

THE CRIME CRYPT

Maxwell Grant

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THE CRIME CRYPT

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CHAPTER I. A MAN OF MURDER

THE glare of a Manhattan evening flushed Times Square. Standing amid the brilliant illumination of the Rialto, a young man surveyed the bright lights as though they were a sight that he had long forgotten.

Lost among the myriads who strolled this dense district, the young man remained unnoticed by those who passed him. Yet there was something in his bearing that would have attracted attention had people paused to look at him. His suave, mustached face; his shrewd, roving eyes; these were tokens of a clever schemer – a man whose mind was trained to think in crime.

The young man noted a huge clock dial that glittered from the far side of Broadway. It told the time as twenty minutes after eight. The observer shrugged his shoulders, strolled leisurely along the street and hailed a taxicab. He gave the driver an uptown address.

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Twenty minutes later, the cab stopped in front of an old brownstone house. The young man alighted and paid the driver. He ascended the steps and rang the bell. A solemn-faced servant opened the door. The menial stepped back and bowed as the young man entered.

"Good evening, Mr. Havelock," said the servant. "Your uncle is awaiting your arrival. His attorney is here, sir."

"Very well, Calhoun," responded the young man. "I shall join them. Are they in the living room?"

"Yes, sir."

The young man crossed the hall, opened a door and entered a lighted room. Two gray-haired men looked up as he came in. One – a stooped shouldered old fellow – arose to greet the visitor.

"Ah, Martin!" he exclaimed. "We have been awaiting you. This is Jason Thunig, my attorney" – he was indicating the other gray-haired man as he spoke – "and this, Jason, is my nephew, Martin Havelock."

JASON THUNIG arose to shake hands with Martin Havelock. To the lawyer, the young man appeared clean cut. He liked the friendly smile that Havelock wore. All traces of the schemer had faded from the young man's visage during the cab ride from Times Square.

"Martin Havelock!" remarked Thunig. "Back in New York, after all these years. Cecil Armsbury's nephew – in the flesh. You are to be congratulated, Cecil" – Thunig turned to the stoop-shouldered man – "on having so fine a young man as your one surviving relative."

"Martin and I have become friends already," asserted Cecil Armsbury, as he took a chair and waved the others to seats. "I was greatly pleased when he arrived from Mexico, two days ago. I have seen him but occasionally, however" – old Armsbury was smiling – "because the lights of Broadway have lured him downtown each evening."

"New York interests me," admitted Martin Havelock. "I haven't seen the old town in a good many years. It is quite a change from Mexico. However, Uncle Cecil, I remembered my appointment. Here I am."

The three men settled back in their chairs. Armsbury and Thunig were smoking cigars. Martin Havelock lighted a cigarette and puffed it idly while he surveyed the faces of his uncle and the attorney.

"Your arrival, Martin," remarked old Cecil Armsbury, "has proven a most fortunate one. I have recently put my affairs in order; and Jason Thunig has come up to discuss all the matters which concern my estate."

"Not a very complex task," declared Thunig, with a smile. "This home – your holdings in stocks and bonds – those constitute your entire fortune, Cecil."

"The value?"

"Between thirty and forty thousand dollars."

"Perhaps a trifle more," remarked Armsbury. "The few curios which I still possess may bring fair value. Ah!" The old man shook his head sadly. "The treasures which I once owned! I was forced to sell them, Martin, to finance the many excursions which I made throughout the world."

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"You were always a spender, Cecil," agreed Jason Thunig. "Nevertheless, you have managed to retain a tidy sum of wealth. Your estate is a well-arranged one. The securities are sound. This property has held its value."

"You are heir to it all, Martin," said Armsbury, smiling in kindly fashion as he turned toward his nephew. "You – my one living relative."

"I appreciate it, Uncle Cecil," declared Havelock, in a voice which echoed the old man's friendly tone. "My one hope, however, is that my inheritance shall be long delayed. In fact, uncle, chance might make you my heir. All of my Mexican mining properties are willed to you. They are worth many thousands – those mines in Hidalgo."

"The old usually die before the young, Martin."

"Perhaps. My father died young – my mother also. However, uncle, my purpose here is to enjoy a visit with you. I shall stay as long as possible; after that, back to Mexico. My interests are too extensive to neglect."

"You are wise, Martin," nodded Jason Thunig, sagely. "It is excellent to know that you have done so well. A stranger in a foreign land, you met with great success. Commendable, Martin. Commendable!"

THE door of the living room opened as Thunig ceased speaking. It was Calhoun who entered. The old servant was carrying a tray which bore a glass of water and a bottle of large white tablets. The three men watched him set the tray upon a table. Solemnly, Calhoun opened the bottle and poured out three tablets which he dropped into the glass of water.

"Your medicine, sir," he said, turning to Cecil Armsbury. "About this evening, sir – do you require me further?"

"No, Calhoun," returned Armsbury. "You may go."

The servant stalked from the room. Cecil Armsbury settled back to puff at his cigar. His voice took on a reflective tone.

"Years have gone rapidly," he declared. "I have traveled far and often. To many strange lands. Those days of journeying are ended. I am growing old. My medicine! Bah!"

The old man scowled as he stretched forward a clawed hand and picked up the glass. The tablets had dissolved while he was speaking. The water appeared almost as clear as before.

"Every night," mused Armsbury. "Three tablets in a glass of water. A stimulus for my weakening heart. I wonder why Calhoun did not put in the tablets before he brought the glass in here. He usually does so." The old man paused and frowned speculatively. "Calhoun is sometimes absent-minded. If he put three tablets in before he entered – and three here – that would be a double dose."

"Would it be serious?" questioned Thunig, anxiously.

"Probably fatal." Armsbury laughed at Thunig's expression of alarm. "But do not worry. I can rely upon Calhoun."

"Perhaps it would be best to prepare another glass –"

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"Foolishness, Jason," scoffed Armsbury. "If I worried over every possibility of error that might mean my life, I should live a burdensome existence. No, no. I have escaped death at the hands of wild African savages. I have eluded well-aimed Tartar arrows. I passed through the Boxer uprising in China. Folly, Jason, to think that a servant's error could possibly end my adventurous career! After these tablets have thoroughly dissolved, I shall take this medicine as is."

With a quiet laugh, old Armsbury placed the glass upon the table. Thunig eyed it anxiously; then puffed at his cigar. Martin Havelock, idly lighting another cigarette, showed little interest in the trend of conversation.

"Do you wish these statements, Cecil?" questioned Jason Thunig, extending an envelope as he spoke to Armsbury.

"No, indeed, Jason," returned the old man. "You are my attorney. Keep them."

"Very well." Thunig rose. "I must leave you, Cecil – and you, Martin. I am expected downtown before half past ten."

Armsbury and his nephew arose. The old man conducted the lawyer to the door and Martin Havelock followed. The nephew watched while his uncle showed Thunig to the front door. Calhoun had evidently gone out.

Cecil Armsbury returned to find Martin Havelock standing just within the doorway of the living room. The old man clapped his nephew on the shoulder.

"Wait here, Martin," he suggested. "I have some papers that I wish to give you. They will interest you. I must go upstairs to obtain them." Armsbury's eyes noted the glass upon the table. "I can take my medicine when I return. I shall not be gone more than ten minutes."

The old man turned and walked from the room. Martin Havelock's lips became suave as his ears heard the fading footsteps. The young man's face had resumed its shrewd expression. From an idler, Martin Havelock had become a schemer. Again, he was that keen, sharp-visaged individual who had stood in the light of New York's Rialto.

WITH long, stealthy strides, Martin Havelock crossed the living room. His eyes were fiendish as they gazed upon the bottle of white tablets. His hands were steady as they uncorked the bottle and removed three of the large white pills. One by one, the treacherous nephew dropped the tablets into the glass. Then, as an afterthought, he added a fourth and finally a fifth.

Twisted, leering lips showed him to be a man who contemplated murder. Carefully, Martin Havelock corked the bottle. He placed it beside the glass. He noted that it still contained many pills. The fact that more had been added to the tumbler of medicine would not be recognized.

Three might have been sufficient. Five was better. Dissolved pills could not be counted. Calhoun would be to blame for this; and Jason Thunig, Cecil Armsbury's attorney, would be a testifier to the fact that the servant must have erred.

Martin Havelock's smile was evil. The young man watched the tablets rapidly dissolve. The water was clearing almost to its original color. Murder was in the making – murder that would be classed as accident.

Still standing by the table, Martin Havelock drew a cigarette from his pocket. He placed it between his evil lips. His expression began to change, turning mild for the part that he was to play upon his uncle's return.

Then came a sudden rigidity. Martin Havelock's changing appearance froze. His face, half fiendish, half friendly, was caught in the midst of its transformation. A chuckle from the doorway. Instinctively, Havelock wheeled.

With staring eyes, the young man gazed into the muzzle of a glistening revolver. The gun was in the hand of Cecil Armsbury. The stoop-shouldered old man, his lips spread in a gloating grin, had returned with stealthy tread.

Cecil Armsbury had trapped his treacherous nephew in the act of preparing certain murder!

CHAPTER II. CROOKS OF A KIND

MARTIN HAVELOCK made no move as he stared into the muzzle of his uncle's gun. The young man knew that he was caught; and in the face beyond that revolver, he saw no mercy. Cecil Armsbury, like his nephew, had undergone a change. The placid face of the old man had become the countenance of a fiend.

Again the chuckle. Havelock paled. He thought that he had previously deceived his uncle. Now he knew that he was the one who had been fooled. There was something monstrous in Armsbury's evil gloat.

"Sit down."

The command was accompanied by a gesture of the revolver. Martin Havelock obeyed. Cecil Armsbury pocketed his revolver, taking it for granted that his nephew was unarmed. The old man strode across the room, showing unusual agility in his paces. With a cackling laugh, he picked up the glass of medicine and drank it at a single draught. He set down the glass with a thump.

"Harmless," he chuckled. "White tablets of sugar. A little bit of by-play performed by Calhoun at my order. It deceived you – as I expected. Well – what do you have to say, Martin?"

"Nothing very much," returned the nephew, in a tone which showed a resumption of his indifferent attitude. "I suppose this changes the will. That's all."

"The law can deal with you."

"Hardly. You have drunk the evidence."

"A clever thought." The old man chuckled. "Well, Martin, I have put you to the test. You played for thirty thousand dollars – perhaps forty – and you lost."

Martin Havelock merely smiled sourly and shrugged his shoulders. He did not feel concerned by his uncle's malicious glare. Cecil Armsbury laughed.

"Thirty thousand. Quite a loss, Martin. Not much to a man who owns large interests in Hidalgo silver mines, perhaps. But to a man who merely pretends to own such wealth –"

Martin Havelock stared at his uncle; paused. The old man drew a large envelope from his pocket.

"This contains the documents that I promised to show you," he declared. "I had them in my pocket all the while. They contain proof that Martin Havelock owns no mining interests in Mexico. They prove, moreover, that Martin Havelock has not been living in Mexico. They tell a great deal, in addition, regarding the affairs

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of a certain international crook who is known as Duke Larrin –"

With a furious cry of interruption, Martin Havelock was on his feet. His spring toward Cecil Armsbury was stopped only by the old man's quick action. Like a flash, Armsbury brought out his revolver and pointed it at his leaping nephew. Havelock halted six feet from the old man's chair.

CECIL ARMSBURY cackled. He seemed to enjoy this turn of affairs. Martin Havelock, seeing the threat in his uncle's eyes, retreated to his chair.

"Duke Larrin," announced Cecil Armsbury. "That is the name you have been using. You are Duke Larrin – smooth crook who has worked in Paris, Berlin, Vienna, along the Riviera.

"Like most men who have turned to crime, you have spent all that you have made. Europe is no longer open to you. But you remembered that your old self – Martin Havelock – had an uncle. You thought that you might be my heir. You came to find out.

"Thirty thousand dollars! Bah! A paltry sum for a crook like Duke Larrin. I lost my respect for you when I saw you, as a vulture, hovering by to wait for me to die. That is why I put you to the test – to see if you would deal in murder."

Martin Havelock stared as he heard these words. A new expression had appeared upon his uncle's face – a look that showed a strange approval. Before the young man could voice a question, Cecil Armsbury spoke again.

"You were my heir," declared the old man. "Thirty thousand dollars would some day have been yours – had you balked at the chance to murder me and lay the blame on someone else.

"But you made good in the test. You showed that murder was in your category of crime. You are my heir no longer, Martin. You will be my partner – an equal sharer in a sum that will exceed a million dollars!"

Armsbury's face was gleaming. Martin Havelock wondered if his uncle had gone insane. The cunning look on the old man's face might be that of a maniac; on the contrary, it showed amazing craft.

"To kill me, Martin," resumed the old man, with a cackle, "would be folly. Your crime would rest upon you. Whatever you might reap would be lost. There are reasons. But to become my partner – ah, there lies opportunity.

"I have been awaiting your arrival from Mexico ever since I gained this information." The old man tapped his envelope with his revolver. "For I had need of a partner of Duke Larrin's caliber. I merely required a test of your nerve."

With a gesture of new friendship, the old man placed both revolver and envelope upon the table. Each had been a threat – one of death; the other of exposure. Martin Havelock, however, ignored them. His uncle smiled approvingly.

"You are with me, Martin," he stated.

"For half a million?" The young man laughed. "Sure thing. How did you find out that I was Duke Larrin?"

"A friend who went to Mexico discovered that you were not living there. I thought, perhaps, that crime was in your blood. The friend learned that you had been in three European capitals. Through another man, I checked

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what was known about the famous international crook, Duke Larrin. I learned sufficient to identify him as you."

"I quit the Duke Larrin stuff for a while."

"Because you knew it was becoming unsafe."

"Yes. I landed back in Mexico – my hide-out – nearly broke. That's why I –"

"Why you came here. It was clever of you. A wise step, Martin. It has paved the way to wealth for both of us."

"Through theft?"

"Yes. Murder, also."

"What is our game?"

"To acquire objects," smiled Armsbury, "that are worth nothing."

HAVELOCK stared. Again he felt the impression that his old uncle had lost his mind. Armsbury saw the look and chuckled.

"Articles worth nothing," repeated the old man. "That is why they must be gained. You may think that you are clever, Martin. You cannot match your uncle. I have left a trail of strange swindles in my path. Once it is covered, our way is clear to tremendous gain. Theft and murder are required."

The old man arose with surprising agility – a further proof that his presumed illness had been a pretense. He crossed the living room and locked the door. Striding to the far wall, he reached into the huge fireplace and pressed a hidden switch.

Martin Havelock stared as he saw the rear of the fireplace slide upward like a panel. The space revealed was of considerable size. Stooping, the old man entered. He turned and beckoned. Havelock joined him. Armsbury pressed another switch. The floor of the fireplace descended like an elevator, into blackness.

Then came light – a dim glow that showed a small vaulted room. An iron door lay beyond. Armsbury led the way. He pressed at the side of the door. It slid away and showed a crypt beyond.

Into this larger chamber went uncle and nephew. Their footsteps awoke hollow echoes in the dim crypt.

Each wall had a door. Cecil Armsbury opened the farther one. His nephew gasped at the sight of gleaming objects that flashed even in this dull light. Golden Buddhas with glittering emerald eyes; strange scrolls of yellow metal; these were samples of the treasure that lay revealed.

"STOLEN goods," chuckled Cecil Armsbury. "Spoils from Chinese palaces; from Hindu temples; from Persian mosques. Some are worth much because of the precious metal and jewels which they contain. Others have value because of their rarity. The time has arrived, Martin, to turn the contents of this crypt into cash. But before we can do so, we must steal – and slay!"

"Why?"

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"Because of my past!" Armsbury gripped his nephew by the arm and spoke in a cackle that was harsh within the confines of the crypt. "I have sold treasures in the past. I have gained fame as a discoverer of unknown relics. But in my dealings with men who had wealth to spend, I used cunning methods.

"I sold them fakes! The jeweled Vishnu from Hyderabad" – the old man paused to raise one finger – "was the first. The golden panel from the Temple of Heaven in the Forbidden City. That was the second. The sacred scroll from Kaaba, in Mecca" – Armsbury was chuckling – "was the third. Last of all, the collection of antiquities which I sold to the Egyptian Museum.

"All are impositions. I manufactured those supposed treasures. I gained large sums through their sale. I kept my real treasures for myself. Now, however, I am faced with exposure. Should my swindles be discovered, all would be lost. My reputation would be ended."

The old man paused in solemn fashion. Martin Havelock nodded with understanding.

"You mean," declared the nephew, "that your first step must be the regaining of the fraudulent items that you have placed in other hands."

"Exactly," stated Armsbury. "More than that: the fake treasures must be destroyed and their owners eliminated. Theft and murder must come from someone other than myself. The first three items that I have named are owned by individuals. Those men must die when their treasures are taken.

"The antiquities in the museum can be regained last of all. No one need die when they are stolen; but there, Martin, we can play a double game. With the fake items, we can also steal real treasure – objects of fabulous wealth – which are in the Egyptian Museum along with the fake antiquities. The trail will be ended. The road to millions will be ours!"

Martin Havelock was sober. His uncle watched him narrowly, as though divining the young man's thoughts. A smile flickered on Cecil Armsbury's face even before the nephew spoke.

"Suspicion," declared Havelock, "is to be kept from you. Yet I – as your nephew –"

"Cannot commit the crimes," interposed Armsbury, with a cunning grin. "But as Duke Larrin, the international crook, you have every opportunity. Your task will be to form a band of clever workers. This crypt will be your headquarters. Here, as the leader, you can give your orders and send the henchmen forth upon their work!"

STRIDING across the crypt, Cecil Armsbury opened a door at the side. He pointed to a darkened corridor which formed a long tunnel leading from the crypt.

"This will be the mode of entrance," declared the old man. "The shaft to my living room will remain unknown to your band. I shall not appear. You will live quietly in my home, as my nephew, Martin Havelock.

"But as Duke Larrin, crook supreme, it will be your part to launch crime so baffling that no one in all New York can ever suspect its source!"

Chuckling, Cecil Armsbury faced his nephew in the crypt. A leering smile appeared upon Martin Havelock's lips. Uncle and nephew – both were crooks of a kind. They saw alike. The time had come to act.

Amazing, baffling crime was in the making; its font was to be this hidden crypt where only men of evil could assemble. Cecil Armsbury had found the man he needed. Lives were at stake and the schemes of these potential murderers were buried as deeply as the crypt itself!

CHAPTER III. THE MEETING

DAYS had passed since Cecil Armsbury and his nephew had formed their plot of crime. New night had come to Manhattan. The metropolis was again aglow.

There was one spot, however, that no illumination reached. This was a room in which pitch-darkness reigned, irrespective of day or night. Somber silence marked the strange abode, until a slight swishing sounded faintly through the gloom.

Something clicked. The rays of a bluish light appeared in the corner of the room. The flickering glare was focused upon the surface of a polished table. Beneath that glow appeared two long white hands. From a finger of the left sparkled a brilliant gem, that displayed a range of mystic, ever-changing hues.

The Shadow was in his sanctum. Those hands were his. The flashing gem – a priceless girasol – was the emblem of this master being who balked all men of crime. An unseen visitant to a lost abode, The Shadow was studying reports that concerned the underworld.

All crookdom knew of the existence of The Shadow. In the badlands, the very name of this weird creature was pronounced with awe. Time and again, the mysterious figure of The Shadow had arrived to foil the plans of master criminals.

A being clad in black – a fighter whose mighty automatics blazed a trail of death to skulking fiends – such was The Shadow. Those who recognized his existence knew that The Shadow held the balance between crime and order. When evil threatened to gain power over right, it was The Shadow who could turn the tide.

Long white hands were opening envelopes. Report sheets and clippings fluttered to the table. These were from The Shadow's agents – faithful workers who aided their master in keeping tabs on the pulse beats of crime.

Strange hands – those of The Shadow! When the mighty fighter fared forth, his hands were gloved in black, in keeping with the spectral attire that clothed him from head to foot. Crooks who had met him had never seen the hands themselves. Long white fingers and the sparkling girasol were tokens of recognition that none had ever gained.

Coded report sheets glistened with bluish ink. The Shadow read the word that his agents had reported. The writing faded in uncanny fashion. Such was the way with all messages between The Shadow and his agents.

THE SHADOW'S right hand brought forth a pen. Upon a sheet of white paper it inscribed a name that remained in liquid ink of blue.

"Duke" Larrin!

This was the name that The Shadow had written. From two of his agents, he had learned that the famous international crook was in New York. Yet neither informant had picked up Duke Larrin's trail.

Cliff Marsland, The Shadow's agent who played the part of a gangster in the underworld, had heard

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whisperings that Duke Larrin had come to the badlands. No descriptions of the man had been given; it was merely rumored that he was somewhere in Manhattan.

Clyde Burke, reporter on the New York Classic, had gained the same information. Clyde was in touch with Joe Cardona, ace detective at Manhattan headquarters. Through stool pigeons, Cardona had heard the rumors of Duke Larrin's presence in New York. The ace sleuth was looking for the international crook.

So far, nothing tangible had been learned. The Shadow divined the answer. If crime happened to be in the making, Duke Larrin would be forming secret contacts. With whom? That was the question to be considered.

Black gloves slipped over the long-fingered hands. The light clicked out. A soft laugh sounded in the gloom. The swishing of a cloak; then silence.

The Shadow had fared forth. His destination was the underworld. There he would seek the undiscovered connection between Duke Larrin and men of the badlands.

AT the precise time when The Shadow was departing from his sanctum, a man was strolling along an uptown Manhattan street. The walker paused to study the entrance of an old apartment hotel. He saw the name above the doorway:

RIDGELOW COURT

With a hasty glance up and down the street, the man entered the doorway of the building. He went through a deserted lobby until he reached the obscure stairway. Another glance came from his dark eyes; his crafty, heavy-browed features showed a cunning scowl. The man moved to the stairway. Instead of going up, he took the downward steps.

No one had seen this visitor arrive. His identity would not have been suspected, even if he had been observed in the lobby of Ridgelow Court. But in certain sections of Manhattan – particularly where gangsters were wont to meet – this dark-browed man would have been promptly recognized. He was "Brodie" Brodan, a gang leader who had ostensibly retired from the business.

Reaching the basement of the old hotel, Brodan passed the entrance to a furnace room and continued on until he reached the rear wall of the cellar. He drew a key from his pocket and unlocked a door. He took a flight of steps that went down to the little-used sub-basement.

All was dark below. Brodie's flashlight flickered in the darkness. The illumination showed the doors of old storage rooms. Brodie picked one and unlocked it. He closed it behind him and pushed his way past stacks of furniture until he reached the rear wall. He stopped in front of a wooden wall that had apparently been erected to offset the dampness from the stone in back of it.

Brodie's flashlight showed a projecting nail-head. The gang leader pressed it, like a button. The nail came back. Brodie waited. A slight clicking sounded. Brodie pressed upward. A portion of the woodwork rose. Brodie went through the opening. He used his flashlight to find his way along a narrow corridor. The wooden barrier slipped down after he had entered.

The passage was more than a hundred feet in length. It terminated in a metal door. Brodie Brodan stopped at the barrier and gave four short raps. The door slid aside. The gang leader's flashlight clicked off.

Brodie Brodan stepped into a dimly lighted chamber. A strange room – vaulted – with doors on every side. Deep in the earth, this crypt had been reached through the cleverly concealed opening into the old storeroom

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of Ridgelow Court.

The iron door clicked shut after Brodie Brodan had entered. Quizzically, the gang leader surveyed three men who were seated on stools within the crypt.

THE dark-browed arrival knew them all. One – a smooth-shaven, languorous fellow – was "Fingers" Keefel. A safe-cracker of remarkable skill, Fingers specialized in artistic crime. He was a crook who looked for big jobs when he needed them.

The second, a tall man with firm-set jaw and cold, evil eyes, was "Croaker" Mannick. With Croaker, murder was a pastime; yet this dangerous criminal was wary in his ways. He killed when people paid the price and each scratch on his .38 represented the life of some big shot whom Croaker had assassinated at another's order.

The police had never pinned a murder on Croaker Mannick. The underworld, however, knew his ability. Brodie Brodan, cagey gang leader, felt that he was in select company with Fingers Keefel and Croaker Mannick.

Yet it was the central figure of the group – the third man of the trio – toward whom Brodie finally looked. He saw a young man of good appearance, whose face wore the faint flicker of an evil, satisfied leer. This was the leader of the four; the man who had summoned Fingers, Croaker and Brodie to the secret crypt of crime. Brodie Brodan was gazing at the international crook, Duke Larrin.

Cecil Armsbury's nephew opened the proceedings. He looked from man to man; then spoke in a firm, harsh tone that marked him as a man who accepted leadership.

"We're all here," he announced. "I've picked the three of you because you are the men I want. You know the terms. They're the same to all. Ten grand apiece."

The other men nodded to show their satisfaction.

"Three jobs for two of you," resumed Duke Larrin. "Fingers gets the swag. Croaker does the bumping. Keep apart. You'll never see each other except when you do the jobs. You've got your instructions. You know the exact times and places.

"Each of you will be washed up after the third job. We'll work fast, because the fifteenth of the month is the deadline. That's the time you're each due back here. The pay-off comes on the fifteenth – and if all goes right, there'll be more than the ten grand each."

Fingers and Croaker grinned. They felt that their parts were set. Duke Larrin turned to Brodie Brodan.

"Fingers has his job," declared the international crook. "So has Croaker. You're the cover-up man. You have your instructions; wherever Fingers and Croaker hit, you be there with your mob.

"These two fellows will have to make clean get-aways. We want it to look as though the mob did the trick. That's your job, Brodie."

"Leave it to me," agreed the dark-browed gang leader.

"There's a fourth job scheduled," added Larrin. "It will come on the fifteenth. We'll need a picked crew for it – and it's up to you to get them, Brodie.

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"None of your regular mob are to be in that crew. Get your special crowd in advance. Have them laying low – doing nothing – until you call them on the fifteenth. They can show up where they're due – and they can pull the job like clockwork. After that, they're through. They can scam out of town, with one grand each for their work."

DUKE LARRIN arose. From his pocket, he drew three typewritten lists. He handed one to each of the crooks. They were detailed instruction sheets. Each read his part. Grins appeared upon satisfied faces.

"Got it all?" questioned Larrin, after the men had finished their reading by the dim light of the crypt.

Nods were the replies. Duke Larrin gathered in the lists. He tore them into fragments and dropped the pieces in a small antique urn that rested on the floor. He applied a match. The flame of the burning paper showed the harsh scowl on his face.

"You are the three whom I have chosen," declared Larrin, "because you accepted my indefinite terms. There were others whom I considered. They were rejected when they wanted to know more before the secret meeting. I told them – as I told you – that I could consider no conditions.

"Each of you agreed to follow my instructions. That is why I gave each of you a key that would enable you to reach this crypt. It is known, perhaps, that Duke Larrin is in New York; but with this crypt as my headquarters no one can find me. I have planned my crimes so that all investigators will be baffled."

Shrewdly, Duke Larrin eyed his trio of subordinates. He noticed sober glances on their faces. Duke Larrin smiled.

"I said all investigators," he repeated. "I know what you are thinking. You are wondering if I have included one of whom we all have heard – The Shadow.

"Yes. The Shadow is included. Perhaps you think that I underestimate his power. You are wrong. I have heard of The Shadow in cities other than New York. He has been in Paris, London, Berlin, Moscow, Madrid – yes, and in Rome. He has struck at crime in all those capitals; and he has vanished as quickly as he has arrived.

"New York, they say, is where The Shadow makes his headquarters. The chances are that he is in this city at present." Duke paused; then smiled as he noted anxious looks on the faces of his companions. "Let The Shadow be here. He can never fathom the secret of this buried crypt. Each of you has dealt in crime. None of you have met The Shadow.

"Our plans are perfect. The police will cut no figure. While The Shadow is on the trail of one job, the next will be under way. Three in swift succession; then the fourth, in which none of you will be actively concerned.

"The Shadow will be thwarted. In all his fighting against crime, he has never crossed Duke Larrin's path. Even though he may know that I am in New York, he will never find me nor my crypt."

The voice of Cecil Armsbury's nephew rang with confidence. It brought nods from the men whom he had chosen as his aids.

Crossing the crypt, Duke Larrin opened the door to the long passage. One by one, the chosen crooks left, each shaking hands with his chief. When the last of the three had gone, Duke closed the barrier.

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The leering look faded from the shrewd crook's lips. Duke Larrin's face assumed the quiet manner which characterized Martin Havelock.

Crime had been launched from the crypt. Martin Havelock – otherwise Duke Larrin – had no qualms. He was sure that even The Shadow would fail to thwart his schemes.

Turning, the young man opened the barrier that led to the secret elevator in Cecil Armsbury's fireplace. He entered the lift and rode upward through darkness until he reached the light of Armsbury's living room.

As he stepped from the fireplace, Martin Havelock heard his uncle's chuckle. With shrewd eyes, old Cecil Armsbury had spied his nephew's face. That one glance told the old man that the meeting had served its intended purpose.

Men of evil had sallied from the crime crypt. When they met again, successful deeds of lawlessness would lie behind them.

CHAPTER IV. CRIME BREAKS

"A GENTLEMAN to see you, sir."

Perry Trappe looked up as he heard the servant's words. There was a puzzled expression on his face. Perry Trappe was a man who seldom received visitors. Here, in the living room of his secluded apartment, he was wont to spend his time alone.

"Who is it?" he questioned.

"Here is his card, sir," replied the servant.

Trappe took the card. It bore an odd name. The inscription beneath was the portion that awakened his interest:

DARWIN BASIB

CURIO DEALER

"Where is the man?" questioned Trappe. "In the anteroom?"

"Yes, sir."

"Show him in. I shall talk with him."

The servant departed and returned shortly afterward, followed by the visitor. Perry Trappe waved the arrival to a chair. The servant left as the two men were studying one another.

Perry Trappe had expected a human oddity, for he was familiar with curio dealers, especially those who had foreign names. Darwin Basib, however, was not at all the type that he had anticipated. The man was tall, smooth of features and languorous in expression. His dark hair was glistening in slickness.

The man who had introduced himself as Darwin Basib, curio dealer, was none other than Fingers Keefel.

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The false curio dealer was studying Perry Trappe. Fingers had expected to find an elderly man, for he knew that Trappe was a collector who lived alone. Instead, he noted that Trappe was of middle age and a brusque, businesslike fellow. Stocky, full-faced and of somewhat challenging eye, Trappe looked like a test for the subtle strategy of Fingers Keefel.

"A curio dealer, eh?" questioned Trappe. "What have you to offer?"

"I am not selling curios," responded Fingers, in an indifferent tone. "I am buying them."

"None of mine are for sale," snapped Trappe. "What I collect, I keep."

"I understand that you are wealthy," declared Fingers. "That is why I have come to see you. Most of my purchases are made from wealthy men. I have done some rather odd buying, Mr. Trappe."

"Of what sort?"

"Of all sorts. Always at the same price which the purchasers originally paid – and my offers have been accepted very quickly."

Perry Trappe appeared puzzled. This smooth-speaking individual had him guessing. He noted a shrewd look in his visitor's eye. The explanation followed.

"The curios that I buy," declared Fingers Keefel, in a cautious tone, "are the ones which have been unloaded on their present owners. In other words, Mr. Trappe, I show people a way out – after they have been swindled."

"You mean" – Trappe's voice was incredulous – "that you pay money for stuff that is worth nothing?"

"Exactly," said Fingers, with a smile.

PERRY TRAPPE was on his feet. With arms akimbo, he was studying his visitor, wondering if the man could possess his proper senses. Leaning back in his chair, Fingers Keefel laughed.

"Here is my system, Mr. Trappe," he explained. "Suppose a swindler should try to sell you a fake curio. Suppose he found you biting. What would be his natural action?"

"To meet my price," returned Trappe, promptly.

"That's right," declared Fingers. "He would let you have a thousand dollar item for less than five hundred. Why? Because he would be selling something without being able to guarantee its genuineness.

"Suppose that you learn your curio is a fake. You would be tickled to sell it to me for five hundred dollars and give me a certificate that I had made the purchase. Am I correct?"

"Certainly," agreed Trappe.

"All right," resumed Fingers. "I take the curio and the certificate. I go to another collector. I ask the full price of one thousand dollars. I have what appears to be a guarantee of its genuineness – the proof that I bought it from you, a recognized collector. You get rid of a fake without a loss; I make the profit that I want."

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Perry Trappe rubbed his chin thoughtfully. He saw the game. It was crooked; yet attractive. Fingers Keefel smiled as he saw the trend of the collector's mind.

"There's no comeback," remarked the fake curio dealer. "My sales appear so bona fide that they are never questioned. You cannot be held responsible after the item has left your hands."

"I agree," declared Trappe. "The only point is that my collection of rare curios contains no fakes."

"You are sure?"

Trappe was startled by the suddenness of his visitor's question. Though he nodded his head, the collector seemed a bit perturbed.

"I should like to see your collection," purred Fingers. "I can pick out fakes where others can't. I'm an expert in that line, Mr. Trappe."

"So I infer," stated Trappe, dryly. He drew a big key from his pocket. "Come along. I'll show you the curio room."

FINGERS KEEFEL followed as Trappe led the way to the rear of the living room. The crook coughed slightly as they neared the far door. Trappe entered a hallway and turned to the right. He reached a door at the end of the passage and unlocked it. He and Fingers stepped into a room that looked like a small museum.

Tapestries hung from the walls. A suit of armor stood in one corner. Glass cases were filled with objects that varied from ancient coins to earthen jars. Fingers Keefel surveyed the medley.

"Is this all?" he questioned.

"Yes," replied Trappe.

Fingers strolled across the room, to the only wall that had no windows. He calmly lifted a tapestry and revealed a door that bore a huge lock.

"Another room, eh?" he questioned, suavely.

"Drop that tapestry!" roared Perry Trappe. "This is outrageous! You act as though you owned this place!"

"Perhaps I do," returned Fingers, with a grin. "Suppose you open that door, Mr. Trappe."

With clenched fists; Trappe sprang toward the crook. He stopped suddenly as he heard a sharp word from the outer door. He turned to see a tall, square-jawed man standing with leveled revolver. It was Croaker Mannick.

"Stick 'em up!" ordered the killer.

Perry Trappe obeyed in sullen fashion. Fingers Keefel, grinning broadly, approached the curio collector and frisked his pockets. He found a ring of keys.

Going to the rear door, Fingers ripped the tapestry from the wall. He tried the keys until he found the one he wanted. He unlocked the door and pushed it inward. The light from the larger room showed a large closet. Set upon a low, square-topped table was a four-armed golden idol.

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The headdress; the objects in the statue's hands – all were studded with sparkling jewels. Fingers picked up the statue of Vishnu and carried it into the curio room. The jewels glittered. Fingers laughed.

"Heavy," he remarked. "Maybe it's gold – maybe not. Perhaps these sparklers are really rubies. Maybe they're only glass. Anyhow, it's what I came for – the jeweled Vishnu from Hyderabad."

"Thief!" gasped Perry Trappe. "Thief –"

A threatening gesture by Croaker Mannick stopped the collector short. Fingers Keefel, holding the small but heavy idol, spied a cloth covering upon one of the curio cases. He laid the Vishnu upon it and formed the cloth into a sack, which he loaded on his left arm.

"All aboard," he said to Croaker Mannick. "I may have trouble with the flunky. If I do" – Fingers pulled a stub-nosed revolver from his pocket – "I'll drop him and leave the finish to you."

"He must have gone to his room," returned Croaker. "He wasn't around when I sneaked in from the hallway. I waited till I heard you cough. I followed you in here without any trouble."

"O.K.," said Fingers.

With a snorting, disdainful laugh at Perry Trappe, Fingers hurried along the passage. His footsteps ended. Perry Trappe stared anxiously, wondering if the thief had found a clear way. Croaker Mannick listened. His keen ears heard the outer door close.

"There goes your funny looking idol," growled the killer. "Don't feel too bad about it – you're only losing a phony."

"What!" gasped Trappe. "You mean –"

"That the thing is a fake," snarled Croaker. "But you're not going to blab about it. That's what I'm here for – to shut you up so you'll stay shut up for –"

The glare in Croaker's malicious gaze struck home. Perry Trappe gasped. He realized that death had been planned for him. This man had covered the thief's get-away. Murder was the step to follow!

"Help!" howled Trappe, hoping that his distant servant would hear. "Help! Harvey – quick! Help! Murder!"

As he shouted, Trappe leaped forward with lunging arms, in an effort to prevent Croaker's shot. The square-jawed killer wore an evil grin. He timed his trigger pull with Trappe's plunge. The revolver spurted flame.

Trappe's cry ended in a choking gasp. The curio collector collapsed upon the floor. His body sprawled sidewise at Croaker's feet.

The single shot had done its work. Perry Trappe was dead.

CROAKER turned. He faced the hall and waited. He heard footsteps. The white-faced servant, Harvey, came into the hallway. The man was holding a puny automatic – a .22. He raised it quickly as he saw Croaker Mannick covering him with the revolver.

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Croaker fired. Harvey had no chance. Like master, the servant dropped. Croaker hurried along the hall and took a look at the body. His second shot had been as good as his first. Both Perry Trappe and his lone servant, Harvey, were dead.

Hastening through the living room, Croaker reached the outer door. He bobbed into a hallway and leaped for a flight of stairs. A shout came from a turn in the hallway. Croaker fired at a man who had evidently hurried in this direction after hearing the shots from Trappe's apartment.

Down the stairs dashed Croaker. He reached a small lobby two floors below and ran uninterrupted to the street. His arrival on the sidewalk, however, brought a shout.

This was a quiet district of Manhattan. The revolver shots from Trappe's third floor apartment had been heard outside. Two men were pointing upward as they beckoned to an approaching policeman. One of them spied Croaker.

The killer dashed toward the nearest corner. Shouting, the two men began to take up the chase. The officer drew his revolver and shouted a command to halt. Not one of the three pursuers noted a sedan that was parked across the street.

As the policeman leveled his revolver, a fusillade of shots broke from the darkness of the sedan. The policeman sprawled upon the sidewalk. The first pursuer staggered; then his companion dropped.

Croaker had reached the corner. From the sedan came a growled order – the voice of Brodie Brodan. The sedan leaped forward and sped along the narrow street. The three victims of gangster bullets lay upon the sidewalk in front of the apartment house.

Fingers Keefel – Croaker Mannick – Brodie Brodan. The trio had worked together tonight. The first of Duke Larrin's scheduled jobs had been accomplished. The orders from the crypt had been obeyed!

CHAPTER V. TWO MEN MEET

"GOT anything, Joe?"

The question came from Clyde Burke, the Classic reporter, as he entered the office of Detective Joe Cardona. It was addressed to the stocky, swarthy–visaged sleuth who was seated behind a desk.

"Nothing new, Burke," growled Cardona, as he looked toward his visitor. "We know it was a gang job – that's all. We're looking for the fellows who were in it."

The detective glanced at his watch. It showed four o'clock. This was the afternoon following the murder of Perry Trappe and his servant, Harvey Diker – a crime which had preceded the slaying of a policeman and the wounding of two men who had tried to apprehend the murderer.

"The fellow who ran away," questioned Clyde. "Anything on who he may be, Joe?"

"Nothing," admitted the detective. "He was one of the mob and there may have been others in the apartment house. It was nine o'clock when he beat it out of the place. We figure he joined up with another car around the corner.

"You know the story, Burke. Where there's a gang, there's a leader. That's the guy I'm looking for. I'm going

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the rounds to hear the alibis. That's the only system."

The reporter sat down. Cardona, paying no attention to his presence, began to check half a dozen names on a list that lay upon his desk. These were the names of mob leaders whom the shrewd sleuth intended to question.

Joe Cardona studied the topmost name. He picked up the telephone and called a number. Clyde Burke heard the clicking of a voice; then came Cardona's questioning:

"Hello. Hotel Spartan?... Brodie Brodan there?... This is a friend of his... Out of town, eh... I see... Wired to have a room for him... I'll see him later..."

Joe hung up the receiver. He looked at the names on the list, then folded the sheet of paper and tucked it in his pocket.

"Six thirty," he remarked. "That's when I'll see the first guy on the list. I'll pick up the others in the evening. Hear what they have to say for themselves. I'll let you know, Burke, if we get anything new."

"Thanks, Joe."

The reporter strolled from Cardona's office. Reaching the street, he approached a cigar store and entered a telephone booth. He called a number. A quiet voice responded.

"Burbank speaking."

"Burke," returned Clyde. "Report. Cardona checking on gang leaders. Going the rounds. First stop Hotel Spartan, six thirty, to see Brodie Brodan."

"Report received."

CLYDE BURKE left the booth. His assigned task was completed. He had informed Burbank, contact agent of The Shadow, of the steps that Joe Cardona was taking to apprehend the murderer of Perry Trappe. Reports that went to Burbank were telephoned immediately to The Shadow, wherever he might be. Burbank represented the hidden link between The Shadow and his active agents.

Clyde Burke was speculative as he strolled toward the Classic office. He knew that Brodie Brodan was a figure in the underworld. Like others of gangland's elite, Brodan lived at the Hotel Spartan when in New York. That hotel was a decadent structure on the East Side – a meeting place between would-be big shots and the lesser of gangdom's minions.

Brodie Brodan, Clyde had heard, made frequent visits to Chicago. He was supposed to be friendly with big shots of that city. The fact that a telegram had arrived indicated that Brodan might have paid a visit to the Mid-West metropolis.

It was nearly six o'clock when Clyde Burke reached the Classic office. At that precise time, a man appeared in the concourse of the Grand Central Station. It was Brodie Brodan. Strolling amid the crowd, the heavy-browed gang leader approached a package room.

Tendering two tags to the attendant, Brodie received a pair of suitcases. He carefully detached the stubs that the package man had left on the bags. Picking up his burdens, Brodie walked toward a train gate. He stopped in an inconspicuous spot by a broad stairway and waited there.

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Six o'clock. The gate opened. A throng of passengers came forth. Brodie watched them from a distance until he spied a man in a loud tan overcoat who was carrying a black suitcase. Picking up his own bags, Brodie strolled after the arrival. As the man reached the exit from the concourse, Brodan was beside him.

"Hello, Fritz," growled the gang leader. "Keep on strolling, I'm with you."

"O.K., Brodie," mumbled the man with the black bag.

The pair moved from the terminal. They reached the taxi tunnel and entered a cab. Brodie told the driver to take them to the Hotel Spartan. Settling back in the rear seat, the gang leader spoke in a low voice to his companion.

"Give me the ticket stub, Fritz."

The other man brought the required object from his vest pocket. Brodie studied the car number and the berth.

"I checked out of the Hotel Spartan five days ago," he said, in a low tone. "Been living in a joint where they don't know me. Packed up today and left my bags in the baggage room at the Grand Central.

"Here's our story. You met me in Chicago, yesterday. Hotel Drury – where you were stopping. We pulled out on the Starlight Limited ten o'clock last night. I've used that train before. I know it. Twenty-one hours from Chicago; came in on schedule. Anything else happen?"

"Nope."

"Where did you see the New York newspapers? The ones with the story about a guy named Perry Trappe getting the bump?"

Fritz raised his eyebrows. He knew the game now. Until this moment, he had not known the purpose of the alibi which he was to establish.

"Evening newspapers came on the train at Albany," he said. "I was in the club car."

"We were in the club car."

"O.K., Brodie."

THE taxicab had reached a dingy district. It was rolling along beneath the superstructure of an elevated line. Brodie Brodan peered from the window.

"Here's the hotel," he stated. "Come in with me, Fritz. Check in for the night. I might as well have a mug from Chicago along with me."

The two alighted after the cab had reached the curb. The driver passed the bags into the lobby and a loafing bell hop carried them to the desk. Brodie swaggered in with Fritz at his heels and waved his hand to the clerk.

"Keep a room for me?"

"You bet," returned the clerk. "Got your wire, Mr. Brodie. Room 406."

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The bell hop carried the bags to the elevator. Brodie started in that direction. It was then that a man arose from an obscure corner. Brodie did not see him until he blocked the gang leader's path, Brodie raised his heavy eyebrows in feigned surprise as he faced Detective Joe Cardona.

"Just a minute, Brodie," declared Cardona, soberly. "I want to talk to you. Where are you going?"

"Up to my room," returned Brodie.

"All right," agreed Cardona. "I'll talk to you there."

"Come on up, Fritz," said Brodie, turning to his companion. "You can check in afterward. I'll phone down to the clerk."

The three entered the elevator. The door closed. The clerk stared quizzically as the lift ascended. Thus he failed to see a motion which occurred in a corner of the lobby where a little used passage led to the rear of the hotel.

Someone had been watching from that spot. Keen eyes had witnessed Brodie Brodan's arrival. They had seen Joe Cardona interrupt the gang leader's progress. While the clerk still stared at the door of the elevator shaft, a figure came openly into view.

A tall being clad in black; such was the appearance of this unnoticed visitant. With easy, stealthy stride, the shape that had come from the gloom of the passage edged toward the stairway that led to the upper floors.

For a moment, the sinister figure stood revealed. Blazing eyes flashed from beneath the brim of a slouch hat. The upturned folds of a long, black cloak obscured the lower features of the stealthy stranger. Hands were gloved in the same sable hue.

Then the phantom being blended with the darkness of the stairway. The clerk, shifting his gaze blankly toward that direction, saw nothing. The Shadow, like a being invisible, had followed Joe Cardona and Brodie Brodan to the fourth floor of the Hotel Spartan.

CHAPTER VI. THE ALIBI

"Do you know Fritz Fursch?"

Brodie Brodan put the question to Joe Cardona. At the same time, he gestured toward Fritz, the man whom had met at the Grand Central Station.

"Never met him," answered Joe.

"Meet him now, then," suggested the gang leader. "Fritz, this is Detective Cardona. Joe Cardona – a good guy."

Cardona shook hands with the man from Chicago. They had reached Brodie Brodan's room and the gang leader was placing his bags upon the bed. He turned to switch on a light, for dusk had brought gloom to this narrow-windowed room.

"Thought you was a dick," confided Fritz Fursch, speaking to Joe Cardona. "You looked like one when we seen you in the lobby."

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Joe Cardona made no response to the comment. He turned and spoke to Brodie Brodan.

"Where've you been, Brodie?" he asked.

"Me?" returned the gang leader. "Chicago."

Cardona stared steadily. The gang leader was unstrapping his suitcases. Brodie stopped as he noted Cardona's gaze. For a few moments, they stood facing each other, without a word.

Fritz Fursch watched the tableau. His eyes went from man to man. All three were engrossed. None saw the motion that occurred on the other side of the room – behind Fritz's back. A door was opening slowly. It was a connecting door to an adjoining room. Inch by inch it moved until it allowed a narrow crevice through which a keen eye peered.

THE SHADOW had entered the next room. Silently, he had gained this vantage post. He could see and hear all that transpired between Cardona and Brodan.

"Chicago, eh?" questioned Cardona. "When did you get in from there?"

"Six o'clock this afternoon," returned Brodie, promptly. "I came in with Fritz. Chicago is his town. We rolled in on the Starlight Limited."

"When did you leave Chicago?"

"Say" – Brodie's tone was challenging – "what's the idea of this third degree? I thought you was a good guy, Joe. You heard what I just told Fritz."

"Never mind the good-guy stuff. I want to know where you were last night. That's all."

"O.K., Joe. Suit yourself. Fritz and I pulled out on the Starlight. Left Chi at ten o'clock."

"What were you doing in Chicago?"

"Say – that's a mean one, Joe. If I had been doing anything, I'd think you were working along with a bunch of Chicago dicks. I wasn't doing anything, though, so I'll tell you. I was staying at the Hotel Drury, trying to put through a deal with some birds who want to start a night club in New York.

"That's where I met Fritz. Found he was coming on to New York, so we came along together. I wired here yesterday. Told them to hold a room for me. That was before I bumped into Fritz."

Fritz watched Joe Cardona closely. It was Fritz who had sent the wire from Chicago. He looked to see if the detective suspected the truth. Cardona gave no inkling.

"Starlight Limited, eh?" quizzed Cardona. "Got anything to show for it – outside of this guy's say-so?"

"Ticket stub," grinned Brodie, producing the article from his vest pocket, as though the idea had just occurred to him. "There it is, Joe."

"You got one too?" quizzed Cardona, turning to Fritz.

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The Chicago man produced the required stub. Cardona examined it along with Brodie's. The gang leader began to unpack his bags. Clothes were in a state of disarray.

"Look at that, Joe," said Brodie, with a grin. "I threw everything into the bag in a hurry. This other bag is just as bad. Say – I didn't get it shut until we were on the cab to the station in Chicago. Lucky I never opened it on the train. Maybe I wouldn't have got it shut."

The second bag was bulging. Shirts fell out as Brodie opened it. The gang leader unpacked a suit, which needed pressing. He found a razor and shaving cream. He laid them on the bed beside the bag.

"So you came in from Chicago, eh?" Cardona was persistent. "Then you don't know anything about Perry Trappe?"

"Perry Trappe?"

"Yeah. The curio collector who was murdered in his apartment, last night."

Brodie Brodan looked up from the suitcase. He stared at Joe Cardona; then laughed.

"You mean the guy who was bumped off with his servant? All about him in the evening papers? Say – have you gone goofy, Cardona?"

The detective did not reply. Brodie guffawed and shook his head.

"That's hot," pronounced the gang leader. "Remember, Fritz, you showed me the paper in the club car – the one with the dead guy's mug on the front page? Coming in from Albany, wasn't it?"

Fritz nodded.

"Is this the paper?" Brodie pulled a folded journal from Fritz's pocket. He saw that it was a Chicago newspaper. "No – that isn't it. I guess we left the New York paper on the train. Say, Joe" – Brodie's voice became earnest as the gang leader addressed Cardona – "you're following a wrong steer. If you're after the bird that killed this guy Trappe, why waste your time?"

"I came in with Fritz on the Starlight Limited. That's that. You know me well enough to know that I don't chase around collecting curios. I'm in the night-club business – building it up from a side line. They used to try to pin rackets on me – but never any hokum like this. Grabbing off curios – say, I'll be cutting up paper dolls before I go into that line."

Brodie bent over the suitcase and pulled out the few remaining objects. One was an excellent desk clock. Brodie set the time piece on the bureau and noted the dial as he did so.

"Ten after seven," he remarked. "I want to get up to the Club Madrid at eight. So if you've got any more questions, Joe, shoot 'em. But I've given you the straight dope. Fritz will vouch for it."

JOE CARDONA shrugged his shoulders in a fashion that was a trifle sheepish. To cover up his lack of composure, he drew his watch from his pocket.

"Ten after seven," he confirmed. "Well, Brodie, I'm moving along. I just picked you as the first person to see because I had a hunch you've been laying too quiet lately. But this night club business of yours sounds straight. Lay off the racket boys and maybe you can make an honest living – if fleecing customers can be

called that."

With a gruff laugh at his own weak jest, Joe Cardona turned toward the door. Brodie Brodan was peeling shirt and vest. He picked up his razor and spoke to Fritz Fursch.

"Ride down to the lobby with Cardona," suggested the gang leader in an affable tone. "Take your bag along – check in and get a room for yourself. Kind of an old joint, this hotel, but it's not bad."

Fritz picked up his bag and followed the detective. The door closed behind the pair. Brodie Brodan did not show the slightest elation. His poker face remained the same. The gang leader turned to cross the room.

The door opposite slid tightly shut, just before Brodie glanced in that direction. The Shadow had heard Joe Cardona's quiz. Like the detective, he was leaving.

RIDING uptown on the elevated, Joe Cardona checked his list of names. He crossed out Brodie Brodan. The gang leader's alibi stood, so far as Joe was concerned. The Chicago story had the ear-marks of a correct one, one Joe could not dispute.

There had not been a flaw in any of Brodie's statements, so far as Cardona could see. Everything had stood the test. A man riding eastward on a limited would have no thought of preparing an alibi. Joe Cardona had picked Brodie Brodan on a hunch. That hunch was fading – it was out.

In retrospect, Cardona recalled each statement that had been made; he defined Brodie's actions and formed the final conclusion that there was not a single shred of evidence to indicate falsity in the gang leader's story.

SUCH was Cardona's conclusion. The detective thought that it was thorough. He was sure that nothing had escaped his keen attention. But Cardona was not the only investigator who had viewed Brodie Brodan at the Hotel Spartan.

There was another – The Shadow. He, the mysterious supersleuth, had been there also. He had heard Cardona's quiz. Like the detective, he had analyzed the statements of Brodie Brodan and had witnessed all of the gang leader's actions.

The Shadow, like Cardona, had an answer. It differed, however, from Cardona's. It came, shortly after Cardona had formed his final decision regarding his suspect.

THE light clicked in The Shadow's sanctum. Long white hands appeared beneath the bluish glare. The Shadow's right hand wrote a name upon a sheet of paper; beneath the name went two short statements:

Brodie Brodan.

Clock in bag.

7:10.

A laugh sounded from the gloom on the near side of the bluish light. That laugh betokened keen understanding. It told of a clew which Joe Cardona had not noticed; one, however, which had not escaped The Shadow.

Brodie Brodan had been in Chicago for three days or more. He had told Cardona that he had packed his bags in a hurry; that he had not opened the second bag upon the train. Therefore, the clock had not been touched

since it was packed.

Ten minutes after seven! A clock packed in Chicago – hurriedly – had registered New York time! There could be but one answer. Brodie Brodan had not packed that desk clock in Chicago. Had he done so, it would have shown ten minutes after six, allowing for the difference in time between Chicago and New York.

Brodie had packed his clock in New York. He could not have gone to Chicago, as he stated. There was a chance that he might not have changed its time during his sojourn in the Middle West. That chance; however, was slight.

The clew was sufficient for The Shadow. It was the thread which marked Brodie Brodan's alibi as a doubtful one. With that thread as a starting point, The Shadow was ready to trace Brodie Brodan's activities in the immediate future.

A long hand reached across the table. A tiny bulb flashed from the wall as The Shadow drew a pair of earphones toward him. A quiet voice came over the wire:

"Burbank speaking."

"Instructions to Marsland," ordered The Shadow, in a low whisper.

"Ready," was Burbank's answer.

The sinister tones of The Shadow's eerie voice clung to the lighted corner of the room as the master worker gave his orders. When Burbank's final corroboration came, The Shadow placed the earphones back upon the wall. The little bulb went out. The blue light clicked. The sanctum was in complete darkness.

Then came a whispered laugh. It rose to a strain of shuddering mockery that awoke ghoulis h echoes from the hidden walls of blackness. When the reverberations had died, deep silence reigned.

The Shadow had departed. His orders had been given. The Shadow had taken the first step to trail Brodie Brodan – the gang leader whom he suspected was concerned with the death of Perry Trappe.

Where Joe Cardona's hunch had faded, The Shadow's inkling had begun. From keen deduction, The Shadow had picked up the trail which Cardona had lost. Crimes like the murder of Perry Trappe were due to fall in sequence.

Through his agent, Cliff Marsland, The Shadow would gain the word he needed. When crime next struck, The Shadow would be there!

CHAPTER VII. MOBSTERS MOVE

"OFF for Chi, eh?"

The speaker was Brodie Brodan. He was seated in his hotel room, on the second evening following his arrival at the Hotel Spartan. The man to whom he was speaking was his alibi artist, Fritz Fursch.

"Yeah. Leaving at nine o'clock," replied Fursch. "Anything you need done?"

"Not a thing, Fritz. You did your job. Say – Cardona fell for that gag like a punk. We'll work the stall again,

some time."

"What – on Cardona?"

"No." Brodie snorted. "Not a chance of that, Fritz. Next time we'll use it, we'll work from New York west. If I've got a job to pull in Chi, I'll plant you here and let you come out there with a couple of tickets."

"And a newspaper in my pocket."

"Yeah. That clinched it."

Fritz Fursch looked at the clock on the bureau. It showed quarter after eight. The alibi man stretched himself and strolled about the room, intending to spend a last few minutes with Brodan.

"I'm set for my next alibi," remarked the gang leader, in a casual tone. "I've got Lobo Ruscott all fixed – he's the guy that's running the Club Madrid."

"Another job coming, eh?"

"Pretty soon." Brodan's reply was noncommittal. "I just took another bird into the outfit – and he's a swell worker, too."

"The fellow up here this afternoon?"

"Yeah. Cliff Marsland. Say – he's cagey, that guy. Everybody knows he's as good as half a dozen gorillas; but there's nobody can lay a finger on any jobs he does. I met him up at the Club Madrid two nights ago – and he let it out that he was on the loose."

"There's lots of gorillas on the loose these days."

"Not guys like Cliff Marsland. He gets dough when he works. Needs some cash – that's all. I picked him up at a bargain and promised to keep mum about the price. Just the guy I needed."

Brodie Brodan paused to light a cigarette. Fritz Fursch noted the clock again. He decided it was time to leave for his train.

"So long, Brodie," he said. "Get me at the Hotel Drury when you need me."

FIVE minutes after Fritz's departure, there was a tap at the door. Brodie Brodan issued a summons to come in. A husky, well-attired young man appeared. Brodie Brodan recognized Cliff Marsland and waved his visitor to a chair.

Brodie held a high opinion of his new recruit. Cliff Marsland was a different type than the average gangster. His face showed intelligence. His appearance was clean-cut. Yet with it, Cliff possessed a firm chin and a straight-featured face that showed self-confidence and ability. Brodie Brodan classed him as one mobster in a thousand.

"All set, Cliff?" questioned Brodie.

Cliff Marsland nodded.

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"O.K.," decided the gang leader. "We've got a job tonight – and I'm picking you as my right hand man. We've got to spread. I'm putting you in charge of part of the crew. Get that?"

"What's the lay?" questioned Cliff, in calm fashion.

"I'll give it to you," declared Brodie. "We're going out to Long Island. A big house near the Sound – home of a millionaire named Tyler Bogart. There's three entrances to the place – front, side and back.

"Bozo Griffin will handle the front. Just for emergency – that's all. I'm taking the side – because that's where someone's going in. The back is yours – and there may be a get-away in that direction. That's why you're there. To cover.

"I'll be on the job. When you hear three quick shots from the side, pile in. That means the get-away has been made by the side and I want a quick fuss at the back. Get it?"

Cliff nodded.

"If you see anybody duck out in your direction," added Brodie, "you pass out three quick shots. That lets me pile in from the side. There'll be two guys coming out – if they come your way. Let them ride."

"I've got it."

"There'll be shooting in the house, maybe," remarked Brodie. "That doesn't mean anything. Forget it. If I give the signal, you kick up the fuss, then scam with your part of the outfit. If you give the signal, beat it right away. That's all."

Cliff repeated the instructions in methodical fashion. Brodie nodded his approval. He arose and motioned his new lieutenant toward the door.

"Come along," he ordered. "We're meeting the mob out back. Wait a second – I want to phone the lobby. Better see who's down there."

Brodie made the phone call. It was evident that he had fixed the clerk. Brodie's signal to leave was proof that no unknown loiterers were in the lobby.

Brodie led the way to the stairs instead of the elevator. At the bottom, he pushed Cliff toward the passage that went through to the rear of the hotel.

REACHING a darkened alley, Brodie uttered a low, hissing whistle. Whispers came from the darkness. Members of the mob had assembled. Brodie drew Cliff over toward the wall; a confab began between the gang leader, Cliff and the other lieutenant, "Bozo" Griffin.

"I'll take these gorillas," decided Brodie. "You take the car out in the side street, Bozo. What about the bunch over by the Pink Rat? Did you tell them to wait for Cliff Marsland?"

"Yeah," answered Bozo. "I told them he'd be along. I'll be driving past there and they can follow. Hunky Wikell is driving Cliff's car. He'll know me when I go by."

"Give me a few minutes to get there, Bozo," interposed Cliff. "I'm not going on the run, you know. Some smart copper might ask me why the hurry."

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"Give him ten minutes," decided Brodie. "That'll make it sure. All right, Cliff. Get started."

Cliff sauntered from the alley. He was smiling to himself as he reached the side street. He made a turn into an alley beyond; then quickened his pace.

Ten minutes! That was a lucky break. He could make the Pink Rat locality in five.

On the next street, Cliff spied a small store. He entered and picked a telephone in the corner. The place was deserted except for an old man behind a counter. Cliff called Burbank's number. He heard the voice of The Shadow's contact man.

"Marsland."

Cliff's lips were close to the mouthpiece.

"Report."

In brief terms, Cliff fulfilled Burbank's order. He told the contact man all that he had learned. Under ordinary conditions, Burbank would have instructed Cliff to stand by and await a return call. This was impossible under the circumstances. Cliff was due at the Pink Rat in five minutes.

However, both Cliff and Burbank saw the situation. That was the way with The Shadow's agents. Trained to obey their master, they were also capable in dealing with emergencies. Cliff, as he explained matters to Burbank, saw that tonight's episode could offer but one of two possibilities.

Either The Shadow would seek to enter the home of Tyler Bogart, or he would require Cliff for some definite duty outside. Perhaps both. Cliff could prepare for either circumstance. Keenly, he visualized a back door that he had never seen.

"I'll post my squad thirty feet to the right," he informed Burbank. "I'll have them far enough from the house. I'll be ten feet to the left of the back door – and as close to the house as possible."

"Report received," returned Burbank.

Cliff hung up the receiver. He glanced to note that the old man at the counter had heard nothing. He hurried from the store and dodged through alleys to gain time on his way to the Pink Rat.

A CAR was waiting near the spot designated. Cliff approached and gave a low whistle as he observed dim forms within the car. Before any of the gangsters could reply, he announced himself in a single word:

"Marsland."

"O.K." The voice belonged to "Hunky" Wikell, the man at the wheel. "Climb in with me."

Cliff joined the driver. They waited for a full minute. Then a car rolled into the narrow street and passed the sedan in which Cliff and Hunky were waiting, with gangsters in the rear. Hunky started the motor and followed. He was taking the way that Bozo Griffin showed.

The cars headed for an East River bridge. They crossed and moved rapidly along a highway. Cliff, silently watching from Hunky's side, felt qualms at the speed that they were making.

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Brodie Brodan had moved sooner than Cliff had anticipated. That meant that the raid on Bogart's home would begin shortly after the mob arrived. Brodie had said that men would enter. Did that mean some of Brodie's crew, from the side? Or were others on the job?

If the latter case existed, the men appointed to enter – whoever they might be – would probably be outside of Bogart's house at present. The Shadow, swift though he was, would have to travel at unusual speed to anticipate this raid, unless some fortunate delay occurred.

Cliff began to see another possibility that he had not suggested to Burbank. If The Shadow needed time, a fracas outside of Bogart's could produce it. Perhaps that would be necessary. Cliff decided to be ready – even to the point of spoiling the raid – should The Shadow not appear.

Half an hour after the start from Manhattan, Bozo's leading car turned into a side road. Cliff fancied that Brodie Brodan must be up ahead of the lieutenant. A mile of side road; then Brodie swung into the deserted driveway of an abandoned house. Wikell followed.

Lights went out; but just before the glow failed, Cliff noted a third car up ahead. With his mobsters close beside him, Cliff alighted from the sedan. He heard the voice of Brodie Brodan.

"All right, Cliff," said the mob leader in a low tone. "There's Bogart's house – through that hedge. We're at the back of the place. Bozo's going around to the front. I'm going through to the side. You come along last and cover the back."

Men shuffled through the darkness. Cliff held his squad in readiness. When all was silent, he led the way through the hedge. He could see the home of Tyler Bogart – a looming mansion of gray stone. There were lights in upstairs windows; a glow from a broad veranda on the side toward the Sound showed that people were at home.

There was no light at the back, except a shaft that came from a curtained room on the second floor. This gave a faint glow above the back door. Cliff drew his men thirty feet to the right and posted them.

"Lay here," he whispered. "I'm casing over by the back door to see what's what. No shots – until I give the order."

Mumbles of understanding came from the gorillas. Cliff moved to the left. His plan was working. It was natural that he should circle in aiming for the back door. Cautiously Cliff crept through the darkness until he found a spot not more than ten feet from the back door. There Cliff waited.

LONG minutes passed. Cliff was not nervous, but he could feel the tension. His eyes were glued to the whiteness of the back door. He felt that the time for trouble was imminent. He feared that The Shadow had been unable to arrive in the brief time allowed.

Then, as Cliff blinked, he fancied that he saw the back door moving inward. The motion itself was imperceptible. It seemed that a vertical strip of blackness was working its way from the side of the door. The strange phenomenon continued; then stopped. Gradually, the widened strip of black began to fade.

Cliff suppressed a gasp. He realized the amazing truth. The Shadow, with ample space between the gangsters and the house, had approached the back door. With stealthy, unseen hand, he had picked the lock. He had opened the door inch by inch; the blackness had been from the interior of the house.

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Through the crevice, The Shadow had passed. The narrowing shaft of blackness was all that marked the silent closing of the door. Cliff – not more than a dozen feet away – had seen no sign of a living form!

The gangsters, farther from the house, could not have seen a single token of The Shadow's arrival – not even that moving strip of black. Subtle had been The Shadow's entrance; yet Cliff realized that it could have been made even less visibly. He saw that The Shadow had deliberately left his trace that Cliff, himself, might know that his chief had entered!

There had been no signal; no whispered words from the dark. Cliff knew the answer. He was to play the role to which Brodie Brodan had assigned him. The Shadow could take care of his own departure as effectively as he had attended to his arrival.

Cliff smiled grimly, as he drew his revolver from his pocket. The climax of this episode was on the way. Silent and placid, the home of Tyler Bogart was due for a startling eruption. Crime was ready to break loose.

This time, consequences would differ from those which had occurred at Perry Trappe's. The Shadow, the master who battled crime, was on the scene to meet the fiends within the silent house.

CHAPTER VIII. WITHIN THE HOUSE

THREE men were seated on the enclosed veranda of Tyler Bogart's home. The millionaire and two friends formed the trio. The night was mild and ice clinked in cold glasses as the three conversed.

This was the side of the house that faced the Sound. A spacious lawn, with widespread trees, formed a pleasant, dimly-outlined vista beyond which sparkled the moving lights of vessels that were passing this portion of Long Island.

The atmosphere was one of serenity, with no menace of approaching danger. Hence the three men, as they chatted, gave no thought to the unexpected. Not one of them saw the door that slowly opened from the house; nor did they observe the keen, brilliant eyes that watched them.

The Shadow, studying this scene, saw that Tyler Bogart and his companions were set to remain on the veranda. This formed a temporary refuge. Brodie Brodan and his crew of mobsmen were on the other side of the house. Cliff Marsland at the back; Bozo Griffin at the front; neither of their squads would appear at this spot.

The one method of attack, should Tyler Bogart's life be sought, would come directly through the house. Stealth would be the method chosen by the crooks tonight. The Shadow held a key position; from this door he could block anyone who tried to come to the veranda.

The Shadow, however, was on the watch for dual crime. He had linked this approaching trouble with the affray at Perry Trappe's. Theft, as well as murder, must be the motive. Cliff had informed, through Burbank, that two men would be in the house. The Shadow, now that he had established the point of contact between house and porch, had other work to do.

Somewhere in the house, criminals might already be at work. The Shadow, when he battled crime, forestalled his enemies. Such was to be his plan tonight. From the darkened doorway, The Shadow moved inward. He reached a gloomy hallway. There he stood in mystic outline, a tall black-garbed figure of sepulchral appearance.

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Keen, burning eyes stared along the hall. The Shadow saw a passage at the rear. It led deeper into the house. It formed the natural path to search. The Shadow moved from the blackness of the wall; then stopped short.

Footsteps were coming down a flight of stairs. The Shadow eased back into the gloom. His keen eyes watched as a servant appeared. The man walked within five paces of The Shadow. He did not see the singular form of blackness that stood so foreboding. The Shadow, however, studied the man's dull, passive features. He saw that this menial was no minion of crime. He watched the man pass onward toward the porch.

SWIFTLY, The Shadow moved out into the narrow hall. He reached the corridor that turned left. He followed it until he came to a blocking door. The side of the broad-brimmed hat pressed against the barrier. The Shadow listened. His keen ear detected the sound of whispers.

Two men were in the room beyond. Crooks were at work. The Shadow had discovered them.

Slowly, a black-gloved hand turned the knob of the door. The barrier did not yield. A tiny metal pick clicked almost inaudibly as The Shadow applied it to the keyhole. The lock gave without a sound. With black form pressed against the door to mask the slight gloom from beyond the turn in the passage, The Shadow opened the door by inches.

Clicking footsteps came faintly from the house. The Shadow waited, knowing that the servant had come back from the veranda. The Shadow heard the footsteps die. The door was open wider now. With keen eyes, The Shadow studied a circle of light that was shining upon the door of a safe.

"Got it, Fingers?" came a whispered query.

"Not yet, Croaker," was the cautious reply. "Easy. Keep a watch on the door. We want it clear to get out by the side – where Brodie is."

"Right. I'll do a sneak to see that you can make it. I'm just waiting until you get this tin box open. You make a get-away. I'll do the rest."

"All set for Bogart?"

"You bet. He's the fat bimbo. I got a squint at the three of them on the porch. I'll plug him and then cut out the way you went."

Momentary silence. Fingers was working at the dials of the safe. A soft click sounded; then came a low expression of satisfaction from the lips of the smooth-fingered crook.

"Got it!"

The door of the safe opened. Fingers threw the rays of his flashlight into the interior. Croaker, somewhere in the darkness behind the safe-cracker, saw the same object that Fingers had spied – a square panel of gold engraved with Chinese characters and studded with sparkling gems.

It was the second of Cecil Armsbury's fake treasures which the old man had unloaded on unsuspecting collectors. The golden panel that had supposedly come from the Temple of Heaven in the Forbidden City of old Peking.

THE SHADOW, from the spot where he was standing, could not see into the safe, for the door was opened in his direction. Fingers Keefel clicked off his flashlight. The Shadow could hear the safe-cracker dragging a

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clanking object from the safe. Then came a whispered buzz.

"Stick here." Croaker was the speaker. "I'm going out to see that it's all clear. Wait –"

"Naw." Fingers put a protest. "I'm sliding straight out, Croaker. There's nobody around. You stick here by the safe. Wait until I'm clear. Then you can head for the porch. Savvy?"

"All right," agreed Croaker.

Pitch–darkness reigned. The Shadow was edging through the door that he had opened. His action was a careful one. The doorway was low; The Shadow's tall form covered the opening between door and post. The blackness of his shape killed all light from the distant hall.

Crooks in the dark! The Shadow was entering with them. Despite the blackness, he could tell the exact positions of the men. Fingers Keefel was sneaking toward a farther door. Croaker Mannick was on the other side of the opened front of the safe.

Theft was reaching its accomplishment. Murder was due to follow. The Shadow, from his strategic position, was ready to frustrate them both. Fingers – a moving target – would be the first. He could be stopped when he reached the door; for that was a spot which he must certainly pass. Croaker, the potential murderer, could come second.

"I'll give you time, Fingers." Croaker's hoarse whisper was coming from the other side of the blocking door of the safe. "I'll finish Bogart and beat it for the side line, after you've made a good get–away –"

Fingers sent an answering growl from near the farther doorway. That, and the clank of the object which he carried, drowned other sounds. Then came a muffled exclamation. Fingers had encountered something in the dark.

Click!

The room was flooded with light. Standing within the doorway, his hand upon the switch, was a portly, grim–faced man who held a glistening revolver.

It was Tyler Bogart. Some unexpected suspicion had brought the millionaire to the strongroom. His gun was pointed toward Croaker Mannick.

Beside the millionaire, almost at the doorway, was Fingers Keefel, crouching as he held the flat shape of the golden panel close against his body.

By the little door stood The Shadow, revealed as a tall, sinister figure in total black. He was the fourth member of this unexpected tableau.

Crooks were at bay; yet the sudden change that had brought the present emergency was to their benefit. Tyler Bogart, by his unexpected arrival had produced a strange dilemma.

The millionaire who had come to protect his property had, by his appearance, thwarted the plan of The Shadow!

CHAPTER IX. GUNS BARK

TYLER BOGART, standing by the doorway of the lighted room, had every opportunity in his favor. The millionaire had come with loaded revolver. He had aimed at the safe as the logical objective. He had Croaker Mannick covered.

Fingers Keefel, though close to the millionaire, was handicapped by the burden of the panel which he carried. He had no revolver ready, although one hand was free. Counting on Croaker's protection, Fingers had left his gat in his pocket.

Circumstances, however, had caught The Shadow in an unfortunate position. The master from the darkness had moved into the room; but he was not beyond that projecting door of the safe. Fingers Keefel, his first target, was in plain view. Croaker Mannick, crouching behind a steel barrier, was not within The Shadow's range!

Tyler Bogart had his chance. He fired. The millionaire's own excitement was his undoing. His shot went wide. Even while the revolver roared, an answering bark came from the safe. Croaker Mannick, replying with a single shot, found the millionaire's body as a target. Tyler Bogart crumpled.

The Shadow, had not been inactive. With the shots, his tall form was sweeping toward the wall away from the safe. The black cloak whirled as The Shadow swung to aim at Croaker Mannick. The killer's gloating eyes became transfixed. A gasp came from Croaker's lips as the murderer saw the weird shape that had arrived to cover him with deadly automatic.

Too late to save Tyler Bogart's life, The Shadow was ready to avenge the murder. Gun to gun, he was facing Croaker Mannick. The quick-fingered crook was aiming instinctively to meet The Shadow's swinging weapon.

Then came an unexpected break. Fingers Keefel had not seen The Shadow. His eyes had been on Tyler Bogart. As the millionaire crumpled from Croaker's bullet, his hand dropped away from the light switch. At that instant, Fingers acted with clawing clutch.

Just as The Shadow and Croaker swung gun to gun, Fingers yanked the switch and plunged out through the door of the room, carrying the stolen panel with him!

DARKNESS – as fingers were pressed to triggers! The Shadow and Croaker Mannick, each seeking to beat the other to the shot, were blotted from view by pitch-black gloom. Instinctive fighters, the terror of the underworld and the famous marksman of the badlands, both adapted themselves to the unexpected change.

Each shifted as he fired. Automatic and revolver blazed simultaneously, each at a target that had dropped away. Those bursts were but the first of a succession. Through the strongroom where Tyler Bogart's body lay came flash after flash, each from a new and unexpected quarter.

The Shadow was fighting it out with Croaker Mannick. The master battler was weaving through the darkness to meet an enemy whose craft was worthy of his own. Flashes were targets; but each marksman was on the move as he fired.

A burst of flame came from near the door. It brought a quick response from the other side of the room. Croaker's revolver had spoken from the exit. The Shadow, with keen strategy, had fired in reply toward the side of the target that was inward from the door.

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A sharp cry from the darkness. Croaker had dodged inward, expecting to deceive The Shadow. He had failed. A zimming bullet from the automatic had found its mark in human flesh. Croaker was wounded – on the left side, and not seriously – for he fired again, almost instantly after he had cried out aloud.

Another bark from the automatic. Then a pause, while roaring echoes resounded through the room. The Shadow was shifting for the cover of the safe door – the barrier which had previously protected Croaker. His enemy was somewhere in the darkness toward the door.

Then came Croaker's final shot. The smart killer had suspected The Shadow's move. He had taken advantage of two short seconds to gain the door. His revolver delivered a winging bullet that thudded like a warning against the steel door of the safe.

The automatic responded. Once – twice – it hurled its lead toward the far door where Croaker, firing, had sprung for safety. Croaker, wounded in the fray, had sought safety in flight. Those two quick shots from The Shadow's gun were the master's last effort to stay the plunging murderer.

The gunfray, despite its varied action, had been short in duration. The few seconds that followed the final echoes of the shots were tense ones. The Shadow, playing his strategic game, was waiting for any answer that might come.

All was silent by the door. Croaker Mannick – he had recognized The Shadow – had chosen flight as his final goal. There would be no more from Croaker – that The Shadow knew. Fingers Keefel had gained a start. Outside were mobsters ready to cause trouble.

The Shadow moved forward. His flashlight glimmered. It showed the body of Tyler Bogart, crumpled within the doorway. The light flickered toward the hallway. Suddenly, its rays went out. A soft, sinister laugh whispered through the room.

What was The Shadow's thought? As if in answer came a signal from the outside of the house. Three quick shots – a belated token from Brodie Brodan. That meant invasion – from the back.

FOOTSTEPS were clattering. Tyler Bogart's friends and servants, alarmed by the shots from the strongroom, were coming to investigate. The sounds were from the direction of the veranda. Sweeping back into the strongroom, The Shadow reached the little hallway.

He was in time. Cliff Marsland, in order to play the part assigned to him, had been forced to launch his cohorts. A snarling mobster arrived in the passage. The Shadow saw the fiendish look on the man's face as the fellow aimed a revolver down the straight hall, where he spotted one of Bogart's frightened friends.

The Shadow's automatic boomed from the side passage. The mobster dropped. With a forward leap, The Shadow gained the junction of the passages. His blazing automatics – a second had come forth in his other hand – delivered fierce fire toward the doorway where two other mobsters had appeared.

One man fell. The other fled. The Shadow caught a glimpse of Cliff Marsland. The agent, playing his part, also took to flight. He could tell Brodie Brodan that he and his men had encountered an unexpected ambush.

Back through the strongroom. The Shadow reached the way to the side door. Again, he was just in time. Brodie Brodan, alarmed by unexpected firing within the house, had launched a new drive. Mobsters were piling into the darkened side passage. Once again, The Shadow's automatics broke loose.

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Snarling mobsters staggered. Guns clattered to the floor as the repulsed horde took to flight. The fury of The Shadow's fire brought belief that several armed men were here to meet the invasion.

The effect on the mobsters, however, was matched by that which came to the startled guests of Tyler Bogart. The two men coming in from the veranda ran back the way that they had come, followed by a pair of bewildered servants.

Flinging open the veranda windows, they leaped to the lawn and fled in the only direction that seemed to afford safety – toward the sloping vista that led to the Sound. Scattered shots – too distant to cause harm – came from Bozo Griffin's few men at the front of the big mansion.

Shouted orders followed. Brodie Brodan was urging his men to scatter. The admonition was a wise one. The Shadow had reached a window that covered both front and side. His automatics belched in both directions. Scurrying mobsters ran for shelter.

The Shadow knew that Cliff would lead the mobsters at the back into a swift retreat. His aim was to scatter Brodie's hordes and send them flocking back to Manhattan. He succeeded swiftly; and as token of The Shadow's might, a few stray gangsters lay flattened on the turf.

Tyler Bogart's home was emptied of all living beings save one: The Shadow. Stalking ghostlike through the darkness, the master battler returned to the strongroom where Tyler Bogart had met his unfortunate death.

Once again, The Shadow's flashlight flickered. Then came a long, weird peal of mocking laughter. In this deserted spot, The Shadow stood alone. He had banished hordes of crime, although murder had been accomplished.

Triumph, itself, was hollow; yet The Shadow's thoughts were of the future, rather than the present. Already, his keen brain was working out new plans.

The first crime – the death of Perry Trappe – had struck without The Shadow's knowledge. The second – this murder of Tyler Bogart – had been accomplished despite his presence, although The Shadow had taken fearful toll in vengeance.

More crime, however, was due. A third stroke was in the making. When it arrived, The Shadow would be there, prepared to accomplish by subtle craft more than could be gained by might alone!

CHAPTER X. CRIME AND COUNTERCRIME

CECIL ARMSBURY was sitting in his living room. The old man who had sponsored crime was puffing at a cigar while he watched his nephew studying newspaper reports. A frown appeared on the brow of Martin Havelock, alias Duke Larrin.

"What's the trouble?" questioned Armsbury.

"This mix-up at Bogart's," returned Havelock. "I don't like the way it turned out."

"I have read the newspapers," commented Armsbury. "I see nothing to cause alarm. Tyler Bogart's safe was opened and rifled. Bogart, himself, was slain."

"But some of Brodan's men were bumped off, too."

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"What of it? That means less to pay. Brodan got away; and so did your other two workers – Keefel and Mannick. They were important enough to have been recognized by the police had either of them remained. We know that the false panel was stolen. That is sufficient."

"I guess so." Havelock's tone was thoughtful. "But I'm glad I've played a wary game. Brodie – Fingers – Croaker – all three are on their own. They don't have to hear from me to go through with the next job."

"Good strategy," agreed Armsbury. "Your qualms, Martin, are hardly justified. Perry Trappe and Tyler Bogart each knew too much; but what they knew has perished with them. The statue of Vishnu, the panel from the Forbidden City – both have been destroyed. The police know nothing."

Havelock nodded in agreement.

"Brisbane Calbot," laughed Armsbury, "is the next. He has the sacred scroll from the Kaaba in Mecca. It will be stolen. He will perish – like Trappe and Bogart."

"I guess you're right," decided Havelock. "Fingers and Croaker know their way. They each have a hide-out; they won't meet again until they show up at Calbot's."

"As for Brodie – he's a good hand with the alibi business. He knows enough to throw the police off the track. It's working perfectly and I'm completely out of it. Duke Larrin in New York! They probably know it down at headquarters by this time; but they haven't got a single thing on what Duke Larrin's doing."

The young man arose and walked to the fireplace. He pressed the switch that produced the special elevator. He turned to his uncle.

"Seven o'clock," announced Havelock. "I'm going down to the crypt. If any one of the outfit suspects trouble, he'll be around to signal me."

Cecil Armsbury nodded. He knew the emergency arrangements that Martin Havelock had made. No news would mean good news. The old man chuckled as the fireplace closed over the descending elevator. He puffed serenely at his cigar for the next few minutes. A clicking sound announced Havelock's return.

"All well," declared Havelock, as he stepped from the elevator. "No visitors. That means each of my men is sure of himself. The job will go through at Calbot's tonight. The only one I was really worried about was Brodie Brodan. Those folks at Bogart's picked off a few of his gorillas. But Brodie is too clever to let that bother him."

MARTIN HAVELOCK'S remark indicated his assurance. He had picked Brodie Brodan as his mob-leading henchman because he felt sure that Brodie could cover up no matter what might occur. The proof that Havelock's certainty was justified was occurring at that very time in a room at the Hotel Spartan.

Brodie Brodan, reclining in a dressing gown, was talking with Detective Joe Cardona. The ace detective was paying a second visit to the mob leader whom he had originally suspected of complicity in the affray at Perry Trappe's.

"Still worrying about me, eh?" Brodie was questioning. "Say, Joe, you must have me heavy on your mind. Where do you get these cuckoo ideas, anyway?"

"There were two gorillas out at Bogart's," returned Cardona, "who were guys that used to work for you, Brodie. I recognized their mugs when I went out to look at the bodies. What were they doing out there?"

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"Working for someone else," responded Brodie, promptly. "Listen, Joe – I'm not going into details about my past. But you know me well enough to know that whenever I do anything, I do it myself."

"With a mob at your heels."

"I've got no mob. But even if I did have, I'd be with the boys, wouldn't I?"

"Yeah."

"That settles it then. I wasn't out on Long Island when Bogart was killed."

Cardona eyed the heavy-browed mob leader in narrow fashion. After a short survey, the detective shrugged his shoulders.

"Guess you're right, Brodie," he admitted. "I haven't been able, though, to pick anyone else that might have been in on the deal. That's why I came to question you. Say – where were you that night?"

"At the Club Madrid," returned Brodie. "In the office with Lobo Ruscott. Why don't you slide up there and talk to Lobo? He'll tell you the same."

"I've seen Lobo," growled Cardona, as he rose and turned toward the door. "Your alibi holds, Brodie."

With this final remark, the detective strolled from the room. Brodie Brodan remained in his chair. His poker face remained the same for a full five minutes. Then his heavy brows furrowed. Reaching from his chair, Brodie picked up a telephone and called a number.

"That you, Bozo?... Yeah. This is Brodie... Ankle up here... Yeah, right away and stop off at the Black Ship on your way... Pick up Marsland if he's around there. Yeah, that's his usual hangout... Listen, Bozo – keep an eye out for Joe Cardona, if he's around this hotel, stay out. Call me instead. Savvy?"

The gang leader placed the telephone aside. He leaned back in his chair and drowsed.

TWENTY minutes passed. Then came a rap at the door. Brodie awoke with a growl. The door opened and two men came in; one was Bozo Griffin; the other, Cliff Marsland. Brodie motioned his visitors to chairs.

"Listen," declared the gang leader. "Joe Cardona was just up here. It's the second time he's been around. He's trying to find something – but he hasn't been able to crimp my alibis.

"We've got a job tonight – as you fellows know. I was going to take you along and let you find out about it on the way. But I'm changing that plan on account of Cardona. I'm going to let the pair of you handle the work yourself. Get me?"

Both Bozo and Cliff nodded their understanding.

"That'll let me hang out at the Club Madrid," continued Brodie. "Like as not Cardona'll be up there – or have some stools mooching around the joint. When tonight's over, Cardona won't suspect Brodie Brodan. That's all."

A satisfied smile appeared on Brodie's face. The gang leader stared approvingly at his companions; seeing that they were anxious to learn their duties, he gave them the needed information.

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"Here's the lay," explained Brodie. "There's a guy named Brisbane Calbot who lives in an old house uptown. Worth a lot of cash, but he hangs out alone with an old goofy servant – a geezer that has been with him for years.

"The servant don't amount to much anyway; but to make it all the softer, he was taken sick a couple of months ago and Calbot sent him to a sanitarium. Being a crabby guy himself, Calbot hasn't taken on anyone else. He lives in the house all alone and he has a room down in his basement where he spends most of his time mulling over a lot of junk that he's collected. He's got a big vault down there, too."

"We're goin' in?" questioned Bozo.

"Wait a minute," ordered Brodie. "You're doing just what I tell you, Bozo. You and Cliff are to be with the mob, outside of Calbot's place. You'll hear a shot from inside. That'll mean the end of Calbot. Wait a couple of minutes, see? Then gang the joint. Shoot up the windows; pile in through the doors – they'll be open – and make a big noise. Then scam, in a hurry, before any flat feet show up. Got it?"

Bozo nodded, a trifle perplexed. Cliff grinned, to show that he understood. Brodie could see which was the more intelligent of his two lieutenants.

"It's a cover-up," growled Brodie. "Like we've done before, Bozo. We lost some gorillas out on Long Island; we don't want to drop any more on this job. That shot from inside tells you that it's all set to do some shooting. But wait a couple of minutes –"

"So the man who fires the shot can get away," interposed Cliff.

"That's it," announced Brodie. "Say, Cliff, you've got a noodle, even if Bozo hasn't. Wake up, Bozo! I've given you credit for being more than just a dumb egg."

Bozo scowled. He glanced angrily at Cliff, as though blaming his companion for the criticism which had come from Brodie Brodan. Cliff returned the scowl with a steady gaze. He felt that Brodie's innuendo regarding Bozo was quite correct.

Bozo, tough, stocky, and with a hard-boiled face, looked like an ordinary gorilla. He had gained his lieutenancy purely through survival in the service of Brodie Brodan. He was a relic of the gang leader's past.

Brodie saw Bozo's malicious glare. He ended it with another growl that caused Bozo to ease back in his chair and give a sheepish grin.

"No sorehead stuff," warned Brodie. "You and Cliff are working together. Figure it between you where you'll pick up the mob. Ten o'clock's the time. Beat it – and dope out your game outside. Look Brisbane Calbot up in the phone book. He's listed. That'll tell you where he lives. I'm going up to the Club Madrid. Stay away from there. Call me here tomorrow."

Brodie waved his hand toward the door. Cliff and Bozo arose and made their exit. Brodie's face, usually immobile, showed changing expressions after the pair had gone. Brodie was comparing his new lieutenant, Cliff Marsland, with the old, Bozo Griffin. The comparison was in Cliff's favor.

Rising from his chair, Brodie Brodan went to a closet and brought out a tuxedo. The gang leader was preparing for a gala night at the Club Madrid. His plans of crime had been completed. The clock on his bureau showed five minutes to eight.

HALF an hour later, at exactly eight twenty-five, a click resounded in a darkened room. Shimmering blue light glared upon a polished table. White hands stretched forth to obtain earphones from the wall where a tiny bulb was burning.

"Burbank speaking," came a voice over the wire.

"Report!" It was The Shadow's whisper that sounded weirdly in the sanctum.

"Report from Marsland."

The Shadow listened in the gloom. The clicking of Burbank's telephoned voice brought the word which the contact man had heard from Cliff. Every detail came in terse form.

"Instructions," spoke the voice of The Shadow. "Marsland to follow orders as given by Brodan."

"Instructions received," answered Burbank.

The earphones clattered to the wall. The bulb went out. The blue light clicked off. A creepy laugh rose to a shuddering crescendo. Silence came to the sanctum.

The Shadow had departed. He had learned the facts he wanted. He would find a way to deal with crime.

The Shadow knew.

CHAPTER XI. THE SHADOW'S PART

NINE o'clock. The home of Brisbane Calbot, an old-fashioned brick structure, showed gloomily in the semidarkness of a side street.

It was a building that no one would have suspected as a place where valuables could be found. In fact, that was one reason why Brisbane Calbot kept this old house. He did not want to be annoyed by intruders who might come to rob; and the fact that his place was so inconspicuous made it an ideal location.

A patch of blackness appeared beneath the light of a street lamp. It paused there, and its shape became that of a human silhouette. Shown in profile, the brim of a hat projected above a hawklike nose. That silhouette was the symbol of a living presence; yet no figure appeared in the darkness near the lamp.

The black patch moved. It blended with the darkness of the street. A slight swish was all that announced a motion in the gloom. A strange, invisible creature was moving toward Brisbane Calbot's old house. The Shadow had arrived before men of crime.

There was a cement passage beside the old house. That was the course which The Shadow took; yet no eyes – unless they had possessed the sharpness of The Shadow's own – could have spied the progress of this mystic visitant.

The dull whiteness of a side door was blotted by a grotesque blackness that covered it. The door was heavy; though its outer surface did not show it, the barrier was held from within by formidable fastenings.

Slight clicks occurred in the darkness. Slow minutes passed. At last the door yielded to The Shadow's skill. The barrier opened. The Shadow entered. The locks tightened again as an unseen hand threw them with

scarcely a telltale sound.

Traveling through a passage, The Shadow spied a single light in a side room. He stalked to the door. His tall form threw a long streak of blackness across the threshold. That darkened, flattened length became immovable. It was not noticed by a man who sat reading at a little table.

Brisbane Calbot was a middle-aged man whose appearance gave him the air of a recluse. He was totally engrossed in his reading; and the volume which he held showed that he was engaged in study. The walls of the room were lined with odd books in dusty bindings.

SATISFIED that Calbot was completely oblivious of what passed about him, The Shadow moved away from the open doorway. He moved through a passage. A tiny light, its circle of illumination no larger than a silver dollar, became the medium through which he found a low, locked door. This was obviously the entrance to the basement.

The Shadow's pick went to work. The lock yielded. The Shadow opened the door, pointed his flashlight down a flight of steps and descended, locking the door behind him.

The basement proved to be a formidably protected place. The iron gratings that covered the small windows were such that no one could have opened them without long trouble and considerable noise. A locked door drew The Shadow to it. He opened this barrier as he had the others. He stepped into Calbot's curio room.

Iron shutters guarded this place. The room was large and well-stocked with all sorts of oddities. The Shadow, knowing that his presence here could not possibly be detected, turned on a light. His spectral form made a grotesque figure in this unusual room.

Suits of armor, curious weapons of many descriptions, iron statues, urns and pedestals – these were the assortment of oddities through which The Shadow stepped. The room was in disarray; and it was obvious that the weight of the objects themselves made them inviolate to thieving hands.

It would have required a group of moving men with a van to carry away Calbot's collection. Stealth and subterfuge could not avail with this huge lot of curios.

The far wall, however, showed a door that fitted tightly. It was the barrier to a vault. The Shadow approached it and began to work. The vault was a formidable obstacle. The black glove came from The Shadow's left hand. The girasol glimmered while long, sensitive fingers tried the knobs.

One minute passed; two – three – The Shadow's skill was rewarded. The door of the vault came open. Glittering metal sent back flashes as The Shadow gazed. Within the large vault stood two guardian statues. One was as black as ebony; the other statue was as white as ivory.

Heavily bedecked with metal, these rare idols were safe without their vault. A whispered laugh told The Shadow's thought. Three men could not carry one of these heavy pagan gods. Yet Brisbane Calbot had placed them in the vault, probably because of their tremendous value.

On the floor between the idols – set as though it belonged to the statues and was in their care – a glittering object rested upon a low pedestal. It was a golden scroll, inscribed with curious characters in Arabic. Each line was illuminated with sparkling gems.

Stooping, The Shadow formed a shroud which blocked off the light that shone upon this treasure. His tiny flashlight glimmered. It showed the uppermost line of the scroll. It moved along from word to word while

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keen eyes followed.

The Shadow was reading the Arabic inscription as easily as if it had been English. He was deciphering it word by word, perusing its mystic message. The flashlight's glimmer continued until it had reached the final statement of the inscription.

FROM hidden lips came a whispered laugh that sounded like hollow mockery within the opened vault. The legend purported that this was the sacred scroll from the Kaaba in Mecca, that cube-shaped building that stands within the holy place called the Haram, and which houses the Black Stone venerated by all Mohammedans.

A sacred scroll from the Kaaba! That was the reason for The Shadow's sardonic mirth. The theft of such a scroll would be as difficult as the purloining of the Black Stone itself. Had this scroll ever rested within the Kaaba, its disappearance would have stirred tumult through all Islam!

The Shadow knew that Brisbane Calbot's treasure was a fake. Someone had duped the old collector. This was not all that The Shadow divined. He knew also that this spurious scroll could be the only object which men of crime might be seeking at Brisbane Calbot's.

Crooks were coming to take false treasure. Paste jewels on plated gold; that was all that they could gain. Yet this, to The Shadow, was more important than the discovery of an object of real value.

His keen mind was tracing backward. Criminals intended to take a false treasure from a man who had been swindled when he obtained it. How had the crooks learned of this hidden scroll? Who had foisted it upon Brisbane Calbot?

The Shadow was connecting the approaching robbery with the two that had gone before. The police had advanced the theory that the robbery at Trappe's and the invasion at Bogart's had resulted in the theft of unknown wealth on each occasion. The Shadow, himself, had glimpsed a golden panel in the arms of Fingers Keefel, when the crook had escaped from Tyler Bogart's.

That was all The Shadow needed. He knew the truth. The crooks were at work to reclaim fake curios; to cover up the traces of some swindler who had operated in the past. Fingers Keefel would be here tonight. The Shadow could frustrate him. But would the saving of this valueless scroll be an accomplishment of import?

Again, The Shadow laughed. His tall form rose. It stood like a gigantic shroud. The black glove slid over the left hand. The girasol was hidden. The Shadow closed the door of Brisbane Calbot's vault.

Stalking through the curio room, The Shadow traversed the way that he had come. He locked the door behind him. He ascended the stairs, unlocked the door at the top and relocked it from the passage. He moved beyond the open doorway of the room where Brisbane Calbot was poring over an antique volume. The Shadow merged with darkness.

Minutes passed. The hour of ten was approaching. The Shadow, however, expected action before that hour. As he waited in the silence of a darkened room, he knew that crime would soon be under way.

The faint whisper of a laugh sounded in suppressed tones. Strange crime would come to a head tonight; and The Shadow was ready to play a part that he had chosen!

CHAPTER XII. THE STOLEN SCROLL

A CLOCK chimed in a room of Brisbane Calbot's home. It marked the third quarter. Fifteen minutes before ten. Hardly had the chiming ended before a bell tinkled to announce a visitor.

Brisbane Calbot heard the bell. The recluse arose from his reading and reluctantly placed his book aside. He walked slowly through the darkened hallway until he reached the front, where he pressed a light switch. He pushed back the bolt of the front door; then turned the lock. He peered cautiously through the crack as he opened the door.

A man was standing on the door step. He turned as Calbot's white face appeared. Brisbane saw a smile flash in the darkness. He put a query.

"You are Mr. Basib?"

"Yes," came the reply. "Darwin Basib, the curio dealer who made the appointment for tonight."

"Come in."

Fingers Keefel stepped into the light. Brisbane Calbot moved beyond him and closed the large front door. With shrewd gaze, Fingers watched the man's action. A gloating smile appeared upon the lips of the visitor.

A pressed bolt – the turning of a lock below. These were easy to counteract from within the house. As Calbot moved back from the door, Fingers, still standing in the vestibule, removed his hat and coat. He spied a rack just inside the inner door; but he did not move in that direction.

Instead, he spoke to Calbot as he showed his host the hat and coat.

"Can I hang these somewhere?" he questioned. "Is there a rack –"

He looked about the vestibule as he spoke. Calbot took the hat and coat.

"Right this way, Mr. Basib," he said.

"The rack is inside – in the hallway. Here –"

In indication, Calbot moved into the hall. Raising hat and coat, he hung them on the rack. Fingers Keefel foresaw the action. Standing by the outer door, he turned and with deft movement drew the bolt while his other hand twisted the key of the lock. Then, with a quick step, he turned toward the hall. He was at the inner door as Calbot turned.

"This way, Mr. Basib," said the collector, not suspecting for an instant that his visitor had released the fastenings of the front door. "I like to talk with curio dealers. Collecting is my hobby –"

Fingers Keefel was experiencing uneasiness. Despite the ease of the trickery which he had used at the front door, he had a suspicion that eyes were watching him. Fingers had opened the way for Croaker Mannick. Could Brisbane Calbot have seen him do it?

AS they entered Calbot's reading room, Fingers decided that he must have been mistaken. Calbot's face was friendly and showed no sign of distrust. The collector offered his visitor a cigar. Fingers sat down and smiled.

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"You told me" – Calbot's tone denoted anticipation – "that you had something most unusual to tell me about curios. I assumed that you might be desirous of selling me some for my collection; but you informed me that such was not the case –"

"You heard me right," interposed Fingers. "I don't sell curios, Mr. Calbot. I buy them."

"But I am not interested in selling any of my curios –"

"You might be," interrupted the false dealer, "when you have heard my terms. There is a particular type of curio that I buy, Mr. Calbot."

"Ah!"

"A type of curio that no one wants."

"That no one wants?"

"Yes." Fingers smiled. "I buy fake curios, Mr. Calbot."

The collector seemed puzzled. Fingers grinned as he went on with his explanation.

"Lots of collectors," he said, "get stuck with phony curios. They usually buy them cheap – that's why they get stung. So I give them their money for them and pass the fake curios on to other people."

An indignant exclamation came from Brisbane Calbot's lips.

"This is outrageous, Mr. Basib!" asserted the collector. "A dishonest practice!"

"Just a way out," returned Fingers. "I find that most curio collectors are glad to find it – if they learn that they own fakes."

"I should never take such a step," protested Calbot. "If ever I have been swindled, the loss is my own. I trust people, Mr. Basib. I believe in honesty."

"So do I." Fingers suddenly changed tactics. "It's not my fault that I had to take up this game. The collectors are the ones to blame. I used to be an expert at detecting forged curios. What did I get for it?"

"Nothing. People called me in to examine articles they thought had value. I told them when I found fakes. That upset them because they saw financial loss. They didn't like to pay me the fee that I required. They all had one question – just one question, Mr. Calbot."

"What was that?"

"If I could help them to get rid of their fakes, passing the junk off as genuine."

"And you complied?"

"I had to do it." Fingers took on a mournful look. "It was the only way, Mr. Calbot. Think of it – me – the man who can spot a fake quicker than anybody else in the country – forced to go into a racket."

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"I am sorry," stated Calbot, sympathetically. "Very sorry, Mr. Basib. I appreciate the fact that you feel remorse. I should like to aid you in a return to honesty. Perhaps" – the collector was nodding thoughtfully – "you would be willing to give an impartial study to my collection of curios. I should value your expert opinion. I can assure you, also, that I shall be willing to pay you a generous fee.

"But I shall not dispose of any spurious items in my collection. Instead, I shall spare no effort to trace the men who swindled me – should you discover that some of my curios are not genuine."

"I'd like to see your collection," asserted Fingers, in an eager tone. "I'd like to get a first look at it so that I could list all doubtful articles. Then I could return to give a more exact inspection."

"Very well, Mr. Basib. Come this way."

BRISBANE CALBOT arose and conducted his visitor toward the door that led to the stairs below. Fingers Keefel, as he followed, gave a warning cough, as he threw a glance toward the front of the house. He heard a slight creaking sound just beyond a turn in the hall. He grinned, knowing that it must be Croaker Mannick.

Brisbane Calbot opened the door and turned on a light at the top of the stairs. With Fingers Keefel at his heels, he led the way to the cellar and unlocked the door of the curio room. The two men stepped into the room. Calbot turned on the light and waved his hand.

"Here it is," he said.

"A wonderful collection!" exclaimed Fingers. "Wonderful. Many interesting items."

He strolled about the room, noting one object after another and finally stopped to face Calbot.

"I suppose," said Fingers, in an indifferent tone, "that you have other items which you consider to be of more value than these?"

"Yes," admitted Calbot. "But –"

"Where are they?"

"I keep them in a special place."

"In that vault?"

Calbot looked nervously at Fingers; then his eyes went toward the vault. Fingers, near the door of the curio room, gave a noiseless snap to his fingers – a sign which could be seen by anyone in the cellar. Then, stepping past Calbot, he approached the door of the vault. He placed his hand upon a knob.

"That vault stays locked!" exclaimed Calbot, excitedly. "I do not care to open it, Mr. Basib."

"What is the combination?" quizzed Fingers.

"What – what!" blurted Calbot. "You dare to seek to open it? Leave my house at once. At once, I say!"

"After you," smirked Fingers, waving his hand toward the door.

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Brisbane Calbot turned in bewilderment. A gasp came from his lips as he sighted the reason for his visitor's grin.

Standing in the doorway was a tall, square-jawed man who gripped a .38. The revolver was covering Brisbane Calbot. The collector's arms came up; he backed away.

"Good work, Croaker," laughed Fingers, as he recognized the tough, though pasty, face of the killer whom he had summoned. "Keep this bimbo covered while I open the box."

With cool indifference, Fingers turned and began his work upon the knob. He laughed sourly as he proceeded, talking to Brisbane Calbot as he went along.

"It would be easier," he remarked, "if you gave me the combination. What's that? No answer? How would a bullet from my friend's gun suit you?"

Brisbane Calbot remained silent. Fingers Keefel muttered, another laugh.

"You'd rather die, I'll bet," he declared. "Well, maybe you will – maybe you will. And if you're dead, you can't tell us. We don't like to stay around long after a guy takes the bump. So we'll let you keep your funny mug shut. Keep watching, old-timer, and see how a safe-cracker works."

BRISBANE CALBOT stared. His lips were pursed. As Fingers Keefel had suggested, the outraged collector was ready to face death without speaking. He had a sort of nervous confidence in the door of his safe. As Fingers growled at missed combinations, Calbot felt hysterical elation.

Fingers began to talk. It was his way of working. His growled remarks reached the door of the curio room and brought a smile to the ugly lips of Croaker Mannick.

"The last job," was the comment that Fingers made. "I fixed it for you and you walked in, Croaker. This is a better lay for you than the one out on Long Island. Say – I helped you out when I yanked off that light, didn't I?"

"You're cool with the gun, Croaker. The way you beat old Fatty Bogart to the shot was neat. You had to scam plenty fast. Brodie's mob ran into trouble that you got out of. Didn't they?"

"Yeah." Croaker's growled affirmative indicated an unpleasant recollection.

"Don't get nervous, Croaker," laughed Fingers. "Say – if I could handle a gat like you can, nothing would make me nervous – not even The Shadow."

"Yeah?" Croaker's voice showed actual nervousness. "Well, when I scammed, there was some guy firing in the dark – and I didn't like it."

Fingers poised his hand. His smile faded. A grim look appeared upon his face. He half-turned his head to look toward Croaker. The gleaming .38 was trained steadily upon Brisbane Calbot; but Fingers fancied that he saw a nervous expression on Croaker's face.

"This is the last job, Croaker," assured Fingers. "I don't blame you for wanting to get it over with – if you've got a hunch that The Shadow might mix in. Well – we'll scam when we're through – and there's nothing more to worry about."

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"Not even The Shadow can get wise to the next stunt that Duke Larrin's going to pull. He'll get what he's after – and it won't be phony junk – so he said. We're not in it – and neither is Brodie. Even The Shadow won't have a chance to get to that crypt of Duke Larrin's."

With these words, Fingers bent back to the vault. His hands resumed their task. The nervousness which Fingers had gained after his survey of Croaker's face seemed to spur him rather than deter him.

Something clicked. The door of the vault moved open. It had taken Fingers twenty-five minutes; he thought that he had done a creditable job. He did not know that The Shadow had been here before him, to do the work in exactly three minutes!

Fingers Keefel spied the golden scroll. He gloated. He pulled the object from between the two statues that guarded it and gripped the scroll beneath his arm, leaving the pedestal on the floor of the vault.

As Fingers headed for the door of the curio room, he saw Croaker Mannick moving inward. The killer shoved the muzzle of his revolver close to Brisbane Calbot's body. Fingers, at the door, peered nervously about. He remembered the sensation of some strange presence in the house. He wanted to be sure that no intruder was around.

"Better give him the bump," urged Fingers, nudging his free thumb toward Brisbane Calbot. "Wait until I'm up the stairs though. You'll have to hurry to get out before the mob piles in. I'll open the side door, Croaker. That'll leave two ways."

"Yeah?" Croaker growled. "How's the mob going to hear it if I fire down here?"

"Give them another signal upstairs."

"And suppose they might happen to hear the first one? Listen, Fingers – I'm coming right after you – get that? I'm not sticking down here in this trap. Say – could anybody ever open that vault in shorter time than it took you?"

"There's not another guy could do it in less than an hour."

"Well, that settles it. This mug is going in his own vault. He won't last a half an hour."

Croaker's gun jabbed against Calbot's ribs. The curio collector backed away. Fingers Keefel grinned fiendishly as he watched from the cellar. He saw Croaker back Calbot into the vault while the curio collector gasped his protests.

"My scroll!" blurted Calbot. "You thieves! Stealing – my greatest treasure. You – you murderers!"

The last word came in a hoarse scream as the collector tumbled backward into the vault. As Calbot sprawled upon the pedestal which had held the golden scroll, the vault door swung shut. Fingers saw Croaker twirl the knob. Without another word, the safe-cracker started for the stairs, leaving his companion to follow.

Fingers reached the side door and opened it. He left the barrier ajar. With the fake scroll of pretended gold, Fingers slipped out into the darkness of the alleyway. He headed toward the back; he quickened his pace as he heard the blast of Croaker's .38 from within the side door of the house.

Croaker, like Fingers, was clear. Thief and murderer were scurrying away to safety – each to his own hide-out. The third job had been accomplished.

Gloating, Fingers Keefel chuckled over the thought of Brisbane Calbot, interred alive in his own vault. The last of three whom Duke Larrin had marked for death was buried in a spot where doom was certain!

CHAPTER XIII. THE SHADOW ACTS

THE pause that followed the shot from Croaker's revolver was an ominous one. To mobsmen, waiting in cars in front of Brisbane Calbot's home, the report was a familiar signal. They had heard the sound of that gun at Perry Trappe's. They had heard it again on Long Island, when they had invaded the home of Tyler Bogart.

Bozo Griffin, assuming full command for himself despite the fact that he and Cliff Marsland were of equal ranking, emitted a growl as he heard the signal. He remembered Brodie Brodan's admonition to allow time for the man who fired the revolver to make a get-away.

The single shot, though unexpected in this quiet neighborhood, had no aftermath until Bozo decided to give the next command. In a louder growl, Brodie Brodan's lieutenant ordered his gorillas to start their wild raid.

"Let 'em go!"

Mobsters piled from automobiles. Dashing across the street, they opened fire on the windows of Calbot's home. Three men rushed up the front steps and threw open the big door. Others made for the alley, to seek the side entrance. Bozo Griffin, with Cliff Marsland beside him, was standing near the leading car across the street.

Shots from the front of the house. Then came a scream from the first mobster who had entered. The man came tumbling from the vestibule. A gorilla beside him leveled his revolver and fired. An answering boom came from within. The second mobster staggered and plunged, headlong down the steps. The third man scrambled for safety.

There were shots in the alleyway. The gangsters who had taken the cement passage were at the side door. In response to the wild barks of their revolvers came a new fusillade. Someone within the house had stopped the raiders at the front and had turned to meet those who were entering at the side!

One mobster had sprawled upon the cement. Another was staggering, crying to his pals to aid him. The rest, remembering the ambush at Bogart's, took to flight. As they scattered for the waiting automobiles, new shots came from bullet-broken windows.

Mobsmen were starting the automobiles. Bozo Griffin had dived into the front car. Cliff Marsland was following him. With demoralized gorillas clambering aboard, the cars shot from the curb. Brodie Brodan's mobsters had met another set-back.

CLIFF MARSLAND knew the answer. The Shadow had acted from within the beleaguered house. Stationed there, he had met the first invaders; then had turned his fire to the second horde. Mobsters had met their just deserts.

The quick exchange of shots had roused the neighborhood. People were shouting from windows. In this quiet, unfrequented district, minutes would elapse before police responded.

Within Calbot's now silent house, The Shadow was moving with quick precision. Almost before the echoes of his fire had died, the tall avenger in black had reached the steps to the cellar. With swift, sweeping stride, The Shadow gained the curio room.

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Gloved fingers worked upon the knobs of Brisbane Calbot's vault. The Shadow had unbarred the barrier in a few minutes on his previous attempt. This time, his task was a matter of seconds. The door of the vault swung open.

Brisbane Calbot was slumped between the two idols. The black statue and the white looked like huge slaves protecting their master. The light from the curio room shone upon Calbot's face. With frightened gasp, the recluse looked up.

Before him stood a being clad in black. The sinister visitant seemed like a spectral figure sent to the vault which had been marked as Calbot's tomb. Burning eyes were commanding, as a black-gloved hand stretched forth and beckoned.

Wondering, Brisbane Calbot rose. He was like a man in a trance. Strong hands caught his shoulders and swung him from the vault. The door clanged shut. The light went out. With a powerful arm swinging him forward, Brisbane Calbot found himself following the sharp glare of a narrow-beamed flashlight as it cut a swath toward the bottom of the steps that led upstairs.

The Shadow swept the recluse onward. Together, they crossed the floor above and reached the side entrance. Calbot, wondering where he was being taken, could do nothing but obey. This strange visitant had brought him from a vault of death. He felt that he had gained a needed protector.

Shouts were coming from the front street when The Shadow and his charge issued into the cement passage. Brisbane Calbot stumbled over the body of a dead gangster. The Shadow caught the recluse and helped him onward. Through the rear of the passage; down a tiny alleyway; then across a side street. The pair was just ahead of the police who were arriving.

Calbot slumped upon the cushions of a coupe. The car shot forward as an invisible driver took the wheel. Turning a corner, it sped into darkness. The Shadow, like those who had gone ahead, was leaving this vicinity.

The coupe stopped after a trip of one mile. Calbot, still nervous, felt himself being aided from the car. He blinked. He was on a side street, with a bright avenue ahead. He felt a strong arm aiding him through the dark; then he tumbled into the rear seat of a sumptuous limousine.

"Newark, Stanley," came a quiet voice at Calbot's side.

THE chauffeur started the limousine. Calbot tried to make out the form of the man beside him. He could see nothing in the black corner of the limousine. Then came the quiet voice, again bringing reassurance.

"You are fortunate, Mr. Calbot," were the words. "The death which you expected has been stayed."

"Thanks to you," blurted Calbot. "I thought that I was doomed. I can never fully thank you –"

"I do not ask your thanks. I wish you to obey. Hear my orders."

Calbot nodded in the darkness. The voice, though quiet, was commanding.

"Men of crime have sought your death." The Shadow's tone was ominous. "In order that they be foiled, they must believe that they succeeded. You are leaving New York."

"Gladly," expressed Calbot, in a relieved tone. "But – but they did more than try to murder me. They stole –"

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"The golden scroll from the Kaaba. I shall speak of it later. In the meantime, remember that you must stay away and communicate with no one. You are taking a train at Newark, tonight. Travel to the destination named upon the ticket that you receive."

Again Calbot nodded. This stranger in the dark seemed to know everything. The recluse, however, was due for a more startling surprise.

"Your golden scroll," declared The Shadow, "was a fraudulent treasure. The theft of it relieves you of a valueless object."

"My scroll!" Calbot's exclamation was a sharp cry. "Fraudulent. You mean that I – that I was swindled –"

"Yes. That is why I seek the name of the man from whom you received it."

"Cecil Armsbury," declared Calbot, slowly. "I cannot believe that he would have played me false. His reputation is too great. Armsbury has traveled everywhere. His collection of Egyptian antiquities was purchased by the Egyptian Museum. I – I cannot believe it of Armsbury. He – he must have been duped also."

"Cecil Armsbury."

The name came in a whisper from The Shadow's hidden lips. The limousine rode on, heading for the Holland Tunnel.

"A man of reputation," added Brisbane Calbot. "A great traveler and explorer. A fine career behind him. Armsbury! I cannot believe that he is to blame."

There was a long pause. Brisbane Calbot, staring ahead, was trying to find an answer to this new perplexity. In one short evening, he had experienced more surprises than he had previously gained during his entire lifetime.

THE limousine came to a stop. It had turned into a side street to gain a parallel avenue. Brisbane Calbot was leaning forward. Keen eyes from the dark were studying his pale profile. Something moved in the darkness at Calbot's side. A gloved hand grasped the knob of the door. Silently, the door opened and closed. While Calbot still stared, the limousine moved on.

"Armsbury!" Calbot still repeated the name. "The golden scroll from the Kaaba – a fake! I have been defrauded. Men have sought to murder me!"

The collector mumbled incoherent words. The limousine reached the Holland Tunnel as he still was speaking. It rolled swiftly through the tube and reached the Jersey side.

Lights from the high-speed highway. Brisbane Calbot turned, with sudden realization that he could see the man beside him. To his amazement, he saw that the limousine was empty of passengers other than himself.

Calbot could offer no explanation. He could not remember a possible occasion upon which his mysterious rescuer could have left the car. He was still bewildered when the limousine pulled up at the Market Street station in Newark.

The chauffeur alighted and opened the rear door. He handed an envelope to Calbot. The curio collector opened it in dumfounded surprise. He found a railway ticket, with Pullman berth to Washington.

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"Your train leaves in ten minutes, sir," the chauffeur of the limousine informed him.

The chauffeur went back to the car. The limousine rolled away while Brisbane Calbot was still examining the ticket. Slowly, the recluse entered the station and ascended the steps to the train platform. He knew that his only course was to follow his rescuer's orders.

Calbot could still recall that weird form in black; the burning eyes of his rescuer; the quiet voice that had spoken in the limousine. As the headlight of an electric locomotive blazed down the track, Calbot realized that some strange brain had been at work in his behalf.

This ticket had been ready for him while he was still within the vault of his curio room. That meant that his rescuer had anticipated the visit of the men who had stolen the golden scroll and had placed him in the vault!

For a moment, Calbot experienced perplexing doubts. Then, as he stepped aboard the sleeper, he realized that one to whom he owed his life must certainly be working entirely in his aid. Brisbane Calbot noted a card in the envelope which contained the ticket. It bore the name of a Washington hotel. That would be Calbot's residence until he received word to return to New York.

BACK at Calbot's house, the side door was open. A patrolman in the passage at the side was staring toward the street. He turned as two men came from the house. One was Inspector Timothy Klein; the other Detective Joe Cardona.

"You were the first man to enter here?" Klein, the gray-haired inspector, put the question to the patrolman.

"Yes, sir," returned the officer. "Came in through one of the busted windows at the front. Found the front door bolted; the side door was closed with a spring lock."

"Looks like the trouble was all outside," remarked Cardona. "That junk room hadn't been touched, inspector."

"It would take more than a bunch of gangsters to lift any of that stuff," agreed the inspector. "That note we found in the reading room settles it anyway."

"Yeah. This fellow Calbot who owns the house left the note for his servant, Hildebrand. I called up the sanitarium where the servant is staying. They told me he's due back in a week – and that he has keys to this place."

Klein nodded. He had read the note mentioned by Cardona. It announced to Hildebrand that Calbot was going away for a trip. It instructed the servant to put the place in order and to remain until his master returned. No mention had been given of Calbot's destination.

"Just a gang fight," decided Cardona, "but they picked a funny place to stage it. I figured for a while that they must have been trying to bust in here. Maybe they were at that; but they didn't make it. Anyway, there's one guy that's out of it."

"Who?"

"Brodie Brodan. I thought that guy was mixed up in the murder of Trappe – and Bogart. But I had my eye on him tonight. I was watching him down at the Club Madrid when I got the call to come up here."

The two men strolled along the alley. The patrolman closed the side door to Calbot's home. The automatic latch sprang shut. The policeman followed the inspector and the detective.

Something clicked in the darkness. The side door opened. A swish sounded as a moving form made its way through the dark house to Calbot's reading room. A tiny flashlight glimmered on the table. It revealed the note which Cardona had read and replaced.

The Shadow had returned to make sure that his plans had succeeded. He had left that note; he plucked it from the table, now that its purpose had been served.

The Shadow had played a triple game tonight.

He had saved Brisbane Calbot from death in the vault and had sent the collector out of town where he was to remain. He had tricked the police into thinking that nothing had occurred within this house. Most important, however, The Shadow had duped the enemy.

So far as Duke Larrin and his minions were concerned, Brisbane Calbot had perished. They would believe that the curio collector's body was still in the vault. Yet Brisbane Calbot still lived; and tonight, The Shadow had gained knowledge of the game which the crooks were playing.

The spurious scroll from the Kaaba. Its former owner a man named Cecil Armsbury! These were facts which The Shadow had learned. Through them, he would trace crime to its source!

The whispered laugh of The Shadow echoed through the hollow stillness of Brisbane Calbot's reading room. The tiny light vanished. The Shadow had departed.

CHAPTER XIV. CROOKS SUSPECT

ONCE again, Cecil Armsbury and his nephew, Martin Havelock, were seated in the living room of Armsbury's home. Calhoun, the solemn-faced servant, had just gone out to the hall, closing the door behind him. The departure of the servitor was followed by a growl from Martin Havelock.

"I don't like it!" expressed the man who called himself Duke Larrin. "I thought that Brodie Brodan was smarter than he is. Getting his mobsmen picked off is something I hadn't counted on."

"Less men for him to pay," reiterated Armsbury, in a satisfied tone.

"All right from that standpoint," admitted Havelock. "But I can't see what caused the trouble. Nothing has gone sour – otherwise Fingers or Croaker – even Brodan – would have shown up at the crypt. They polished off Brisbane Calbot, sure enough, and stowed his body somewhere. But what caused all the shooting?"

"Easily answered," returned Armsbury. "The shot that Croaker Mannick fired as a signal must have brought in someone other than Brodie's men."

"Who, for instance?"

"The Shadow."

Cecil Armsbury uttered the name in matter-of-fact fashion. His nephew stared in unfeigned alarm. A cackling laugh came from old Armsbury.

"The Shadow," repeated Armsbury. "You, Martin, have yourself expected him to appear. He is a supersleuth; and it is not at all unlikely that he has trailed some of Brodan's mobsmen. Brodan's system was a delayed

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attack. The Shadow, lurking somewhere in the dark, must have come to meet it."

"He didn't stop Fingers or Croaker," declared Havelock. "They made a getaway all right. Those fellows whose bodies were found by the police were just second-rate gangsters."

"Precisely," stated Armsbury. "That is The Shadow's forte, my dear nephew. He fights with men of the underworld. He kills them and he feels satisfied. But he has touched the surface only. He cannot have reached beneath. He will never reach far enough" – the old man's eyes were gleaming with cunning – "to learn the secret of our crime crypt."

"You're right about that," decided Havelock. "The Shadow is a keen worker, but all indications show that he hasn't gone far. I'm glad, though, that this was the last job for Fingers Keefel and Croaker Mannick. They can lay low until they're due at the crypt."

"On the fifteenth," chuckled Armsbury.

"Yes, the fifteenth," repeated Havelock. "But there's one point of contact left. Brodie Brodan."

"A clever man, Martin, despite your criticism of his leadership."

"Sure Brodie's clever. That's why I picked him. But he's the only one that The Shadow might trail to the crypt. That's why I want to make sure about him."

"How?"

"I'm going to call Brodie. I'm going to tell him to be on the lookout. I took the right precautions from the start. He has a special crew all fixed to handle our final job."

"Which will bring us vast wealth," chuckled Armsbury, "as well as destroying the final shred of evidence that might be used to expose my past."

"There's only one answer," declared Havelock. "Somebody in Brodie's mob must be working with The Shadow. I'm going to put Brodie wise to what I think – and let him act accordingly."

"A wise thought," returned Armsbury, "but actually an unnecessary precaution. Brodie is through with his present minions. When he tells them that they are no longer needed, they will have no further trail to follow."

"Except Brodie himself. That's why I'm calling him. I can reach him at the Hotel Spartan, from a pay station a long way from here. There'll be no way of tracing my call."

With this decision, Havelock arose and sauntered from the room. Cecil Armsbury smiled indulgently. He did not share his nephew's apprehensions.

THE aftermath of Martin Havelock's precaution came at the Hotel Spartan. Brodie Brodan, seated in his room, was talking with Bozo Griffin. Coincidentally, the gang leader was discussing the very subject that Havelock had mentioned to Armsbury – the forestalled raid on Brisbane Calbot's home.

Brodie's voice was coming in a growl when it was interrupted by the ringing of the telephone. Brodie picked up the receiver. His eyebrows furrowed as he heard the voice of the man whom he knew as Duke Larrin.

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Duke's terms, though cautious, were to the point. Brodie answered them in short monosyllables. His words meant nothing to Bozo Griffin. When the call was complete, Brodie placed the telephone aside and stared at Bozo.

"I was talking to Marsland a short while ago," asserted Brodie. "That's why I called you up here, Bozo. Marsland can't account for the trouble up at Calbot's any more than you can. But he told me – without criticizing – that you were the one who told the mob what to do. Is that right?"

"Sure, I told 'em," retorted Bozo. "If I hadn't, Marsland would have. The thing looked like a set-up, Brodie. I can't see why Marsland squawked."

"He didn't squawk," returned Brodie. "He told me something which you have admitted. Seems to me you don't like Marsland, Bozo."

"I don't," growled the lieutenant.

"Good," grinned Brodie. "That's why I want you to pal with him."

"Me?"

"Yes, you. Stick along with the guy. Do as I tell you. I'm keeping the two of you to handle the mob if I need you later. You buzz me every night at the Club Madrid. When I've got work for you to do, I'll let you know."

There was a rap at the door. Brodie gave a summons to come in. Cliff Marsland entered. Brodie had told him to return.

"Hello, Marsland," greeted Brodie, in a cheery tone. "Was just talking about you. Bozo, here, was a bit sore because he thought you were passing the buck to him on that trouble up at Calbot's. I told Bozo to get over it."

"No reason for him to be sore," remarked Cliff, in a quiet tone. "He gave the order quicker than I expected, that was all. It might have been better to wait a few minutes longer."

"Then you'd have given the same order," growled Bozo. "It would have turned out the same way, wouldn't it?"

"Probably," admitted Cliff.

"That settles it," expressed Brodie Brodan. "Stick out your mitt, Bozo, and give Marsland the grip. You birds are pals. Get it?"

Bozo obeyed. Cliff shook hands in friendly manner. Brodie lowered his growl and spoke to the reconciled lieutenants.

"I'm laying low, boys," he declared. "I'm sticking at the Club Madrid – except when I'm here at this hotel. When I need something done, I'll let you know. That's why I want you to be pals. Get it?"

Nods from the lieutenants.

"Bozo can call me every night," resumed Brodie. "I'll tell him what's to be done. If it don't sound O.K. to you, Marsland, you can get me on the wire to make sure. But we're laying easy for a time – that's all."

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With a wave toward the door, Brodie dismissed his lieutenants; Cliff Marsland and Bozo Griffin went from the room. From now on, they would stick together, with the understanding that both would be ready when needed.

SEVERAL minutes passed. Brodie Brodan picked up the telephone. He called a number. A growling voice responded. Brodie recognized it. The man at the other end of the wire was one whom he had chosen to keep under cover – "Sinker" Hargun – a mobster who had his own squad of gorillas.

"This is Brodie," informed Brodan. "All set?"

"Yeah," came Sinker's growl.

"Let it ride then," returned Brodie. "You know the lay. Go through with the job. I'll see you after it."

Brodie hung up the receiver. He grinned as he prepared to leave for the Club Madrid. The warning that had come from Duke Larrin had aroused latent suspicions in Brodie's mind.

The Shadow! Duke Larrin had mentioned the name of that dangerous foeman. He had stated that an agent of The Shadow might be a spy in Brodie's camp. If such were the case, the guilt must lie between Bozo Griffin and Cliff Marsland. Of the two, Brodie picked Cliff as the logical one.

Hence the mob leader's insistence that Bozo and Cliff stick together. It had been Brodie's original idea to break up his mob after the Calbot job. His present plan was better. The Shadow – if Cliff were his informant – would be waiting for another move by Brodie's present mob. That move would never come. Brodie would lie idle at the Club Madrid. Sinker Hargun would do the dirty work.

Bozo and Cliff, however, were not out of Brodie's mind. The crafty gang leader had plans concerning them; and by keeping the two together, he saw a culmination that would strike home.

Brodie Brodan had played his cards craftily. Cliff Marsland, strolling through the badlands with Bozo Griffin, had gained no suspicion whatever. When the pair reached the notorious dive known as the Black Ship, they separated for the time. Cliff, with opportunity at his disposal, slipped into a room where a telephone was located and gave a call to Burbank.

SOME time afterward, the tiny bulb glowed on the wall of The Shadow's sanctum. The little spot of light showed clearly, for the silent room was dark. The glow remained. At last, a swish in the blackness announced that The Shadow had entered.

Hands clicked the earphones in the dark. The voice of The Shadow spoke from the total gloom. Burbank replied with his report – a simple statement from Cliff Marsland. The Shadow gave brief orders. Cliff was to stick with Bozo.

A weird laugh resounded as the blue light clicked above the polished table. There was cause for The Shadow's mirth. The master fighter could see that Brodie's instructions to Bozo and Cliff were a stall.

Plotting fiends were planning different crime. The Shadow was seeking their objective. Beneath the surface, he had gained startling results that his enemies did not suspect. Though they believed his hand was present they had no inkling that he had learned an iota of their game.

The Shadow was planning a counterstroke to crime; one that would prove astounding when it came. But in the plans lay a flaw that even The Shadow did not see – for it was the result of Cliff Marsland's unfortunate

lack of intuition.

Cliff's report had failed to give a complete resume of the conversation with Brodie Brodan. It did not show that Cliff, himself, lay under the gang leader's suspicion. That fact concerned The Shadow, for it involved the safety of his agent.

All lay in the cunning of The Shadow's contemplated counterstroke; for when it was delivered, The Shadow would find the life of Cliff Marsland dependent upon The Shadow's own success!

CHAPTER XV. AT THE MUSEUM

A FEW days after the affair at Brisbane Calbot's, a stoop-shouldered old man appeared on the avenue in front of the new Egyptian Museum. Turning from the sidewalk, this visitor ascended the granite steps that led to the imposing edifice.

The old man had an odd, tottering step that seemed to indicate a strength despite the frailty of his form. His short height was due to the forward lean of his shoulders. This resulted in a peculiar upturn of his neck; and the old man made a ludicrous appearance as he stalked toward the entrance of the museum.

An attendant at the door grinned and turned to a companion. He pointed out the figure of the weary-looking old man.

"Here he is again," said the attendant. "The guy I was telling you about. If he ain't a card, I miss my bet. We get some goofy looking birds around here, but this old turkey-neck has 'em all beat."

The old man was at the door when the attendant ceased speaking. The uniformed man opened the barrier to admit the visitor. The old man bowed in friendly fashion and mumbled his thanks. Then, in a quavering tone, he asked:

"Is the curator in his office?"

"Yes, sir," returned the attendant. "You can see him this afternoon."

"Ah!" The old man's tone was grateful. "I had hoped to find him here. This is my third visit in the past few days. I had hoped to find him this time."

Following the attendant's pointing finger, the old man walked along a corridor and reached the office which had been indicated. An inscription on the glass door read:

HANDLEY MATSON

CURATOR

The old man opened the door. Hesitatingly, he entered. He reached an outer office and bowed to a young woman, evidently the curator's secretary.

"The curator?" questioned the visitor. "May I see him?"

"Who shall I tell him is here?"

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"Professor Dilling. Professor Sturgis Dilling."

"Be seated, professor."

The old man was carrying a heavy package under one arm and a briefcase in his other hand. He placed these objects upon the floor and seated himself in a chair. He produced a pair of large-rimmed spectacles and adjusted them to his eyes. The action gave him an owlish appearance.

"The curator will see you, professor."

OLD Sturgis Dilling arose and followed the girl into an inner office. He bowed to a cadaverous-looking man who sat behind a mahogany table. Handley Matson, curator of the Egyptian Museum, looked like the mummy of some Pharaoh.

"Good afternoon, professor," said Matson, in a solemn voice. "What is the purpose of your inquiry here?"

"I am an Egyptologist, sir," returned Dilling, in a quavering voice. "I came, a few days ago, to see the tomb of Senwosri. I was informed that it was not open to the public."

"It is not," asserted the curator. "We intend to have it so after the new wing is completed. However, I can show individual visitors the tomb. Would you like to see it?"

Sturgis Dilling nodded. His eyes gleamed warmly. The curator arose and led the way to the door. He passed through the anteroom, with the professor following. On the way, the old man hesitated; then picked up his package and briefcase to totter after the curator.

The pair reached a long room some distance from the office. They passed an attendant who was standing at the door. The curator turned to the professor.

"You have seen the antiquities here, of course?" he asked. "We have some remarkable specimens of Egyptian art and sculpture in these cases, particularly here."

Sturgis Dilling nodded as Handley Matson pointed out a show case that contained delicately sculptured objects of the sort found in Egyptian tombs.

"This is the Armsbury collection," explained the curator. "Purchased from Cecil Armsbury, a man whose archaeological work is highly recognized. Over here are clay tablets – also from the same collection."

Professor Dilling stared at the second case. He seemed to be deciphering the inscriptions on the tablets. The curator watched the old man nod.

"I have seen these," declared Sturgis Dilling. "Very interesting, sir. Very interesting, indeed."

The curator led the way to the end of the room. He removed a large key from his pocket and unlocked a heavy door. Within was a huge stone sarcophagus, with heavy lid. Standing before the coffinlike structure was an upright mummy case, fastened with heavy bands.

"THE tomb of Senwosri," announced the curator, in a voice that sounded solemn within the walls and low ceiling of the little room. "We keep the mummy case here because of its great value. The golden mask – the jeweled objects – all are in their place within the case. We keep it closed and strapped shut because of the value of its contents."

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"I should like to see the mummy itself," remarked Sturgis Dilling. "I shall certainly be among the first to visit the new wing of your museum, Mr. Matson. I have been deeply interested in the history of Senwosri. He was the son of Amenemhe –"

"And the builder of the obelisk at Heliopolis," added the curator, in a monotone. "He also erected the temple at Wadi Halfa. Confidentially, Professor Dilling, I am almost afraid to have so valuable a treasure here in my museum! The wealth within that mummy case rivals that of Tutankhamen's tomb!"

"The public does not realize the value of Senwosri's coffin, for the publicity given to Carnarvaron's discovery of Tutankhamen eclipsed the finding of Senwosri. There are Egyptologists, however, who know that the American expedition which unearthed this case and its sarcophagus did quite as creditable work as the British expedition which Lord Carnarvaron headed in the finding of Tutankhamen."

"This is a strongroom," observed Sturgis Dilling.

"Accessible only from the outer room," declared the curator. "That fact has somewhat relieved my qualms. In the new wing, however, the tomb of Senwosri will have ample space for public display. We have made it a rule, however, to keep the mummy case closed until we have the proper arrangements for its protection."

Professor Dilling was examining the painted, gold decorated surface of the mummy case. The curator added another comment.

"The straps," he explained, "are simply to keep the case loosely shut. At first, we used to keep it in the stone sarcophagus. You will observe the padlocked bars that still encircle the stone container. I intend to remove those later. They serve no useful purpose."

The old man looked at the sarcophagus. He turned and walked from the little room. The curator followed him and locked the door of the tomb.

Dilling was strolling about the outer room when the curator joined him. The old professor had laid his package and briefcase aside. He was displaying new interest in the Armsbury collection. Then he turned and pointed to the end wall of the room – opposite the door of the tomb.

"I was told," he said, "that yonder space was reserved for a collection of mummies."

"Yes," acknowledged the curator. "They are a part of the Armsbury collection that has not yet been delivered. The mummy cases have been in temporary storage. They are not of great value, professor; nevertheless, they would interest you. They are virtually a gift from Armsbury – for we did not have the funds to purchase them."

"Indeed," remarked Dilling. "That is quite interesting, Mr. Matson. The attendant did not know just when the mummies were expected. He thought they would come on the fifteenth."

"They are to be delivered on the fifteenth," returned Matson. "Jove! That's today, isn't it? I had forgotten all about the matter."

The curator paused to glance at his watch. The time showed twenty minutes of three.

"We close at three o'clock," declared Matson. "Of course, the attendants and myself are here until five. The mummies will probably come in later in the afternoon. Should you come back tomorrow, Professor Dilling, you will find them on display."

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"Thank you, sir," returned Dilling.

"I must leave you," said the curator. "I have business in the office. I shall be pleased to meet you again, Professor Dilling."

Handley Matson departed, leaving Dilling in the long room that housed the Armsbury collection of Egyptian antiquities.

THE old man moved about from case to case, mumbling to himself as he studied hieroglyphs that appeared upon various objects.

At times he paused to look at the windows. They were high above the floor and heavily barred. All the doors about the place were massive. The old man remembered the museum as he had seen it from the outside. The place was a formidable fortress.

Strolling about the room, Professor Sturgis Dilling allowed a thin smile to form upon his lips. He studied the door of the tomb of Senwosri. He looked toward the end of the room reserved for mummies of lesser value.

The afternoon was glum and a pall seemed falling within this room. The old man, stalking noiselessly here and there, seemed like some ghostly figure out of Egypt. He was the only occupant of the room. His presence here seemed forgotten. At last, the old man's inspection of the antiquities was ended. He came to the door of the room and picked up his briefcase and package.

The attendant had gone from the outer hall. It was near the closing hour and the whole museum was silent. Then came the clang of a bell. Attendants called to one another through the corridor.

Shortly afterward, the uniformed man appeared and entered the room where Sturgis Dilling had been. He saw that the old man had left. He was about to close the outer door when another attendant called to him from the curator's office.

"Keep it open, Jerry! Mummies coming in. Stick around until the truck arrives. Curator's orders."

The attendant nodded. He turned on the lights in the room and sat down to read a newspaper that he took from his pocket. An hour passed. The museum, closed and barred, was as silent as the shut tomb of Senwosri.

Then came the tramp of footsteps in a corridor. Attendants and truckmen appeared carrying heavy mummy cases. The man in the room which housed the Armsbury collection was on his feet, pointing out the spot where the cases were to go.

Fifteen minutes later, a row of mummy cases lined the end of the room. The heavy objects were standing upright; their painted faces made them appear like a squad of solemn sentinels. The moving men went out, accompanied by an attendant. The other attendants remained, making jests as they studied the row of new exhibits.

The mummy cases bore fastenings that had kept them intact during shipment. These would be removed in the morning. It was approaching five o'clock and the attendants seldom waited until that hour. They reported at eight in the morning – an hour and half before opening – and that was the period during which new exhibits were arranged for proper display.

"Curator says he'll look over the mummies in the morning," declared an attendant, coming from the office. "Come on. He's leaving. Time to close."

The group passed along the corridors to the rear entrance of the museum. This was where the truck had delivered the mummy cases. The curator and his secretary passed from the museum; the attendants followed. A big watchman shut the heavy door and barred it.

The Egyptian Museum was closed until the morrow.

CHAPTER XVI. THE PILLAGERS

EVENING. Blackness pervaded the Egyptian Museum. The building was a whitened sepulchre within a blanketing pall. The glow of Manhattan did not visibly affect the secluded spot whereon the granite edifice stood.

Within the room which housed the Armsbury collection, thick blackness reigned below the dim stretch of high windows. The watchman's electric lantern, glimmering in the darkness, flashed upon the solemn painted faces of the mummy cases. Then the man was gone upon his rounds.

A slight sound occurred in the end of the room. It came from one of the mummy cases. Something was working from within! Life was present inside that wooden shroud! Some prying force was pushing out the front; an instrument was at work upon the central band which held the case intact!

The front of the mummy case sprang open. A figure stepped from within. A flashlight glimmered upon the next case in the row. Brawny hands ripped open the bands that held the second case. Another man came into view.

Both set to work. Other cases were opened. Where eight closed mummy cases had been, four opened ones remained. Flashlights were flickering about the room. Two men, sneaking through the darkness, reached the door.

"Get the watchman," came a growl. "Grab him and tie him up. We don't want any shooting until we're ready for it."

"All right, Sinker."

Men moved out into the darkness of the hall, bound on the mission ordered by Sinker Hargun. These men who had come from the mummy cases were invaders from the underworld, under the command of Brodie Brodan's hidden lieutenant.

Flashlights showed upon the cases which harbored the items of the Armsbury collection. Clay tablets were dumped into burlap bags which the invaders had with them. Specimens of metal sculpture were piled into other containers.

A squad of crooks was rifling this room of its supposed treasure. Actually, Duke Larrin's orders were being completed. Spurious items of fake origin were being lifted for destruction. The last evidence of Cecil Armsbury's swindles was being reclaimed!

Whispers in the darkness. They announced that the watchman had been captured. Gangsters had trailed him to an obscure part of the museum. He was bound and gagged – totally unaware of how the yeggs had entered.

"That's good," growled Sinker. "Drag this stuff out to the back door. Set that charge so we can blow the works and make it look like we came in there. But don't do nothing until after we've finished in here. Come

back, you gorillas, when you're ready."

His flashlight sweeping along the floor, Sinker Hargun revealed the door to the Senwosri tomb. It was a formidable barrier because of its powerful lock. Sinker Hargun, however, was a thug who used measures more persuasive than lock-picking.

HIS flashlight showed him making arrangements in front of the door that hid the tomb. His warning growl sent mobsters scurrying to cover, with Hargun at their heels. Then came a muffled report; with it a burst of flame. Flashlights showed clouds of pungent smoke.

As the vapor cleared, Sinker uttered a command. His torch marked the mummy case of Senwosri. The heavy object had toppled backward from the explosion and was leaning against the wall beside the stone sarcophagus.

"Come on!"

Mobsters piled into the tomb. Three on a side, they gathered up the heavy mummy case of the Egyptian king. Struggling with their burden, they made their way along the corridor to the back.

Sinker Hargun, chasing ahead, yanked open the bars of the rear entrance. He uttered a warning hiss. A reply came from the alleyway. A truck was parked there.

"Make it speedy, Sinker," came a low voice. "You could hear that boom out this way. Maybe they got it in the avenue. Make it speedy."

The mummy case came floundering through the wide doorway. Sinker aided the men who were carrying it. The big case slid aboard the truck and settled into a mammoth box, coffinlike in shape, which was there to receive it.

"Yank those doors," growled Sinker. "Shoot the works as we start, Terry. Climb on with us –"

The truck was in motion. A stooping yegg was standing by the doors which he had closed. He was igniting a new charge. He came bounding after the rolling truck and leaped aboard. As the truck reached a side street, a huge roar followed it. A second explosion had wrecked the rear entrance of the Egyptian Museum.

The truck was speeding toward a rear avenue. Police whistles were sounding from in front of the Egyptian Museum. Sinker Hargun, growling a laugh, had clambered up to the front seat of the truck.

"It's soft," was his comment to the driver. "Say, bo, this job went through like clockwork. The bulls are goin' to go goofy when they look it over."

"Keep on rolling. I'll show you where we're goin' to unload. There ain't nobody can stop us now. This job is a honey."

AT Sinker's direction, the truck driver guided the big vehicle on a weaving course. Far from the vicinity of the robbed museum, there was no need for hurry. The truck was moving slowly when it neared the vicinity which Sinker Hargun required.

"Easy, now," warned the leader. "Stop here – we're goin' to make sure there's nobody following."

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The driver obeyed. Gangsters dropped to the street and strolled back along the sidewalk. They returned to report that no one was on the trail of the truck.

Sinker ordered the driver ahead. He growled new directions. When he issued his final command to stop, the truck had pulled up close to an old apartment hotel – Ridgelow Court.

Sinker Hargun alighted. He strolled down a side entrance and rapped at a big delivery door. A janitor opened it.

"Got my truck outside," announced Sinker. "Bringing in a big couch to go down in Mr. Sudgen's storage room. I got the key."

The janitor nodded as he peered from the door and saw a crew of men unloading a huge box from a truck. He pointed out the way to the subcellar. As the pretended moving men came through, the janitor strolled away.

Men went back and brought in burlap bags. These – had the janitor seen them – would have passed for bags of household effects. But the janitor gave no further thought to the matter. When he happened back, he noted that the truck had moved away. He thought that the crew of storage men had gone with it.

Little did he realize that the subcellar harbored Sinker Hargun, notorious gangster, and a crew of sullen thugs. The box which had been unloaded was going through a passage that led beyond the subcellar of Ridgelow Court.

The mummy case of Senwosri, pillaged from the Egyptian Museum, was being delivered to the crime crypt!

CHAPTER XVII. BRODIE'S MOVE

WHILE hard-faced thugs, members of Brodie Brodan's under-cover band, were lugging away their loot from the Egyptian Museum, their absent leader was enjoying a gala night. Brodie was at the Club Madrid, one of the most glittering of Manhattan's night cafes.

Brodie, attired in well-fitting tuxedo, was seated at a conspicuous table. The gang leader was applauding a dancing act. His bluff face wore a grin; a paper cap perched above his heavy eyebrows gave him the appearance of a playboy.

At the table with Brodie was Fritz Fursch, his alibi pal from Chicago. Fritz had come in at Brodie's order and seemed to be enjoying his visit to New York.

But Brodie, despite his merrymaking had serious thoughts in mind. He was secretly eyeing a stocky, swarthy-faced man on the other side of the floor. This individual, half behind a pillar, was also making a pretense of watching the floor show. Actually, however, his gaze was on Brodie Brodan.

It was Detective Joe Cardona. Persistent in his hunches, the sleuth was dogging Brodie's trail. Baffled in his attempts to locate the murderers of Perry Trappe and Tyler Bogart, Joe was watching Brodie in the hope that he could at least frustrate further crime.

Cardona's reasoning showed logic. He had accepted Brodan's first alibi. He had also been forced to take the second. One had been on the say-so of Fritz Fursch from Chicago; the other on the statements of Lobo Ruscott, proprietor of the Club Madrid. Cardona was not willing to base much on the testimonies of those two.

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So he had watched Brodie Brodan – either through his own observation or with the aid of stool pigeons. Joe was sure that Brodie had been at the Club Madrid on the night that mobsters appeared at Brisbane Calbot's. He was sure that some of those dead gangsters were members of Brodie's old crew.

Whatever the purpose at Calbot's, it had failed. That, Cardona knew. He had attributed the failure to the possible absence of Brodie Brodan. That was why Cardona was again at the Club Madrid. Brodie watched, was crimped. Such was Cardona's maxim.

LOBO RUSCOTT, a suave, elegantly attired man with a pointed mustache, paused at Cardona's table to acknowledge the detective's presence. Joe growled a reply to Lobo's welcome; then snorted.

Brodie Brodan had spied Lobo from across the floor; seeing the proprietor, he had apparently discovered Cardona also. The black-browed gang leader had left his table and was skirting the floor to join the pair.

"Hello, Lobo," greeted Brodie. "Hello, Cardona. Say – you've picked a great place to spend a night off. Not a better night club in the city. You know Lobo Ruscott, don't you, Cardona?"

"I know him," commented the detective, grimly.

"I remember," laughed Brodie, sitting down at the table. "You talked to Lobo after that guy was killed out on Long Island. I had forgotten it."

"Yeah," retorted Cardona. "Lobo gave you an alibi – like that other pal of yours, from Chicago. I see you've got him with you again tonight."

"Fritz Fursch?" questioned Brodie. "That's right, he told you the straight dope one night – another time you were going to put the screws on me. Say, Joe" – Brodie was making a fervent appeal – "when are you going to forget this goofy idea that I'm hooked up with a funny racket?"

"I've got no idea," returned Cardona. "I'm just playing a hunch, Brodie. Things are sort of quiet right now. I'm waiting for something to break – something big – and I just want to see if that can happen while you're wearing a paper hat and making goo-goo eyes at a flock of chorines."

"Great stuff, Joe," laughed Brodie. "Well, stick around old kid. How long have you been here tonight?"

"Since seven thirty."

"Just before I came in. Well, Joe, I hope something does break. It'll give you some excitement and it'll mean a real alibi for me. But let's be serious. This cuckoo idea of yours –"

"Listen, Brodie. I'm not questioning your alibis. They're good ones. I'd like to see a better one; I've got a hunch that some funny business is going to break loose. If it does while you're here, I'll admit that you're out of it. How's that?"

"Fair enough, Joe. Say, Lobo –"

Brodie paused as he turned toward the proprietor. Looking beyond Lobo Ruscott, he saw a solemn-faced man picking his way among the tables. Brodie turned and plucked Cardona's sleeve.

"Say, Joe," informed the gang leader. "Here comes a pal of yours – another dick, ain't he? Is he looking for you?"

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Cardona followed the direction of Brodie's gaze. He saw that the gang leader's statement was correct. The man coming from the door of the night club was Detective Sergeant Markham.

CARDONA arose and beckoned to the second sleuth. Markham hurried over and buzzed with Cardona. Joe's face took on a grim look.

Both Brodie Brodan and Lobo Ruscott were staring with questioning gaze. Cardona noted Brodie's look. He turned to the gang leader.

"No reason why you shouldn't know what's up," growled the detective. "A crowd of gorillas just raided the Egyptian Museum."

Brodie looked puzzled; then guffawed.

"Say – that's hot!" he exclaimed. "They'll be crashing Grant's Tomb next. What can they get out of a museum?"

"That's what I'm going to find out," retorted Cardona. "Take it as a joke, Brodie. You've got a right to laugh."

"Why?"

"Because I expected something like this, I won't be around for an alibi from you. That's why you ought to laugh."

"O.K., Joe," returned Brodie. "Thanks, old man."

There was a touch of feigned sincerity in the tone. Cardona remembered it as he followed Markham. No use of watching Brodie Brodan now. This was the clincher that backed up Brodie's previous alibis.

Brodan watched Cardona leave the night club. He remained seated and chatted with Lobo Ruscott. A waiter approached and spoke to the proprietor.

"Call for you in the office, sir," he said. "Not exactly for you – the man wants to talk to someone – but he wishes to speak to you first –"

"All right."

As Lobo turned away, Brodie arose and followed him. Traveling by the proprietor's side, Brodie whispered:

"Sounds like Bozo Griffin. Probably for me. I'll come along with you."

They reached the office. Lobo Ruscott spoke into the mouthpiece of the telephone. He turned and handed the instrument to Brodie with a nod. As Brodie began to talk, Lobo went from the office and closed the door.

"Listen Bozo." Brodie's tone was serious. "Is Marsland there with you?... Yes? All right... I want to see the two of you... Together... Yes. Right away... I'll tell you where to meet me... Hotel Ridgelow Court... Yes, come up there in a cab and don't mention where you're going until you've got Marsland in the cab with you, see?"

"I'll meet you outside the place. We'll go in together... Now remember this. When you hear me say 'Hurry up, Bozo!' yank your gat and poke it in Marsland's ribs. Get that?"

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Brodie scowled as a surprised exclamation came over the wire. He growled an admonition.

"Keep mum, you sap! You heard me... Remember what I told you... Now get started."

Brodie hung up the receiver. He opened a closet door and removed hat and overcoat. He examined a revolver in the pocket of the outer garment. Brodie was accustomed to parking his gat and overcoat in the closet of Lobo Ruscott's office.

Following this action, Brodie opened the door of the office and signaled to Lobo Ruscott, who was seated in a chair outside.

"Tell Fritz Fursch to meet me out at the side door," order Brodie.

The gang leader took an obscure exit that led from the Cafe Madrid. On the sidewalk, he waited for Fritz and piled the alibi man into a cab. He ordered the driver to take him to an uptown destination not far from Ridgeway Court.

"Fritz," declared Brodie, in a low tone, "you're going to see a lot tonight. You and some other guys that I can count on. You're going to see the headquarters for the greatest bunch of jobs that has ever been.

"More than that, you're going to see a double-crosser get double-crossed. Have your gat handy. I'll tell you when and how to use it."

BRODIE and Fritz alighted at their destination. They strolled a block until they reached the front of the old hotel, where Brodie was to meet Bozo and Cliff. A few minutes later a cab rolled up. Bozo and Cliff alighted. Brodie stepped out to meet them.

"Come along," ordered the gang leader. "We're going places. You two go first. Through the lobby of this old hotel – and take the stairway down. This fellow – Fritz Fursch – will follow along with me."

Cliff and Bozo obeyed. They entered the old hotel, walked across the deserted lobby and descended. At the bottom of the steps, they awaited Brodie and Fritz, who showed up a minute later. Brodie led the way to the door that opened on the steps to the sub-basement.

The quartet arrived at the storeroom. Brodie unlocked the door and ushered his companions in. A voice spoke. It was Sinker Hargun's. Brodie growled a reply.

"All right, Sinker. We're coming through. Give us a light."

Sinker turned the glimmer of a flashlight upon the spot where the wooden panel was located. Brodie stepped forward and called for Cliff. The Shadow's agent joined him.

"Watch this gag, Cliff," remarked Brodie, in a cordial tone. He pressed the special nail. The panel opened.

"Come on through," said Brodie, urging Cliff forward. "Come on, you other guys. Hurry up, Bozo!"

Cliff Marsland was in the light of Sinker Hargun's torch. Brodie Brodan was ahead. The gang leader swung suddenly; he whisked out a revolver. At the same instant the muzzle of Bozo's gun jabbed Cliff from behind.

"Put 'em up, you rat!" snarled Brodie. "Keep 'em up and come along with us. We're going to put you on the sweetest spot you ever saw."

Cliff's arms raised mechanically. The Shadow's agent had fallen into a perfect trap. Brodie Brodan's flashlight came on; Sinker Hargun let the panel drop. With a contemptuous laugh, Brodie Brodan ordered Bozo Griffin to bring the prisoner along.

The gang leader had trapped the man he suspected as The Shadow's agent. Cliff Marsland, a helpless prisoner, was marked for death when he reached the crime crypt!

CHAPTER XVIII. DEATH AWAITS

"WHO'VE you got there?"

The question came to Brodie Brodan's ears as Cliff Marsland was shoved through the opening of the crime crypt. The man who asked it was Fingers Keefel. The safe-cracker had opened the barrier in response to Brodie's signal.

"A double-crosser," jeered Brodie, as he glowered at Cliff Marsland. "A rat that's working for The Shadow."

"Yeah?" Fingers matched Brodie's growl. "Well, he'll get his as soon as the word is given. What you going to do? Wait for Duke Larrin?"

"Sure. Maybe we can pump this guy first. Say – this crypt is going to mean a lot to us. The first job we've got ahead is to give The Shadow the bump he's been waiting for. This is the place to work it from."

"And starting with one of his stools is the best way to get at him," derided Fingers, in reply.

"You said it. Shove him over in the corner, Bozo. You frisk him, Fritz."

Brodie's henchmen obeyed. The gang leader nudged his thumb in their direction as they forced Cliff to a seated position against the wall.

"Here's two birds that'll count," he asserted. "Bozo Griffin and Fritz Fursch. They're in on the lay. I've got another guy outside – Sinker Hargun – and his mob. They're the boys that gabbed the gravy tonight. They'll be good workers for the de luxe mob that Duke told me to bring up. None of those bum gorillas of mine will be in this new outfit."

Brodie paused. He was staring past Fingers Keefel to a huge object that stood in front of the farther door. It was the mummy case of Senwosri. The painted face and its golden inlay showed dimly in the low light of the crypt.

"Old Nebuchadnezzar himself," exclaimed Brodie, with a grin. "Say – the boys did a neat job lugging that down here. Where's the box they put it in?"

"They carried that back to the storeroom," explained Fingers. "Duke Larrin was down here. He had them stand it up. He's waiting until everybody's here – then he'll knock it open."

Brodie nodded.

THE mummy case was encircled with the broad straps that had been put about it in the museum. These kept the case from coming open. The gangsters had delivered the case intact.

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"Where's Croaker Mannick?" questioned Brodie, turning to Fingers Keefel.

"Not here yet," responded the safecracker. "He slid away like I did, after we raided Brisbane Calbot's place. Say – I'll bet you can't figure what we did with Calbot."

"Give me the low-down, Fingers. The bulls didn't make much fuss about Calbot. I had a hunch that you and Croaker carted the old boy away with you."

"Not a bit of it. Calbot had a vault down in his cellar. Took me about a half hour to open it. So we shoved him in that and left him there. Croaker didn't want to shoot until he got upstairs."

"Now you're telling me something, Fingers. That's how you and Croaker got away in such a hurry. You were lucky – as I figure it. You know who we think was there?"

"The Shadow." Fingers was sober. "Duke told me tonight. He must have come up after he heard Croaker's shot. That's how he was in time to start a fight. It's lucky that your gorillas piled in as quick as they did – if it hadn't been for them The Shadow might have had a chance to trail after me and Croaker."

Bozo Griffin heard Fingers Keefel's comment. The tough-faced lieutenant swelled. This was a justification of the promptness with which he had ordered the raid. Brodie Brodan saw Bozo's face light.

"That squares you, Bozo," declared Brodie. "You did a good job tonight, too, covering Marsland the way you did." Brodie turned to glare at The Shadow's agent, who was under the muzzle of Fritz Fursch's gun. "Say, Marsland – you rat – I'd like to give you the works in a hurry. But we're holding you, see? Holding you so you can squawk. Wait until Duke Larrin gets here. Did you ever hear of him?"

Cliff gave no response. He faced Brodie with unflinching eyes.

But Cliff was thinking plenty. He had heard of Duke Larrin; in fact, he had informed The Shadow of the rumor that the international crook was in New York. In the past ten minutes, Cliff had learned a lot about Duke Larrin. This underground crypt was the famous crook's lair!

Cliff had much to tell The Shadow. But that opportunity was ended. A prisoner, Cliff could only hope that The Shadow might find another trail to the crime crypt. But Cliff realized the difficulty. Brodie Brodan had been left for Cliff to follow while The Shadow was otherwise engaged. Cliff had failed. A captive, he was helpless. He held the key to crime and could not use it!

"CROAKER MANNICK is coming through," declared Fingers Keefel, again speaking to Brodie Brodan; "and Duke Larrin says he'll show up before midnight. Not long to wait. The payoff comes tonight, Brodie – and from what Duke tells me, this is just going to be the beginning. We're all in for a cut on the swag in that coffin."

"You telling me?" Brodie grinned. "Say, Fingers, I can talk now. When Duke passed me my instructions, he told me more than he told you. That was just because I had the mobs to look out for, see?"

"I picked the real guys to grab off old Nebuchadnezzar's casket here so that they would be ready for what's coming next. We're going to raise hob after the swag is unloaded. Say – if The Shadow pokes his nose around this crypt, he'll be in for trouble. You – me – Croaker – and the rest of us, all working with Duke Larrin!"

"Out of sight," agreed Fingers. "Dumb dicks like Joe Cardona will go goofy."

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"Cardona? He's goofy already. Where do you think he is now? Up at the Egyptian Museum. He pulled out from the Club Madrid and gave me a clean alibi for a starter. Match that, Fingers – match it is the best you can do; you can't beat it, that's a cinch."

Fingers Keefel joined Brodie in raucous mirth. Laughter echoed through the crime crypt. Men of evil had gained their way. They were awaiting the arrival of their comrade in crime, Croaker Mannick and their chief, Duke Larrin.

Cliff Marsland, under the cover of Fritz Fursch's gun, felt a hopeless weakening as he listened to the merriment of his captors. He felt that he had failed The Shadow. He knew that the police had been eliminated.

Of the two, Cliff trusted The Shadow most. He had seen the master fighter spring into being almost out of nowhere. But in this forgotten crypt, its corridor entrance guarded by Sinker Hargun and a band of thugs, The Shadow, even if he fought through, would be forced to make his presence known.

Cliff groaned as he realized the extent of his failure. The fact that his own rescue seemed impossible was bad; but the thought that crooks might triumph was worse.

Death in The Shadow's service was something that Cliff Marsland was glad to face. The inability to be of service to his chief was what hurt him.

CHAPTER XIX. CARDONA'S CLEW

WHILE Brodie Brodan was chuckling over Joe Cardona's dash to the Egyptian Museum, the ace detective had arrived at his destination. The museum was lighted; the front door was open. Joe Cardona entered and a policeman showed him to the room at the end of the corridor.

Cardona found two men in charge. One was Inspector Timothy Klein; the other, a lean-faced individual who the inspector introduced as Handley Matson; the curator. Klein led Cardona to the rifled tomb of Senwosri.

"Look it over, Joe," ordered the inspector. "This is where they made the biggest haul. They took a lot of other stuff, too."

"Out of there?" questioned the detective, with a perplexed stare, as he surveyed the stone sarcophagus, which still bore its padlocked bands.

"That is the sarcophagus," explained Matson, nervously. "It used to contain the mummy case of Senwosri. It is empty at present. The thieves must have known that. They took the mummy case, but did not bother to touch the empty sarcophagus."

"Where was the mummy case?"

"Standing right here." The curator looked like a mummified king as he took his position to indicate the spot. "The case contained the embalmed body of Senwosri, the son of Amenemhe. He was the builder of the obelisk at Heliopolis and the temple at Wadi Halfa –"

"All right," interposed Cardona. "What was the value of the stuff in the mummy case?"

"Thousands of dollars," stated the curator, in an awed tone. "The golden mask; the jeweled boat that was to

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carry the soul – the ka – of Senwosri –"

Cardona was nodding as he turned to look at the outer room. He saw the rifled cases. He waved his hand toward them.

"These?"

"Very valuable," declared the curator. "Antiquities from the collection of Cecil Armsbury. The purchase price was in excess of sixty thousand dollars. Examples of early Egyptian sculpture; clay tablets with hieroglyphic inscriptions which –"

"Those?"

Cardona was pointing to the farther wall. The row of opened mummy cases had attracted his attention. The curator added another explanation.

"The thieves rifled those cases," he stated. "They carried away the mummies, which were not of high value. We had not inspected the mummy cases, I must admit, but I have a list here of their contents – all articles of but little value, even as antiquities –"

"You mean those cases had not been opened here?"

"They were brought in only this afternoon. We intended to open them in the morning."

"I see." Cardona turned to Inspector Klein with an inquiring air.

KLEIN smiled slightly. He had listened to the curator's long harangue before the detective had arrived.

"Here's the story, Joe," explained Klein. "At about eight fifty this evening, there was a muffled explosion heard on the street. About five minutes later came the second blast. The patrol arrived just after nine."

"They found that the burglars had blown open the rear doors of the museum. They came in here and blew open the door to the mummy's tomb – where the empty scarab is located."

"The sarcophagus," interposed Handley Matson. "A scarab, inspector, is a beetle – about so large" – he showed the size with thumb and finger – "which was regarded as sacred by the Egyptians. I have a specimen in my office. Wait! I shall obtain it."

"Scarab or sarcophagus," laughed Klein, as the curator hurried away. "I mean that stone box that has the locks on it. The crooks got in the room and carried away a mummy case – the one that had King Says Who's This in it."

"They also rifled this exhibit. Took the stuff from the cases and yanked the new mummies out of their wooden boxes. They must have gotten away in a truck. There must have been a crowd of them, too, to make such a quick clean-up. The king's mummy case was a heavy one, the curator says."

"Is that all?" asked Cardona.

"The watchman," added Klein. "They landed on him in the basement, while he was making his rounds. Tied him up and gagged him. I quizzed the watchman. We're holding him for further questioning."

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"Clews?"

"I don't see any, Joe," admitted Klein, ruefully. "You're the man to find them, if they're here. I'm going down to headquarters. If you can get the curator to calm down, maybe you can get some information out of him. I can't."

"Leave it to me." Cardona strolled away and went to the curator's office. He found Matson digging through desk drawers in search of his golden beetle.

"I had it here in my desk," began the curator. "It's made of gold – about so large –"

"Never mind the scab," interposed Cardona, gruffly. "The crooks wouldn't have had time to take it. You'll find it later. Come along with me, Mr. Matson. I want to see that rear door the crooks blew open."

The curator complied. He led Cardona to the rear of the museum.

JOE surveyed the blasted door. Beckoning to the curator, he led the way through the corridor to the rifled exhibit room.

"Let's get things straight," suggested the detective, as he stood alone with Matson. "When was the last time you opened that door to the king's tomb?"

"This afternoon."

"Was the mummy case there?"

"Yes. I locked the door myself. I showed the mummy case to a visitor – a Professor Sturgis Dilling."

"What did he look like?"

"An old gentleman with stooped shoulders. Thin gray hair. A scholar – one acquainted with the history of Senwosri. He was sorry that I could not open the mummy case for him."

"Did he want you to open any of these?" asked Cardona, pointing to the emptied mummy cases.

"They had not come in," explained the curator. "They arrived after the museum had been closed. We opened the rear door and my attendants carried them into this room."

"Hm–m." Cardona was thoughtful. He paced about the room. Like Inspector Klein, Joe Cardona could see no clew. Handley Matson watched him anxiously.

Cardona half shut his eyes and rested his chin in his right hand. He was thinking over everything that Klein had told him. A practical sleuth, Cardona made no claim to deductive reasoning. He relied upon his hunches. Often, however, his hunches were deductions. He was gaining one now.

"Listen, Mr. Matson," said the detective, slowly. "You're an intelligent man and you know the layout of this museum. Forget your golden beetle and hear what I've got to say. Tell me whether I'm right or wrong."

"Very well," agreed the curator.

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"First of all, it's a long way from that back door here. It takes a few minutes to blow a door. I figure that the crooks would have needed a regiment to pile in here, blow the door to the tomb, grab off these exhibits, empty out the mummies and carry away the old king with his coffin. That is, they would have needed a regiment to do the whole job in about seven or eight minutes. Am I right?"

"Absolutely!" exclaimed the curator. "Especially with the watchman here. It must have taken them some time to find him. He was bound and gagged – and they knocked him out when they took him. He said he did not hear the explosions."

"Hm–m. Of course he was down in the cellar. Still, the explosions were heard on the avenue. We're getting somewhere, Mr. Matson. Getting somewhere! I've got it!"

Cardona stared across the exhibit room and pointed at the emptied mummy cases. He clutched the astonished curator by the arm and put a quick question.

"Why did the crooks take those mummies out of the cases?" demanded the detective. "Can you tell me why?"

"Perhaps they thought the mummies were of value –"

"Like the old king's? Well why didn't they yank the old boy out of his casket, too? Why did they want to lug away the box and all?"

"The mummy case of Senwosri had some value," declared the curator. "Nevertheless, its contents were the actual prize. These other mummies – well, to be valuable, it would have been wise to take their cases also. It took time, unquestionably, to get those mummy cases open –"

"You're right," decided Cardona. "Listen. You didn't open those cases when they came in. Suppose, Mr. Matson, that those mummy cases had each held a living man –"

"Living mummies?"

"No. Living crooks! In there instead of the mummies. There's the answer! That's how the crooks got in here. They came out of the mummy cases. They grabbed the watchmen. They swiped all these exhibits that are missing.

"They fixed two charges – one for the door to the tomb; one for the rear door of the museum. They let off the first blast in here – after they had dragged out the exhibits. The mummy case went out as fast as they could take it. They blew the rear door when they made their get-away. Am I right?"

CARDONA looked at Matson. The curator was standing open-mouthed. He was nodding in emphasis. Cardona needed no more encouragement.

"Wait until the inspector hears this!" he exclaimed. "I'm going to follow this up, Mr. Matson. Tell me. Where did those mummy cases come from?"

"I do not know," admitted Matson. "They were in some storage house – delivered at the order of the man who presented them to the museum."

"Who is he?"

"Cecil Armsbury. The famous collector of Egyptian antiquities."

"Is he here in New York?"

"I believe so. I have his address in my desk."

"Let's have it."

Cardona accompanied the curator to the office. The detective was talking on the way.

"The crooks knew those mummies were coming in here," he declared. "They must have gotten into the warehouse and chucked the mummies. If we can locate the warehouse, through this man Armsbury –"

Cardona paused. They were in the office. The curator was looking for the file which contained Armsbury's address. He emitted a cry of satisfaction as he brought his hand from a desk drawer.

"You've got the address?" questioned Cardona.

"No," returned Matson, excitedly, "I've found the scarab. See? Here it is. I must keep it to show to Inspector Klein if he returns."

"Let me have it," growled Cardona, seizing the golden beetle from the curator's hand. "Get that address. Forget this yellow bug."

Nodding, Matson delved through files. He finally produced a card and showed it to Cardona. It bore the name and address of Cecil Armsbury.

"You know this man?" questioned the detective.

"I have met him," returned the curator.

Cardona seized the telephone. He called headquarters. He asked for Inspector Klein and was told that the official had not returned.

"I'll call him later," declared Cardona. "This is Joe Cardona." He hung up the receiver. Then, to Matson: "Come on; we're taking a taxi to Armsbury's house."

The curator nodded and picked up his coat and hat. Joe Cardona, tapping his clenched fist against the table, suddenly realized its weight. He opened his hand and laughed as he saw that he was still holding the golden scarab.

Cardona chucked the metal beetle into the desk drawer from which Matson had taken it. He grabbed the curator's arm and hurried the man out to the front door. Policemen were still in charge. Cardona told them to expect him back.

Three minutes later, the ace detective and the curator of the Egyptian Museum were whirling in a taxicab toward the home of Cecil Armsbury.

CHAPTER XX. THE SNARE

"READY?"

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The question came from Martin Havelock. He was standing by the fireplace in his uncle's living room, about to press the switch that would open the hidden elevator.

"One moment, Martin," returned Cecil Armsbury. The old man was seated in his favorite chair. "I think I heard the door bell. Calhoun will answer it."

Havelock showed momentary alarm. Then he strolled from the fireplace and lighted a cigarette. There was a knock at the door. Armsbury motioned to Havelock. The young man went over and unlocked the door. He opened it to admit Calhoun.

"Two gentlemen to see you, sir," explained the servant. "One is Mr. Matson, the curator of the Egyptian Museum. The other is a detective from headquarters."

"Matson?" quizzed Armsbury, in a pleased tone. "Ah! I shall be glad to see him. You say a detective also? I hope nothing has gone amiss. Usher them in, Calhoun. Then you may retire. I shall not need you later."

"Thank you, sir."

With a warning glance toward his nephew, Cecil Armsbury arose to his feet. He was all smiles as he stepped forward to greet the two men who entered. He knew Matson. The curator introduced him to Cardona.

"My nephew," remarked Armsbury, turning to Martin Havelock. "He is my only nephew – Martin Havelock. Sit down, gentlemen. Tell me the reason for this unexpected visit. I hope that nothing serious has occurred."

"Something very serious," explained Matson, solemnly. "The Egyptian Museum has been rifled by thieves. Your entire collection of antiquities has been stolen."

Cecil Armsbury sank back in his chair. His whole attitude was one of a man who had experienced a terrific shock. Martin Havelock looked on in admiration.

"More than that," added Matson, "the thieves also took the mummy case of Senwosri, the son of Amenemhe –"

"With its priceless treasure?"

"They carried away the case intact."

CECIL ARMSBURY was gripping the arms of his chair. His air showed that he regarded this daring theft as a terrific outrage. Joe Cardona motioned to Handley Matson to say no more.

"We want to recover these stolen articles, Mr. Armsbury," he explained. "We have come here because we believe that you can help us."

"How? I shall do all in my power."

"Give us some information, then, regarding the mummy cases that you donated to the Egyptian Museum."

Armsbury stared with wild eyes. A sudden thought had occurred to him.

"My collection of mummies?" he questioned. "I remember! I had ordered them to be delivered today. You do not mean that they were stolen also!"

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"Yes," returned Cardona, "but not from the museum. Tell me, Mr. Armsbury, where did you have them stored?"

"This is bewildering!" exclaimed Armsbury. "Let me think. Indeed, Mr. Cardona, I do not remember for the moment. I shall have to call my attorney, Jason Thunig. He arranges all my business affairs."

"Thunig is out of town," interposed Martin Havelock.

"So he is," recalled Armsbury. "You do not recall my mentioning the name of the warehouse, do you, Martin?"

"No."

"I may be able to remember it. But tell me" – Armsbury's tone was quizzical – "have there been two robberies? One at the museum – the other at the warehouse?"

"No." Cardona furnished the explanation. "I have a theory, Mr. Armsbury, that may aid us. The manner of the robbery makes me believe that crooks were smuggled into the museum in mummy cases.

"That granted, they must have entered the warehouse first; there to remove the mummies from the cases. Do you understand?"

"I see. A remarkable deduction, Mr. Cardona. Tell me, has this been established as a certainty?"

"No. But it is the only plausible theory. I struck upon it while I was in the museum, after Inspector Klein had left."

"Ah! And did you corroborate it, Matson?"

"I did," said the curator.

"I suppose," remarked Armsbury, in an innocuous tone, "that you have informed Inspector Klein."

"Not yet," declared Cardona. "I want to give him the whole dope, Mr. Armsbury. I told my theory to Mr. Matson. He and I were alone at the time. So we came down here at once. When I make my report, I want it to be a clincher. I wish you could remember the name of that warehouse."

"I have it!" Armsbury sprang to his feet with agility. "Do you remember it now, Martin? I marked that name in my memoranda book – the one in the table drawer –"

The old man pointed as he spoke. His face was turned toward Martin Havelock. Cardona and Matson were following the direction of the old man's finger. They did not see the motion of Armsbury's lips. Havelock alone caught that. He understood. Nonchalantly, the young man dropped his hands into his coat pockets.

CECIL ARMSBURY strode across the room. Cardona and Matson followed him. The old man yanked open a desk drawer. He reached in and glanced over his shoulder, smiling.

"Here it is" – Armsbury was looking at Joe Cardona. His gaze turned to Havelock – "the very thing we want to –"

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As he broke the sentence, Armsbury turned. In his hand was a short-barreled revolver. He swung the weapon directly at Joe Cardona's breast. At the same time, Martin Havelock made a sidewise spring. His hand, too, had drawn a gun. He had his finger on the trigger.

"Up with them!" snarled Havelock.

Joe Cardona was too stupefied to do other than obey. Handley Matson followed the detective's action. Bowing, old Cecil Armsbury pointed to his nephew.

"This gentleman will take charge of you," he said. "As a man of crime, I am a mere tyro. Perhaps you have heard of my nephew, Mr. Cardona. Under another name than that of Martin Havelock –"

Cardona was staring at the young man with the gun. He saw the fiendish sneer that had grown on Havelock's lips. Yet he could not place the crook until Armsbury's next words brought astonishment.

"Better known," smirked the old villain, "as Duke Larrin."

"Duke Larrin!" exclaimed Cardona.

"Yes," snarled Havelock. "That's who I am – Duke Larrin. I've been working this town of yours and you've been too dumb to know it. So you're Joe Cardona, eh? Well – there's a bunch of friends of mine who'll be glad to meet you."

Cecil Armsbury was depriving Joe Cardona of his revolver. The old swindler was chuckling. He urged Cardona and Matson toward the fireplace; Havelock accompanied the movement with a gesture of his revolver. Armsbury, carrying Cardona's revolver, leaped ahead.

"As Duke Larrin's uncle," chortled the old fiend, "I am worthy of my nephew. It was for him that I provided a very excellent headquarters which has failed to attract your notice, friend Cardona."

"Allow me" – Armsbury was pressing the switch – "to conduct you to our lair. It is the resting place of Senwosri, the son of Amenemhe. He is dead – poor Senwosri – but he shall have company. He came dead from the Egyptian Museum; you have come living from that same place. Let the living join the dead!"

Armsbury cackled gleefully. Martin Havelock stepped aboard the elevator and descended. Cecil Armsbury remained alone; but he and the gun he held were a sufficient threat. The elevator came up empty. Armsbury forced Cardona and Matson aboard. The lift began to descend.

"My nephew will be awaiting you," cackled Armsbury. "He will take charge until I join you!"

Cardona and Matson, staring upward, saw the gloating face of the fiend. Then came darkness as the descending elevator carried its prisoners to the crypt below.

CHAPTER XXI. LIVING AND DEAD

MIDNIGHT. Duke Larrin sat in the center of the crime crypt. Grouped about him were the privileged crooks who had come to this underground vault.

Brodie Brodan sat with gloating face and bristling eyebrows. Fingers Keefel wore a malicious smile upon his crafty face. Bozo Griffin and Fritz Fursch were standing in a corner of the crypt. Seated on the floor between

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this pair of thugs were the three prisoners, their hands bound behind their backs.

Joe Cardona – Handley Matson – Cliff Marsland. The trio found no pleasure in their company. Each knew that he was facing doom and that two others were due to perish with him.

The crime crypt harbored another person: Cecil Armsbury. He was standing behind his nephew, grinning as sponsor of insidious crime. To him, this crypt was a legacy which he had given to a deserving heir. Cecil Armsbury was proud of the power which Martin Havelock, alias Duke Larrin, had come to wield.

"Where is Croaker?"

This was the question with which Havelock opened the proceedings.

"Not here yet," asserted Fingers Mannick. "He'll be through. No reason why he should be on time tonight."

Brodie Brodan chuckled at the jest.

"Shall I bring in Sinker Hargun?" he questioned.

"Yes," affirmed Havelock. "He is one of us. Let the mob remain on guard. We shall talk with them later. They are to play their part in future crime."

Brodie Brodan went to the door to the corridor. He opened it and summoned Sinker Hargun. The gang lieutenant joined the criminal assemblage.

"You all know me," announced Martin Havelock, his voice resounding through the crypt. "I'm Duke Larrin. That's the name I go under. This crypt is my headquarters. From here we have put through successful crime. There is more to be done.

"No dumb dicks are going to cross us. Neither are any stools that work for The Shadow. We're going to blot out the ones we've already got – and a third man with them. That's settled. When Croaker Mannick arrives, we'll let him do the wiping, like he did with three others."

Havelock turned toward Cardona as he spoke. His lips snarled the names of the three men whom the fiends of the crime crypt had marked for death.

"Perry Trappe. Tyler Bogart. Brisbane Calbot." Havelock laughed. "They're the ones we blotted out – and you three are due to follow."

He turned and faced his henchmen. Rising, Havelock waved his arm toward his uncle. Cecil Armsbury's countenance was a gloating one.

"This," stated Havelock, "is the silent partner. Cecil Armsbury. The man who built this crypt. The one who planned our crimes. He has reclaimed articles which might have exposed his past. Through his cunning, we have also gained fabulous wealth. He is the man who showed the way to obtain the mummy case of Senwosri, which is worth –"

Havelock paused. Armsbury's chuckle took up the tale.

"A quarter of a million," was the old man's statement.

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Eager gasps came from the crooks as they heard these astounding words. Duke Larrin's aids were beginning to realize the mammoth proportions of this crime ring. Martin Havelock, however, maintained a calm demeanor. He knew the truth. Cecil Armsbury had not told one half the reputed value contained within the mummy case of Senwosri.

"The jeweled Vishnu from Hyderabad." Cecil Armsbury was checking as he spoke to Fingers Keefel. "The golden panel from the Temple of Heaven. The sacred scroll from the Kaaba in Mecca. Those were fakes which needed to be destroyed. You performed that work, I am told. You have my thanks.

"With the mummy case of Senwosri came the antiquities which I once sold to the Egyptian Museum. That was your work" – Armsbury had turned to Brodie Brodan and Sinker Hargun – "and it was well done. Those antiquities were fakes – clever ones, but liable to detection. They are to be destroyed."

"I placed them in the treasure room," reminded Martin Havelock, in an undertone. He meant the compartment at the end of the crypt.

Cecil Armsbury nodded. The old man was gloating as he looked toward Handley Matson. The curator of the Egyptian Museum was aghast at the news which he had just heard.

"Living men have obstructed our path," resumed Armsbury. "Some of them have died. Others still live. Three of them are here before us." He pointed to the prisoners. "They shall die – all three. Living shall be dead!"

THE old man's chuckle resounded in hollow tones through the vault. It was a fiendish sign of an evildoer. The prisoners who heard it knew that they could expect no mercy from this cruel captor.

"Living men have brought us trouble," continued Armsbury, in a dramatic voice. "Therefore they shall die. The dead mean more to us than the living. The dead can bring us wealth!"

He turned to approach the huge mummy case. While the others watched, Armsbury clawed away the loose straps which bound the huge Egyptian casket.

"Wealth from the dead!" exclaimed Armsbury, turning to face his listeners. "Senwosri, the son of Amenemhe, brings us his gifts! The living have deserved to die. The dead deserve to live. Had I the power, I would restore life to Senwosri.

"That cannot be." The old man's tone seemed regretful. "So we must accept Senwosri as dead. Let us look upon his wealth. Feast your eyes, my friends, upon the splendor that will glitter from within this casket!"

As he completed his statement, Cecil Armsbury seized the front of the mummy case and pulled it open. The powerful wrench brought him alongside the casket, facing the men who thronged the crime crypt. That was as Cecil Armsbury had intended. A showman in his ways of crime, he wanted to see the effect upon the members of Duke Larrin's band.

Cecil Armsbury stared at faces that showed grotesquely in the crime crypt. He had noted eager eyes; he expected to hear gasps of elation. Instead, he was amazed by the sight of frozen faces.

Brodie Brodan's eyes were bulging. Fingers Keefel was sinking as his legs trembled beneath him. Bozo Griffin – Fritz Fursch – Sinker Hargun – these redoubtable lieutenants were wavering. Armsbury stared at Martin Havelock.

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The crook who called himself Duke Larrin was as rigid as a statue. A look of horror showed upon his whitened face. His gaze was centered upon the opened mummy case. Something within it had petrified the international crook.

With a snarl, Cecil Armsbury sprang forward. He wheeled and gazed in the same direction of the others – toward the opened front of the mummy case. His snarl died. He, too, stood astounded.

The figure that loomed within the mummy case was not the dead body of Senwosri, son of Amenemhe. Instead of a white-wrapped mummy, Cecil Armsbury gazed upon a living form in black. A tall, spectral being was surveying the crime crypt crooks with burning eyes. That penetrating gaze brought terror.

Black from head to foot. Eyes, alone, of the features that were hidden beneath the projecting brim of a slouch hat. A form shrouded with a cloak of sable hue. Such was the terrible figure that Cecil Armsbury and the others saw. They also viewed the threats that this living creature carried – a pair of mammoth automatics that bulged from black-gloved fists!

"The Shadow!"

Cecil Armsbury gasped the name that others dared not utter. In answer came a token from the opened mummy case of Senwosri. It was a strange, weird burst of whispered mirth that rose to a crescendo within the hollowness of the crypt; then faded to leave taunting echoes that seemed voiced by a myriad of invisible, impish tongues!

The laugh of The Shadow! To the startled crooks who heard it, that strident mockery came as a prophecy of doom!

CHAPTER XXII. WORDS OF THE SHADOW

NOT one crook dared make a move. Silence reigned within the crime crypt, but the memory of The Shadow's laugh prevailed. The Shadow had caught these fiends at a moment when they thought their safety complete. Not a gun was ready to challenge the threat of his mammoth automatics.

Cliff Marsland uttered an inaudible sigh of relief. He had forgotten that his own life was at stake. He had been chiding himself for the failure which had brought two others – Joe Cardona and Handley Matson – to share his fate.

The presence of The Shadow had ended all thoughts of doom. That spectral visitant in black, his ready guns looming before the terrified crooks, had the situation completely within his control. One against six; but The Shadow dominated the half-dozen!

Moments seemed to linger within the crime crypt. Bulging eyes stared as The Shadow's weird shape moved forward. With a slow, gliding motion, The Shadow issued from the mummy case of Senwosri.

His tall figure in plain view, the master who battled crime whispered forth a laugh more terrifying than the first. It was a shuddering laugh that seemed to come from everywhere. Sinister mirth pounded the ear-drums of the listening fiends. All trembled. Even Cliff and the two prisoners beside him felt the horror of that mockery.

"Living shall be dead." The Shadow's pronouncement came in a sibilant tone. "The dead has come to life to deal judgment. Your crimes are ended."

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The blazing eyes were focused upon the cringing crooks. Again an echo of The Shadow's laugh; then the hissing voice spoke:

"You are murderers. Perry Trappe died through your conniving. So did Tyler Bogart. One man – Croaker Mannick – was the instrument through whom death was dealt.

"Croaker Mannick met his fate. He challenged my might. He fought me amid darkness – at Tyler Bogart's home." A pause; The Shadow's whispered laugh was throbbing at the recollection. "A fight in the darkness. The Shadow dwells in dark! Croaker Mannick did not escape The Shadow. Croaker Mannick, man of murder, died as he fled!"

A gesture of one automatic added emphasis to The Shadow's statement. Fingers Keefel stared, bewildered. He remembered shots that Croaker had fired, back in Bogart's strongroom. Croaker had fought with The Shadow – and had lost!

"Croaker Mannick left Bogart's." The Shadow's voice was a creepy sneer. "I carried him from the spot where he had died. His body will never be found. But I retained his famous revolver. It was I who visited the home of Brisbane Calbot – to play the part of Croaker Mannick!"

THE truth broke upon Fingers Keefel. He realized now the oddities of that meeting in Calbot's curio room. He had seen Croaker Mannick there – but Croaker had seemed different. Fingers recalled the pale face of the murderer; Croaker's unusual suggestion.

Fingers had attributed them to nervousness on Croaker's part. He knew now that The Shadow had feigned such expressions so that Fingers would not detect the imposition!

"Croaker Mannick placed Brisbane Calbot in the vault." The Shadow's whisper was a sibilant throb. "I was Croaker Mannick. It was I who released Calbot – I, The Shadow – to carry him to safety. Brisbane Calbot lives! Living, he provided the clew to crime!"

The whole truth was dawning upon all. Cecil Armsbury, a snarl frozen on his lips, was facing The Shadow with eyes that still showed the glower of a fiend.

"Cecil Armsbury!" The Shadow's scoffing tone marked the crook who had backed the schemes of crime. "Purveyor of false treasures. I learned your game; but I, The Shadow, waited. I foresaw the culmination of crime. I sought a way to reach this crypt and take you and your minions unaware.

"I visited the Egyptian Museum! I saw your collection of antiquities. I knew them to be spurious. I learned of the mummy cases that were coming in. I divined that they would carry living henchmen."

A gasp from the corner of the room. It came from Handley Matson. The curator of the Egyptian Museum had gained a sudden inkling. He realized the identity of the old visitor who had called during the afternoon to see the tomb of Senwosri.

The Shadow! He had played the part of Professor Sturgis Dilling. His package – his briefcase – these had contained his black garments and his huge automatics. The Shadow, with masterful craft, had opened the door to Senwosri's tomb. He had entered – to close the door behind him.

"I took the part of Senwosri." The Shadow delivered a low, ominous laugh. "The mummy and all its treasure is safe – within the locked sarcophagus where I placed it. That container – supposedly empty – was not touched."

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It was Joe Cardona who uttered an amazed exclamation. He realized the subtlety of The Shadow's work. The crooks had ignored the relocked sarcophagus. So had the police. Both had passed by the real treasure. Unstolen, the mummy of Senwosri and its fabulous accompaniment of gems and gold had never left the Egyptian Museum.

The Shadow had tricked the crooks of the crime crypt with their own game! Minions of crime had been carried into the Egyptian Museum within closed mummy cases. The Shadow, foreseeing that move, had countered with the same scheme. Brodie Brodan's picked henchmen had served as carriers to bring The Shadow, himself, to the crime crypt!

TENSE silence reigned. The Shadow held the crooks at bay. They knew that their crimes were learned. Cecil Armsbury's past swindles were uncovered. Murder had been exposed. The secret of the crypt was known. The ways of fiends were ended.

Cliff Marsland, yanking one hand loose from the cord that bound his wrists, was preparing to give The Shadow aid. Cliff had served The Shadow in situations that had held this weird intensity.

He knew the ways of cornered crooks when they faced The Shadow. First terrified; then cowed; they invariably leaped to desperate measures when they realized that The Shadow knew all the evil which they had committed.

Cliff's hand was free. The Shadow's agent was reaching to aid Joe Cardona. This action was unnoticed by the crooks. Their staring eyes were all upon The Shadow. Six fiends were waiting, all with common thought. Their hope was a way to thwart this master who held them helpless. A single spark alone was needed to explode them.

It came. Martin Havelock – the redoubtable Duke Larrin – was the one who led the challenge to The Shadow's might. Facing the looming automatics, the snarling international crook was seized with sudden wildness.

A cry echoed through the crypt as Martin Havelock gave the word for mass attack. Nearest to The Shadow, Havelock leaped forward, hurling his reckless body into the path of both The Shadow's guns!

CHAPTER XXIII. THE SHADOW'S MIGHT

A TERRIFIC roar exploded within the crime crypt. It was the burst of an automatic wielded by The Shadow. Its report, caught by the vaulted room, sounded like the outburst of a mighty cannon.

The shot was fired just as Martin Havelock precipitated himself upon The Shadow. The crook sprawled as he reached his objective. The Shadow, whirling aside, let Havelock plunge on. The crook dove head first into the bottom of the mummy case of Senwosri. His clawing fingers only grazed the swishing cloak of The Shadow.

The Shadow never turned to gaze at Havelock's body. His shot had marked the end of Duke Larrin's career of crime. Havelock, dead from a single bullet in his heart, offered no new threat. There were others who needed a taste of The Shadow's blistering lead.

They were coming to the fight. The roar of the automatic had brought them to swift action. Brodie Brodan – his three lieutenants – all were yanking shining revolvers to fight the common foe. The delay of Martin Havelock's plunge; The Shadow's sidestep – these were factors which gave the crooks an opportunity.

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Brodie Brodan, leveling his revolver, was the first to make a forward lunge. Ahead of the others, Brodie sought to fire. The Shadow's second automatic spoke. The gang leader crumpled. The automatics continued like the roar of musketry. Their thunder was accompanied by tongues of flame.

Bozo Griffin staggered, wounded. Vainly, the hard-faced gang lieutenant tried to fire as he backed against the wall. A new bullet laid him low.

Fritz Fursch, dropping to the floor, got away one shot. His hasty aim was wide. As he steadied for a second shot, a tongue of flame spat toward him. Fritz crumpled with a stifled groan.

Sinker Hargun, slowest on the draw, was the coolest in his aim. Backing toward the side door of the crypt, the fiercest of Brodie Brodan's henchmen aimed a shot to kill. The Shadow had taken the others first, in consequence of Sinker's slowness. Apparently, Sinker was set to beat him to this shot.

Finger on trigger, Sinker pressed. As he did, the report of his revolver was accompanied by sight of The Shadow's dropping form. Sinker aimed again, in wild elation.

He never fired. The Shadow's fall had been designed. Coming a split second ahead of Sinker's shot, it had enabled the black-garbed master to escape the steady gangster's fire. While Sinker, thinking that he had felled his enemy, was pointing for new delivery, another blast from an automatic sponsored new echoes through the crime crypt.

The Shadow, shooting as he crouched, was perfect in his rapid aim. Sinker Hargun slumped. His left hand went to his body. His right arm lowered. His revolver loosened from spreading fingers. It clattered on the stone floor of the crypt. Sinker folded; his body cracked the floor with a thud. The gangster rolled on his back and lay motionless.

Cecil Armsbury! The chief plotter of this band of crooks had chosen different tactics than the others. His aim was escape. Plunging across the crypt, he had taken advantage of The Shadow's activity. He had made his objective the elevator that led to his living room above.

A man blocked his path. Armsbury, gun in hand, found himself wrestling with an unexpected foeman who had risen to meet him. It was Cliff Marsland. The Shadow's agent strove to hold the master plotter.

Armsbury fought with savage fury. His strength was surprising. Cliff could not wrest the revolver away from him; but he did manage to hold Armsbury on equal footing. Together, the two struggled while The Shadow performed execution upon snarling crooks.

Joe Cardona was struggling with the bonds which Cliff had partially released. The detective broke free. He paid no heed to Handley Matson's cries for release. He could aid the curator later. Joe launched himself upon Cecil Armsbury, in an effort to aid Cliff Marsland.

Amazingly, the old man increased his power as his adversaries doubled. He wrenched himself free and leveled his revolver squarely at Joe Cardona. Cliff Marsland, hurled against the wall, flung his arm upward and hit the old man's wrist. Armsbury's shot ricocheted from the ceiling.

Cardona and Cliff leaped forward, just as Armsbury yanked open the door to the elevator shaft. A cry came from Cardona.

"Stop him! He's going up to his house above!"

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Armsbury broke away as the two men seized him. His swinging hand delivered a side clip to Cardona's head. The detective slumped from the glancing blow of the revolver. Springing clear, Armsbury leveled his gun at Cliff. The Shadow's agent made a futile spring to stop the shot.

ARMSBURY'S gloating cackle ended as a burst of flame was accompanied by a roar from the crypt. The old man's arm dropped. The Shadow, picking the only opening past Cliff Marsland's intervening body, had clipped the archcrook in the shoulder.

Cliff seized Armsbury's gun. He dragged the old crook forward into the crypt. Joe Cardona, rising dazed, saw that Armsbury was helpless. Joe picked up a revolver that was lying on the floor beside the body of Fingers Keefel.

Cliff Marsland, standing by the door toward the elevator shaft, heard a warning hiss beside him. He turned to find himself staring into the eyes of The Shadow. Before Cliff could nod in reply, he was drawn through the door toward the elevator. Thrust aboard, he found himself riding up through blackness.

The Shadow had withdrawn his henchman. He knew that Cliff's status might be questioned, even though Cliff had aided Joe Cardona. With his agent, The Shadow was departing. Death reigned in the crime crypt.

The Shadow had played his part. He had ended the reign of crime. He had saved wealth that crooks had marked for theft. The crime crypt had been uncovered. Joe Cardona, representative of the law, was in possession!

The Shadow had picked the exit through Armsbury's, learning of it from Joe Cardona's cry. Standing in Armsbury's living room, he pointed Cliff Marsland toward the door. The agent nodded and hurried from the house. It was his part to vacate this vicinity.

Cliff, as he reached the corner of the nearest avenue, paused for a long breath. It was then that he heard the whispered echo of a weird laugh – a sound that seemed to come from in back of Armsbury's home.

The laugh of The Shadow! It was sinister mockery that denoted triumph. Yet to Cliff, it carried a strange note that presaged impending action!

CHAPTER XXIV. FROM THE CRYPT

DETECTIVE JOE CARDONA stared about him. He was in possession of the crime crypt. He realized for the first time that The Shadow had departed; then he discovered that the prisoner who had aided him was also gone.

Cardona had not recognized Cliff Marsland in the dim light of the crypt. He suspected that his fellow prisoner had been a former member of the crooked gang. That was all.

Cecil Armsbury, alone of all the crooks, still lived. The old man, sprawled helplessly against the wall, was weaponless. He was clutching his wounded shoulder, whimpering as though in pain.

Gasps for aid attracted Cardona's attention. The detective was forced to smile as he noted Handley Matson. The museum curator was weakly endeavoring to release himself from the bonds which held him.

Cardona approached and aided. Handley Matson, freed, staggered to his feet. He was unsteady; his cadaverous face showed pallor. Cardona thrust a gun into his hand.

THE CRIME CRYPT

"Look after Armsbury," ordered the detective. "Keep him covered. I'm going to see what's in here."

Cardona motioned toward the door beyond the mummy case of Senwosri. Picking up loose revolvers from the floor, the detective approached and hacked at the lock of Armsbury's treasure room. He finally used a revolver to blast away the lock.

The sight of glittering objects opened Cardona's eyes. Here was pelf of tremendous value – stolen wealth which Armsbury had stored away during his long career. It captured the detective's entire attention until a sharp cry made Cardona turn back to the crypt.

Cecil Armsbury had risen weakly to his feet. Handley Matson, nervous, had made no attempt to stop him. Now, with a renewal of his old vigor, Armsbury had leaped upon the curator!

Cardona saw Matson go down. His revolver clattered on the floor. Armsbury scooped it up with his left hand and sprang to the side of the crypt as Joe Cardona blazed a revolver shot.

The bullet missed its mark. Armsbury, with fiendish strength, yanked open the side door. Cardona, firing, sprang forward. Armsbury seemed to possess a charm against the detective's bullets. Cardona saw him disappear beyond the door.

"Come on!" Cardona thrust a new gun into Matson's hand as the curator rose from the floor.

THEN, with prompt pursuit, the detective yanked open the door and revealed the long passage which Armsbury had taken. The old crook was fleeing toward a spot of safety which Cardona had not known was in existence.

Joe fired down the passage. His bullets ricocheted from the walls, too late to stop Armsbury's flight. The old man had gained the other end. He was going through the panel. Cardona dashed after him and reached the barrier. He yanked it open.

"Hurry! Hurry!" he heard Armsbury calling. "We must get away or all is lost!"

Scuffling feet sounded on stairs. Armsbury had called to Sinker Hargun's henchmen. These gangsters had not heard the firing in which their leader had been slain. The buried crypt was sound-proof.

Cardona delivered wild shots as he dashed through the storeroom, with Matson at his heels. His flashlight showed the stairs that led above. He blazed in that direction. Return shots resounded. Then a door slammed shut. Cardona clambered up the steps and tried to crash the barrier. It resisted.

Cecil Armsbury was explaining matters to a group of excited gunmen. He was urging them to flight; and he pointed out the way. Across the basement was an elevator shaft. An open car stood there. The operator and the janitor were staring at the sound of shots which they had heard.

A revolver barked from a mobster's hand. The elevator man and the janitor fled for cover, leaving the car deserted. Armsbury waved his good arm and the mobsters followed him into the lift. The door clanged. They rose upward to the lobby floor.

The door was flung open. The operator of a second elevator looked out as he saw a gun-wielding gangster spring from the car that had come from the cellar. He made a leap to stop the armed invader.

THE CRIME CRYPT

The gangster, with others at his heels, flung the elevator man aside and paused to aim at him. Then came a sharp cry from a second mobster. The aiming man looked up. Straight ahead, framed in the outer doorway of the lobby, was a looming form in black!

The Shadow!

A FIST-CLENCHED automatic barked. The murderous gangster dropped. Others raised their guns and started fire. Automatics thundered in quick return. The Shadow's shots, aimed at the startled group, found quick effect. Mobsters sprawled, their hasty shots traveling wide.

"Back! Back!" Cecil Armsbury was screaming. "Up to the roof!"

Three gangsters were all who could obey. Diving into the elevator, they clanged the door. The lift started up. Armsbury uttered a cry of satisfaction. Then came a growl from a mobster, peering through the slatted side of the elevator.

"He's after us!" was the man's statement. "In the other elevator!"

Armsbury peered through the slats. His lips writhed as he realized the truth. The Shadow had seized the second elevator and was in pursuit.

The shaft was designed for three elevators. The central one was not in use. Hence there was a space between the two – the one which contained Armsbury and his gangsters and the other in which The Shadow was following.

"Out with the light," ordered Armsbury.

A mobster clicked the switch. The elevator was passing the seventh floor. Armsbury knew that the old hotel had twelve stories.

"Slow it!" he ordered in an undertone. "We can't get out before he reaches us –"

The command was obeyed. Gangster guns were through the slats, ready to blaze The Shadow's elevator when it came alongside. In the vague gloom of the shaft, the other car was gaining upward impetus. Its solid top was a guard against bullets; but its slatted sides were vulnerable, beginning three feet above the floor.

Gangster guns blazed. The faster moving elevator was the target. To return the fire, The Shadow would have to be at the slats. Bullets flattened against The Shadow's lift. Others whistled between the bars.

Growling gangsters stayed their fire as the other elevator shot by. There had been no reply. They thought that they had clipped The Shadow!

"Down!" gasped Armsbury. "Down! Don't take chances –"

A mobster fumbled in the darkness. He stopped the car and started its course downward. This time they could fight their way through the lobby. Sure of safety, the mobsters were grouped against the open-slatted side.

Then came thunderous roars. From the height above, the second elevator came dropping, with all control released. The Shadow had loosed it from the topmost floor. With terrific speed, he had taken the downward pursuit!

THE CRIME CRYPT

Freed from the control of the elevator, he was at the slatted sides, pouring the lead of his loaded automatics into the car which held Armsbury and the frightened mobsters.

NOT one had suspected The Shadow's ruse. They had thought – as Armsbury had suggested – that The Shadow might have crouched to cover to avoid their shots. But to drop – as if from nowhere, on a twelve-story plunge! This was the stroke that caught them unaware.

Cecil Armsbury crouched to the floor as cursing mobsters dropped about him. Of a dozen shots delivered by The Shadow, seven had passed between the slats. They had crippled the trio of mobsters in the car with Armsbury.

Alone capable of action, the old crook yanked the control as The Shadow's car whizzed past. Armsbury's elevator jammed to a stop between the fifth floor and the fourth. It started upward at the old man's action on the control.

A whistling sound wailed through the shaft. The Shadow's lift had struck the air-cushion in its confined shaft below the fourth floor. Rebounding as though shot upward by a spring, it was in new pursuit. The Shadow had regained the control!

Armsbury's car clicked to a stop at the twelfth floor. The old man clawed open the door. He dashed along a short passage, up steps, and pulled open a barrier. He hurried out to the roof of Ridgelow Court. He was ahead of The Shadow. Let the dying gangsters remain in their useless elevator!

Reaching a corner post at the rear of the roof, Cecil Armsbury clung there in the darkness. He was obscured from the glare of the city's sky. He steadied his right wrist upon the cornice. Gloating; he pointed revolver at the door through which he had come. He waited.

Though capture might prove inevitable, Cecil Armsbury was determined to commit one final deed of crime. He had reached this spot in time to await The Shadow. The moment that the blackclad avenger might appear, Armsbury's hand would press the trigger.

Sure death – with this steady aim. Armsbury's eyes were keen as they watched the whitened surface of the door. Not even The Shadow could come there undiscovered. Armsbury's only qualm was the possibility that The Shadow might avoid this trap. Yet the old fiend, chuckling, counted on The Shadow's daring.

The being who had come to the crime crypt in the mummy case of Senwosri, there to eliminate a band of fierce ruffians, would certainly not avoid this challenge. In the crypt, Armsbury had chosen flight. That course was ended. The Shadow would learn the perfection of Cecil Armsbury's calculating aim!

ON the twelfth floor of Ridgelow Court, The Shadow was standing by the very exit which Armsbury had taken. Behind him were the open doors of two elevators: the one containing the bullet-scarred gangsters whom Armsbury had abandoned; the other, the car in which The Shadow had arrived.

There was one path which Armsbury must have taken. The Shadow knew it: through that door to the roof. The Shadow's gloved hand was upon the door. Then came a solemn, whispered laugh from lips that were hidden by the upturned collar of the black cloak.

The Shadow saw the trap. He knew the odds which Armsbury was playing. His keen eyes spied a window at the bottom of the steps. The Shadow took it as his objective.

THE CRIME CRYPT

Gloved hands raised the sash. The Shadow's tall form passed through the opened window. Strong fingers gripped an ornamental stone above the window. A long arm was thrust higher; it clutched the base of the cornice.

Clinging with one sure hand, The Shadow swung over space. His free hand joined the gripping one. Both held the base of the cornice. The Shadow's body moved upward. A rising hand pressed powerful fingers against the top of the cornice.

Both hands gained this objective. The Shadow's body reached the base. It rested firmly there; a freed hand reached beneath the black, enshrouding cloak.

That hand produced an automatic. Gripping the weapon of vengeance, The Shadow raised hand and head above the walled cornice. Clinging to his precarious perch, he turned his keen eyes in searching gaze across the roof.

The Shadow was more than a dozen feet from the door which Cecil Armsbury was watching. The old man was hidden in the darkness of the opposite corner; but the whispered laugh which was almost inaudible told The Shadow's divination.

The one spot which the villainous sponsor of the crime crypt could have chosen was that opposite corner. There, The Shadow knew, the fiend was waiting with his gun trained on the whitened door from the twelfth floor!

The Shadow raised head and shoulders. His automatic leveled. Here, at the front of the roof, the glow was behind him. His slouch hat and the upper portion of his cloak formed a spectral silhouette against the glowing sky.

A cry came from across the roof. Cecil Armsbury had spied The Shadow. Clinging to his vantage post, Armsbury shifted aim as he realized that the door could no longer be his target. With his cry, Armsbury fired.

THE blaze of the revolver showed the old man's exact location. The bullet, though aimed in haste, was close. It clipped the brim of The Shadow's tilted hat as it whistled past to space. Armsbury's frantic finger was pressing for a second shot when The Shadow's answer came.

The automatic barked. The Shadow's aim was perfect. The flash of the crook's revolver was all that he had needed. The leaden messenger found its target.

A second cry came from Cecil Armsbury. The old man's clinging arm lost its hold. His revolver dangled, hanging from his trigger finger. It clattered to the roof. A wail came from Armsbury's lips as the master of the crime crypt toppled backward.

Headlong over the cornice – thus did Cecil Armsbury plunge. Twelve stories downward to the courtyard behind the old hotel; Armsbury's helpless body formed a circling, puppet figure as it dropped through darkness. It crashed upon the paving.

The Shadow crossed the roof. Peering from the rear cornice, his keen eyes distinguished the contorted form of the villain who had perished. Cecil Armsbury was dead; his motionless corpse was lying on the cement that covered the passage between Ridgeway Court and the crime crypt!

Crime from the crypt was ended. From the crypt had Cecil Armsbury fled. The Shadow, from the crypt, had blocked the monster's path of flight.

THE CRIME CRYPT

Minions of crime had perished. Duke Larrin's band of murderers and raiders were no more. Last to die had been the master schemer of the lot: Cecil Armsbury.

Weird laughter sounded its triumph from atop the old hotel. Its tones reached the roof of the old mansion where Cecil Armsbury had lived.

Chilling, penetrating mockery! Its echoes faded with eerie irony, as though creeping through the old secluded mansion that they might reach the crime crypt as a token of The Shadow's victory!

THE END (NOTE: Here is a description of the main characters in the story. They were placed throughout the story in the original pulp. They have now been placed at the end of the story, so as not to interrupt the flow of the narrative.)

CECIL ARMSBURY

Under the guise of adventurer, world-traveler, collector of various treasures, Cecil Armsbury has been successful in accomplishing a masterful plot of crookedness. The victims of his evil are not aware of his treachery – not yet. But there is a time for reckoning, and Cecil Armsbury plans for such a time.

From within his own home, he acts as the master mind of this vast plot. He foresees all contingencies; he realizes the difficulty of the task which he undertakes. But his evil mind is equal to all the situations, and his cunning sufficient to bring to him aides who carry out orders to the letter.

DUKE LARRIN

A master crook in his own right, Duke Larrin attempts to take advantage of another master crook – and there results the most deadly combination of wickedness possible. One is a schemer beyond reproach; the other is a crook of international reputation who is looking for new territory, new means of crime.

Duke Larrin and Cecil Armsbury, two of a kind! They pool their experience, and out of it comes a plot that is bigger than anything any single crook could imagine. The idea is perfect; the system they plan is foolproof. They account for everything – everything except The Shadow!

HARRY VINCENT

Agent of The Shadow

Of all The Shadow's agents, Harry Vincent is probably the most important. It was Harry Vincent who aided The Living Shadow, long ago, in his battle against the gang of diamond thieves. But that was only after The Shadow had saved Vincent when he was on the brink of death, and thus won his everlasting loyalty and subservience.

Vincent, as the dean of The Shadow's agents, is worthy of his post. Quick-thinking, fast-acting, impressive-looking – that is Harry Vincent. He follows orders, and when necessary, is able to do his own thinking, a requirement essential to all agents of The Shadow.

"FINGERS" KEEFEL

Another lieutenant of the master crooks. Fingers and Brodie Brodan are both serving the same purpose – doing the work "up front" while the masters do their plotting behind the scenes.

THE CRIME CRYPT

"BRODIE" BRODAN

One of gangland's big shots, is only an incidental lieutenant in this campaign of great crime. Nevertheless, upon him rests much of the success of this crookery.

JOE CARDONA Ace detective of the New York force

Although The Shadow is not an officer of the law, he fights for the law at all times, and, indirectly, is the law's most effective agent. There was a time when the police did not believe in The Shadow, when the name was accounted as nothing more than a myth. Even today, officially, there is no such name on the police rolls. In all reports, it is a "person unknown" who does something which brings the police on the trail.

But to Joe Cardona, ace detective of the New York force, The Shadow is real. More than once Cardona's life has been saved by this master fighter; more than one baffling case has been "solved" by the police because The Shadow set the scene, gave Cardona the tip, and let this ace detective win new laurels by making a marvelous "catch." Joe Cardona knows he owes everything, including his life, to The Shadow.

CLIFF MARSLAND

To the underworld, Cliff Marsland is a free-lance fighter, a gunman of high repute. He owes allegiance to no gang; his nerve, his gun-fighting ability, make him a man in demand when big jobs are planned; and his price is high.

Cliff Marsland has a reputation. He was in the Big House on a murder charge; he has dozens of crimes accredited to him.

But what the underworld does not know is that the murder charge Cliff took was lifted from the shoulders of another, and that the crimes credited to him are all trumped up. And also, that this free-lance fighter who owes allegiance to no gang is an agent of The Shadow, enemy of gangdom, and uses his built-up reputation in order to maintain contact between the chiefs of the underworld and the king of crime avengers – The Shadow!

CLYDE BURKE

Newspaperman

As a newspaperman, Clyde Burke is a wizard. All sources of news are open to him; his "scoops" have made him in demand by every paper in the country. Clyde serves faithfully on the Classic, leaving his occupation only when duty calls him elsewhere.

That duty, by the way, is not imposed by his newspaper superiors, but by someone else – by The Shadow. For Clyde Burke, who was once down-and-out, ready to give up entirely, was rescued by The Shadow. The master who saved his life now calls it his own, to be offered up if need be. But The Shadow's agents, though they risk their lives continuously, also have the protection of their master, the man who wastes no lives, but saves many.