of Mocquino's men appeared. Quickly, The Shadow cut through another room.

The next few minutes produced quick surprises. Weaving in and out from unexpected doorways, The Shadow encountered Mocquino's henchmen at every turn. The house was alive with the murderous rogues. The dozen who had grouped against The Shadow were but half of the total that Mocquino controlled. Needing one hand to yank at doorknobs, The Shadow was restricted to use of a single gun. He employed it at every turn, switching his emptied weapon for a fresh one. Halts were useless; they would only bring a massed throng to the spot.

The Shadow's one objective was the front door; to gain it, he needed to reach a stairway. Each flight of steps proved to be a nest for Mocquino's minions. All that The Shadow could accomplish in four minutes of hectic fray was the elimination of three enemies, each a member of a different group that he encountered.

WITH sudden change of tactics, The Shadow chose a stairway that led upward to the third floor; and hence proved unguarded. At the top, The Shadow came upon a group that he had not seen since his first encounter with them on the floor below. There were four in the cluster: Doctor Mocquino and the three underlings who served as his own bodyguard.

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As The Shadow opened fire, Mocquino leaped for a doorway. The Shadow saw him spring upward, taking the stairway that led to the central lookout tower of the building, that square-walled room that loomed above the roof. Two of the bodyguards succumbed before The Shadow's rapid shots. The third followed Mocquino, slamming the stairway door as he passed it.

There was no chance to follow. The Shadow's gun was emptied. As he reached for his last automatic, he heard thuds of footsteps everywhere. Bands of enemies had located the sound of the fray. They were coming to surround The Shadow, to block off his escape. This time, he would be ambushed if he tried to reach the second floor.

Few minutes remained. Departure by the ground floor would be impossible. Any delay would bring the moment of destruction. The Shadow took the one course that remained – a route that he had reserved in case of final emergency. Speeding toward a darkened hall, he dashed through the rear portion of the third floor, just as the first of the arriving squads sighted him.

Shouting fighters followed, thinking their enemy in flight. They fired wildly, uselessly, in the darkness. They could not see The Shadow; but they heard his footsteps, for he was making no attempt to cover his route.

Suddenly, The Shadow's course led upward. Mocquino's minions stopped at the entrance to the old castle tower that adorned the back corner of Myram's Folly.

The Shadow had gone above, following the circular stairway, keeping to the wall, away from the open center. With shouts to their fellows, half a dozen of The Shadow's enemies dashed upward in pursuit.

The Shadow reached the rounded roof; slamming the old trapdoor, he pounded its surface with the handle of an emptied automatic. Wood splintered and jammed the trap in place. It would take minutes for the men below to crack it. Swinging to the rough-hewn parapet, The Shadow looked beyond the stone bulwark, toward the center of building.

There, in the clear glow of moonlight, he saw a figure above the solid wooden rail of the Mid-Victorian tower, a dozen feet lower than The Shadow's own vantage point. It was Doctor Mocquino, his purple robe blackish, its gold trimmings dull against the moonlight.

The Voodoo Master had guessed The Shadow's objective, for he had heard shots from within the rounded tower that The Shadow had ascended.

AS he saw The Shadow, Mocquino rasped a command. Mocquino's last bodyguard bobbed up beside him. Both opened fire with revolvers. Bullets chipped the stone beside The Shadow; he dropped below the level of the bulwark.

Jabbing his automatic through a stone crenelle, The Shadow used that space to return the fire. His bullets splintered the wooden rail; one found Mocquino's henchman. The Shadow heard a cry. He fired for the rail, knowing that Mocquino would be behind it.

Men were pounding at the trapdoor close by The Shadow. That sound did not trouble him. Mocquino was the only enemy who could battle him during the scant moments that remained. The Shadow halted his fire, reserving last shots for the Voodoo Master, should he reappear.

The moonlight revealed a grisly sight. Up from the rail of the square roof moved a death-stilled figure. It was Mocquino's last bodyguard, his corpse as mechanical as one of the Voodoo Master's zombie. From beneath the dead man's right arm there came a living hand, aiming the bodyguard's own revolver.

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The hand was Mocquino's. The Voodoo Master had taken his dead henchman for a shield. Ready with the gun, Mocquino awaited The Shadow's reappearance. Through ghastly artifice, Mocquino hoped to win a last combat with his superfoe.

The Shadow delivered a triumphant laugh. From his parapet, the mirth rose in sardonic mockery. The trapdoor was breaking below him; Mocquino was prepared to stop him with a deadly aim; nevertheless, The Shadow knew that victory was close. He sprang into view, wheeled across the rounded roof and neared the rear parapet.

MOCQUINO fired. His bullets sizzled wide of the moving target. The Shadow was too swift for Mocquino's hand to follow him, for the Voodoo Master's arm was burdened with the weight of the dead man whom he held as shield.

The Shadow fired return shots; weaved one direction, then the other. Suddenly, he sprang to the rear parapet itself, just when Mocquino expected him to drop to cover.

Again, Mocquino fired wide.

The Shadow sped a bullet that came a scant inch from Mocquino's projecting arm. It was his last shot; but it made Mocquino shift, swinging the dead body with him.

At that moment, the trapdoor splintered open; a head poked through; with it a fist and a revolver.

The Shadow hurled his emptied automatic straight for the glaring, grimy face. The heavy weapon crashed the upthrust jaw; Mocquino's henchman dropped back through the trapdoor.

Mocquino saw the action; observed that The Shadow was weaponless. Dropping the corpse that served him as shield, the Voodoo Master aimed. Simultaneously, The Shadow spun upon the parapet. With a long, sweeping dive, he went head foremost over the rear edge, taking a forty-foot plunge for the pond below.

The Shadow had held out to the last possible moment, knowing that he would be a target when he reached the moonlit pond. He was gone from Mocquino's range; but there would be others, on the rounded roof. Last moments had seemed slow to The Shadow. He had lingered in hope of a quake which he knew would come. That was the sign he wanted before he made the dive.

The token came while The Shadow was speeding downward through the air. From the depths of Myram's Folly came a muffled blast. The building quaked; the depths delivered another burst. Then came the third explosion one that seemed to rip the countryside with a searing volcano of flame.

The Shadow had hit the water; arms tilted upward, he shot to the surface at the end of a shallow dive. Nearly ten feet deep, the pond had given him ample leeway.

As his face came above the water, The Shadow swung his head toward the tower that he had left. He was met by a sweeping tidal wave, as if the whole pond had lifted.

SWIMMING away with the sweeping wave, The Shadow saw the end of Myram's Folly. The gray stone tower had buckled inward. Pygmy men who had reached its top were tilted from it, down into the crumbling ruin of the building below. Foundations had been shattered by the buried mines that Mocquino had installed. Old, decaying, the building added to its own collapse.

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Outer walls had fallen to ruin. The stone tower was gone, to give weight to the debris. Cracking stone and splintering wood were scourged by the thrusts of flames. The men on the stone tower had met their doom; those within were buried in the crash. Others, lower in the house, were lost in the destruction.

Oddly, amid that tremendous smash, one portion of the building resisted. Swaying, it seemed to fight against the fall. That was the square room above the center roof – the Mid-Victorian tower.

Upon it, his clenched fist high above his head, stood Doctor Mocquino. With his other hand, the Voodoo Master was clutching the wavering wooden rail – like the captain of a sinking vessel, stationed on the bridge.

From the shore of the pond, The Shadow saw the finish. Others, too, observed it: Harry and the rescued men, back from the chase in which they had downed the last of Banzarro's ruffians. They watched Mocquino sway as the square tower lurched; they saw the lookout room collapse and take its final plunge.

Down into the ruins of Myram's Folly went Mocquino, still clinging to the wooden rail. The woodwork splintered as the Voodoo Master went from view, into the very center of the shattered mass that no longer resembled a building.

Last sections of wall tumbled. Flames crackled high amid the dust of crumbled stone. The last sign of life had disappeared from the ruin.

ABOVE the roar of the rising fire came a grim, sardonic laugh. Mirthless, it told of deserved triumph. It marked the doom of evil men who had engaged in schemes of murder and destruction. It foretold that facts would be made public, when revealed by Harry Vincent and the others who had been prisoners in Mocquino's dungeons.

Crime would be laid where it belonged – to Doctor Rodil Mocquino and his chief assassin, Banzarro. Some past deeds would be understood, such as Banzarro's murder of Wishart, the chauffeur. Others would be guessed at, yet their true facts never learned.

For the full tale of Mocquino's mad reign of crime had been grasped by The Shadow alone. He, the master of right, would preserve those details in his hidden archives. The Shadow, alone, had conquered Doctor Rodil Mocquino.

THE END