

FIVE IVORY BOXES

Maxwell Grant

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CHAPTER I. THE IVORY BOXES

THERE were five men gathered around the table; five whose faces were intent as they gazed at the object that rested in the center an ivory box, its surface carved in an intricate pattern of harmonious design. The box was a perfect cube, measuring nearly a foot on each side, and it seemed to invite the grasp of eager hands.

However, such hands were restraining themselves. Four of the men present were leaving all handling of the box to Alexander Talbor, the man who could claim its ownership by right of present possession.

He was an odd creature, Talbor. His deep-lined face, his thin gray hair and stooped shoulders, evidenced the weight of age. In contrast, Talbor, by action, showed himself spry and energetic. Experience had aged him, but with it Alexander Talbor had lost none of the driving force that had carried him through strange adventures in distant lands.

Not the least of those adventures was the one that had resulted in Talbor's acquisition of the ivory box and its contents, which all the rest were so eager to see. Talbor recognized their impatience, when he looked about the group.

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"Five ivory boxes," chuckled Talbor. "One for each of us. Rare boxes, obtained at a high price that of many lives!"

The listeners stared. Talbor was speaking of five boxes, whereas they saw only one. Their curiosity about the other four was soon to be satisfied. Picking up the box between his quick, nervous hands, Talbor probed deftly among the many squares that formed its pattern. Quite suddenly, the lid of the cube sprang open.

Inside was a second box, that Talbor removed. It was similar to the first, except in size, being about two inches smaller. Removing the second box, Talbor played his fingers along its surface. In the same surprising fashion, the second box came open.

A third box was within. Again, Talbor operated it deftly, to open it and produce a fourth. Therewith, his action was repeated, until the fourth box, springing wide, disgorged a fifth, which, according to Talbor's own tabulation, must be the final one.

It was the fifth box, small enough to be cupped between his loose–spread hands, that Talbor handled with the greatest care.

Talbor's eyes were quick and darting as they roved the group, seeking to capture other gazes. When he was satisfied on that point, Talbor pressed a hidden spring; the fifth box came wide, and its owner chuckled as he placed it on the table, beside the others that he had taken from the nest.

No wonder Talbor chuckled.

Gleaming from the final box was a great ruby, so glorious a gem that no one could have mistaken it for anything but genuine. This was the prize that all had expected, an object so rare and valuable that Talbor's comment on the ivory boxes amounted to no more than idle banter.

"The pride of the Orient!" gloated Talbor. "The great Siamese ruby that once graced an emperor's crown! Our ruby, gentlemen!" Shrewdly, his eyes roved the group. "I should say 'mine,' until you have paid me the stipulated price of fifty thousand dollars each, toward joint ownership."

There was a buzz of indignation from the group, rising to individual voices, all expressing the same protest. The price was not fifty thousand apiece. Before his trip to the Orient, Talbor had agreed to acquire and deliver the matchless ruby for the sum total of fifty thousand dollars. His present claim was a false one, an outright misrepresentation of the facts.

To all this, Talbor listened, his face set in an adamant smile that told he would not yield the point at issue. Only Talbor's eyes moved, as he checked upon the indignant faces that confronted him.

These partners in Talbor's venture were behaving in the individual style that he expected.

FIRST: Wilbur Glenlake. His tone had a rumble that suited his glowering, bulldog face, with its underslung jaw. Glenlake was a successful man of business, who had retired after a career in which he had constantly forced his indomitable will upon lesser associates. He was trying such tactics with Talbor, at present, but they wouldn't work.

A contrast was Laird Trevoise. He was the professional type, a criminal lawyer who had matched wits with the best of prosecutors. His eyes were sharp, his voice persuasive, though his features, thin and dry, retained a poker–faced attitude. He thought he could outwit Talbor, but he would learn that he couldn't.

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The third man, Jonathan Philmont, had been a professor in his time. His face was roundish, both studious and reflective. His eyes had a kindly, puzzled gaze through the beribboned glasses that adorned his nose. But Philmont was neither generous nor bewildered. He was out for all that he could get, and Talbor knew it.

Last of the lot was Peter Harlingen, the noted scientist whose experiments with X rays had won him awards as a humanitarian. But if Harlingen had any regard for the human race, it was embodied all in himself. He was as selfish as the rest, perhaps more so.

With these four, it was one for all and all for one, each with the desire to be the final one. If anyone could find an easy way of eliminating all the others, Talbor included, that individual would do it. Each man wanted the magnificent Siamese ruby for his own prize; they were willing to share, however, only because there was no other way.

"My price still stands, gentlemen," announced Talbor blandly. "At that, I am offering you a bargain. This long-sought ruby is worth half a million dollars, to the right purchaser, with no questions asked. By pooling your resources, you will stand in line for a sizable profit. My only purpose is to get my proper share."

Closing the ruby within the smallest box, Talbor began to put the nest together, watching the other men as he did, and noting their typical reactions.

Glowing, Glenlake was thinking only of the ruby. Trevoise, eyes alert, was studying the way the boxes fitted. Philmont's gaze was distant, through his spectacles. As for Harlingen, he waited until the largest box had clicked shut, then observed the fitted nest as a whole, as though an idea had struck him.

"You can't get away with this, Talbor!" boomed Glenlake. "Can he, Trevoise?"

"Impossible!" responded Trevoise, in the dry style of a consulting attorney. "We happen to know the lengths to which Talbor went to acquire the ruby."

"One word from any of us," announced Philmont, in an important tone, "and your game is up, Talbor!"

"And we shall speak that word," reminded Harlingen, "if you insist upon forcing the issue!"

Rising, Talbor picked up the five nested boxes with a satisfied smile. He stepped to a corner of the room, removed a picture from the wall and disclosed a small safe behind it. Speaking while he turned the dial, Talbor gave his final verdict.

"We share a common secret," he declared. "One that none of you would dare to reveal. Admitting that we were partners in our venture, each of you can be held liable for the bribery, and resulting crimes including murder that my effort to gain the ruby required."

Opening the safe as he finished, Talbor looked across his shoulder. One pair of eyes shifted hastily; they belonged to Wilbur Glenlake.

From his angle, Glenlake had been watching Talbor turn the safe knob something that had not interested the rest; partly because they lacked Glenlake's advantage, partly because their minds turned to subtler plans.

Putting the nested boxes in the safe, Talbor closed the door and twirled the knob. He reiterated his intentions, with the precise statement:

"The five ivory boxes will remain here, gentlemen, until you meet my price. That stone, the ruby, will be

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yours to share. As for the ivory boxes, we shall each keep one as a memento of a profitable partnership."

AS the other four arose, Talbor opened the door to another room and gestured them through. On the threshold, Glenlake paused, to boom a question.

"What about that servant of yours, Talbor? Does he know anything about the boxes or their contents?"

"Absolutely nothing!" replied Talbor. "In fact, I have dismissed Channing from my service. So, good evening, gentlemen, and be careful about going out. Use the back exit, at the bottom of the stairway."

The other men nodded as Talbor conducted them through the connecting room to a hallway where stairs showed ahead. He watched them start down, then closed the door. They heard it shut, but said nothing until they had descended a full floor. Then whispers began among them.

"The ruby is ours, whatever Talbor says –"

"He's in it deeper than we are, so he'll have to come to terms –"

"He'll come to terms, all right, when his money runs out –"

"That's right. Time is to our advantage!"

There were three flights down to the lobby. Near the bottom, the four men paused by mutual agreement. One by one, they sneaked down the final series of steps, to an obscure passage that led out to a rear street. There, before taking separate courses, they waited in the offing, to make sure that the rest had come along.

None of the four trusted each other. Nor did Alexander Talbor trust any of his partners. That fact was evidenced, a few minutes later, when Talbor's stooped figure appeared at the rear exit that the rest had left. His chin buried in his overcoat collar, hat pulled down upon his head, Talbor sidled along the street, checking the cars that pulled away from various spots along the curb.

Glenlake's car first; then one belonging to Trevoise. Philmont picked up a cab, a block away, and Talbor was close enough to witness his departure. That left only Harlingen, and Talbor snooped craftily in search of the fourth man. He finally spied Harlingen, three blocks from the hotel, entering a subway entrance.

Waiting a few minutes, until he heard a subway train arrive and rumble away, Alexander Talbor chuckled to himself and stalked toward a little lunchroom, to get a midnight snack. He'd fared well in the conference, Talbor had, but he was thinking of the future, not the past.

How long Talbor's finances would enable him to hold out against the wealthy combine, was only part of his problem. The rest involved the Siamese ruby itself.

Possession of that much-prized gem was in itself a liability. In centuries past, the stone had brought disaster not only to those who owned it, but to those who sought it.

Of course, no one but Talbor and his associates would suspect that such a jewel was locked within the five ivory boxes so safely stowed in the hotel room safe. But a secret shared by five men belonged to far too many. Particularly when each of the five felt that he was entitled to the ruby, quite as much as was its present owner.

Five ivory boxes!

They boded doom for any man who held them, and Alexander Talbor, the present owner of those boxes, stood first in line for tragedy, unless the wits that had served him so well in the past could preserve him through the future!

CHAPTER II. CREEPS IN THE NIGHT

IT was only a few minutes after midnight, when Harry Vincent sauntered into the lobby of the Hotel Talleyrand and glanced about the place. It was just the sort of hotel where Harry would expect to find Alexander Talbor, the man whose trail he had been seeking for the past few days.

Not that Harry knew much about Talbor. In fact, Harry had never even seen the fellow. It was The Shadow who wanted data on Talbor, and Harry Vincent had been assigned to the preliminary work of locating the man in question.

So it often happened in the service of The Shadow. Usually, however, Harry's surveys concerned persons much more sinister than Alexander Talbor. Indeed, there was nothing of the sinister about Talbor. The man was notable only as a lecturer who had traveled to remote quarters of the globe while acquiring material for his public appearances.

Talbor, like his lectures, belonged distinctly to the past. Harry, for one, recalled him only as a boyhood memory, when Talbor had toured Michigan, Harry's home State, speaking on the world of today as it had been then.

That tour had probably been Talbor's last, though the man's name had stayed before the public in connection with movie shorts on travel subjects. Talbor photographed those reels himself, and they were voiced by the studios to which he shipped them.

Hence, finding Alexander Talbor wasn't easy, since no one knew what he looked like, talked like, or what his habits were, except, of course, those persons to whom he happened to disclose himself.

Nevertheless, Harry Vincent was using a very good system in tracking Alexander Talbor.

The system was this:

Since Talbor had probably reserved rooms ahead of him, at some New York hotel, his mail would be on hand at the desk, along with letters for other unregistered persons. All that Harry had to do was ask if any mail had come for himself, and the clerk would sort through the letters to see.

Sometimes, such mail was alphabetically arranged; if so, all the better. Vincent would be under "V," near the very bottom, which meant a trip through the whole pile.

By watching the sorting, Harry kept a lookout for "Talbor" while the search was under way. As an asset to this system, Harry had practiced reading names upside down, from right to left, and was all set to spot Alexander Talbor's name if it appeared.

Harry's request for mail brought the same barren result at the Hotel Talleyrand. The clerk found no letter for anyone named Vincent, and Harry saw that there was none for Talbor. Then came the clerk's usual inquiry: did Harry intend to register? As usual, Harry was about to shake his head, when a diversion occurred.

The features of the man who supplied it were well muffled in overcoat collar and hat pulled down upon his graying hair. He walked with a stoop. He came in from the street and headed directly for the elevator, where

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he nodded abruptly when the operator said:

"Good evening, Mr. Talbor."

The clerk was watching Talbor, as though the man constituted a living curiosity. Perhaps he thought that such a guest was a sale's point in the hotel's favor. Noting Harry's interest, the clerk leaned across the desk and confided:

"An interesting gentleman, that Mr. Talbor. Came in two days ago. Been around the world a dozen times, or more. He picked this hotel, and he likes it so much that he's going to stay right on."

The dial showed that the elevator was stopping at the fourth floor. Turning to the clerk, Harry acted as though convinced of the merits of the Hotel Talleyrand. He decided that he would take a room, provided that it wasn't too expensive, and thereby he reduced the choice to the lower floors. The clerk gave Harry a room on the fifth.

ON the way to the elevator, Harry observed a rear passage leading from the lobby and noticed that it turned a corner past a staircase that could be seen from only one angle. Since the Hotel Talleyrand had no other special merit, Harry judged that the obscure stairs might be a reason why Alexander Talbor had chosen it as residence. It certainly fitted Talbor's reputation as a mystery man, this place where a person could slide in or out unobserved. True, Harry had seen Talbor enter by the lobby, but that didn't mean that he always used the recognized route. Nor did it apply to any clandestine guests who might call on Talbor.

Mentally, Harry was getting close to the existing state of things, though there was an added point that the clerk had not mentioned. A very important point, relative to Talbor's choice of the Talleyrand, in preference to similar apartment hotels in Manhattan.

The point was this: Talbor's apartment had once been occupied by the hotel manager; on that account, its wall had a built-in safe. That one item had sold Talbor on stopping at the Talleyrand; the stairway, with its easy access to the street, was just an added attraction.

Before the elevator could start Harry on his upward journey, the clerk received a call at the desk phone, and the elevator operator waited to hear what it was about. Obviously, Mr. Talbor was on the wire, for the clerk kept repeating the name earnestly, apologetically, and at the end, beseechingly.

At last, the clerk turned, started to say something, but finished by beckoning to the elevator man, who left the car and met the clerk halfway to the desk.

Their buzzed tones carried, and Harry caught the gist of things. For some reason that the clerk couldn't understand, their prize guest, Mr. Talbor, was checking out. The clerk finished with a despairing spread of his arms.

"His servant has already packed the bags," said the clerk. "Mr. Talbor sent him to look for other quarters, and he found them. He's coming back here in a cab to pick them up."

The elevator man stared blankly. "What servant?" he queried. "Does Mr. Talbor have one?"

The clerk nodded.

"A man named Channing," he stated. "He's been in and out a few times, but he usually stays close to the apartment. Anyway, Channing is gone, and Mr. Talbor is leaving, too. So bring the bags when you come

down."

Harry pretended that he hadn't heard a word. The elevator man took him to the fifth floor and showed the room assigned to him, but Harry didn't stay there long. Instead, he hurried along the hall, found the stairway and crept down to the fourth floor.

There, peering around the corner, Harry saw the elevator man picking up some suitcases that were stacked outside a door. Evidently, Talbor had simply put them outside where the elevator man could take them.

What Harry didn't learn was that Talbor's suite had two doors; one opening toward the elevators, the other close to the very stairs that Harry had used for his own inspection trip. Going up those stairs again, Harry reached his room and made a prompt phone call, which was answered by a quiet voice:

"Burbank speaking."

Burbank was The Shadow's contact man, through whom Harry could always reach his chief. As prompt as he was methodical, Burbank also had a quiet way of producing confidence, one which Harry had found most helpful when phoning under stress.

And Harry, at present, felt heavy stress, though he couldn't analyze the reason. The mere fact that Talbor was checking out was not enough to produce a tense sensation.

So, curbing his growing imagination, Harry told Burbank that the bird was about to fly for parts unknown, and Burbank, as a matter of course, instructed Harry to keep watch a short while longer. In keeping with that order, Harry left the room again and took his position at the stair top.

He was sure that he would hear the elevator, if it came to the fourth floor again. Should Talbor intend to go down by the stairs, now that his bags were in the lobby, Harry should certainly hear him. The fact that Harry could hear things that happened on the stairs, was demonstrated suddenly, and in a fashion that gave a prophetic quality to Harry's earlier qualms.

FOOTSTEPS came creeping from the stairway.

Slow, creaky footsteps, that couldn't belong to Talbor, for these were coming upward. They were somewhere below the fourth floor and, as Harry listened, they reached the floor itself.

It was then that Harry, on the fifth, realized that he ought to investigate the owner of those stealthy creeps, so he started a downward sneak. Then, on an afterthought, Harry halted.

The creaks were going in the wrong direction. Instead of approaching the door where Harry had seen the bags, they stole in the opposite direction. Listening, Harry heard a door come open, then a soft thud as it closed. Deciding that some prowling guest had simply tucked himself away for the night, Harry judged that the man had no connection with Talbor.

The case was quite the opposite. The door that Harry had heard come open and go shut chanced to be the other entrance to Talbor's suite, the route through the connecting room, by which four visitors had come and gone earlier this evening!

Getting back to the fifth floor, Harry decided to close his own door, which he had left ajar. Hand on the knob, he was feeling in his pocket to make sure he had his key, when a whispered laugh reached his ear.

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As he looked up, Harry felt a gloved hand clamp his own, its pressure urging silence. Then Harry was staring into burning eyes, the only visible features of a face that was obscured by the brim of a slouch hat. Below those eyes were black-cloaked shoulders.

The Shadow!

Harry's chief had made a rapid journey to the Hotel Talleyrand. His remarkable arrival in Harry's room was explained by a breeze that swayed the folds of The Shadow's cloak. The breeze came from the window, by which The Shadow had entered, after scaling the outside ledges of the old-fashioned building wall.

To Harry's ears came the whispered word:

"Report!"

Briefly, Harry added what little he had learned since phoning Burbank. When he mentioned the creeping footsteps, he caught a sharp glow from The Shadow's eyes. The Shadow asked the exact location of Talbor's suite, in reference to Harry's. When Harry gave it, The Shadow responded:

"Watch the stairway. Let no one leave!"

Then, with a whisk of his cloak, The Shadow was gone. Across Harry's room, he merged with the blackness of the window. When darkness unclouded and Harry saw the blinks of an electric sign, coming through the night, he knew that The Shadow was off on a trip along the outside ledge, to a spot that would give him access to Talbor's room, on the floor below.

Still wondering how little, or how much, the creeps from the stairway might have meant, Harry moved back to his post. He was hardly there before he heard the creeping sound again.

Tightening his hand on an automatic in his pocket, Harry decided that whoever it might be, Talbor or the unknown man, he would follow the prowler down the stairs.

Right then, he learned that the system wouldn't work. Whoever those creeping steps denoted, they belonged to a new factor in the case. Two men had already come to the fourth floor: one by the elevator, another by the stairway. They were soon to be joined by a third.

These new footsteps, almost at the fourth floor when Harry heard them from a story above, were also coming up from the darkened stairs below!

CHAPTER III. DOUBLE CRIME

A RING of light glowed upon the dial of the safe that was set in Talbor's wall. Within that circle, a steady hand was turning the combination to the exact numbers that Talbor, himself, had used a short while before.

The hand stopped; its motion was eager as it gripped the knob and tugged. The safe came open.

The light glistened upon a cube of creamy white, the outer of the five ivory boxes that contained the stolen ruby from Siam. As eager as the hand that held the light, was the face that pushed into the glow.

It was the face of Wilbur Glenlake.

A little thing like robbery couldn't faze the retired business magnate with the bulldog profile, not where the

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ivory boxes were concerned. Glenlake already regarded himself as part owner in the Siamese ruby, since he had helped finance Talbor's trip to gain it. However, Glenlake also recognized the rights of ownership as stated by Talbor.

Those rights had become Glenlake's. His chuckle was a deep basso gloat, as he withdrew the largest box from the safe and his face from the light. Clutching the ivory prize with the arm that held the flashlight, Glenlake used his other hand to shut the safe door and then smear away all fingerprints with a handkerchief.

Not that Glenlake feared the law. He was sure that Talbor would never report this robbery. Glenlake was worried about his other associates. They would believe that one man of four had stolen the boxes and the ruby, all for his own. It would be Glenlake's business to play dumb, and act grieved like the rest of them. He couldn't afford to leave traces of his crime, even though it was no crime, to his warped mind.

Closing the safe was Glenlake's mistake.

So far, he hadn't made too much noise, not even with his booming chuckle. But the metallic thud of the closing safe door was a heavy sound that carried.

As Glenlake turned from the safe, a door popped open in a corner of the room. It was the door of Talbor's bedroom, and Glenlake knew it. Extinguishing his flashlight, Glenlake broke for the other door that led through the connecting room to the outlet afforded by the stairs.

At that moment a window shattered, as a figure in black precipitated itself through with a swing from the ledge above. Landing on the floor, The Shadow saw two figures swing as they grappled; one, a brawny man, who was clutching a squarish object under his arm and swinging at an opponent, with a flashlight as a cudgel; the other, a stoop-shouldered fighter, in shirt sleeves, whose thin, white hair made a bobbing beacon in the darkness.

The Shadow did not wait to identify the strugglers. So far, he knew nothing about Glenlake; while Talbor was something of a mystery figure, whose return to New York had accompanied certain rumors from the Orient. What they were fighting over, was also doubtful, though it looked very much like a square white box, that rattled slightly as they grappled.

They saw The Shadow as he landed, for he was against the background of the window, where flickered the electric sign from across the way. As if in concert, the two lunged through the connecting door, slamming it behind them, cutting off the challenging laugh that came from The Shadow's hidden lips.

The mutual action was logical.

It wouldn't be policy for Glenlake to stay around, having acquired the ivory boxes. In Talbor's case, all invaders could be classed as enemies. To reclaim the stolen prize, the man in shirt sleeves would prefer to deal with opponents singly; hence, he went along with Glenlake.

Reaching the connecting door, The Shadow wrenched it open to lunge upon the strugglers. Halfway through his drive, The Shadow turned it into a sideward sprawl that landed him shoulder first upon the floor. The Shadow hadn't stumbled; he'd seen something that forced him to take the sudden spill.

Across the room, in the shelter of the far doorway leading to the hall, was a crouching man who held a glittering gun.

This was the unidentified newcomer that Harry had heard coming up the stairs. He was waiting, with his

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swaying revolver, to shoot at the pair who struggled for the ivory boxes!

CATCHING first sight of the lurking assassin, thanks to the revealing gun gleam, The Shadow had flung himself aside with double motive.

First, he could gain nothing by staying in the path of fire and making himself a target for stray bullets, should the gunner prove quick-triggered. Again, by rolling to a different angle, The Shadow, still unseen in the darkened room, could insert a timely shot if the lurker happened to be deliberate.

Deliberate, this gunner was. Unfortunately, another man was already taking advantage of that fact. The new factor was The Shadow's own agent, Harry Vincent. Coming down from the fifth floor, Harry had spotted the open door, and upon reaching it, caught instant sight of the revolver that shone from a waiting hand.

Harry lunged for the assassin, blocking the aim that The Shadow was taking with an automatic. Quick as a whippet, the crouched man slapped the door Harry's way. The Shadow's agent took it head-on. Then two grapplers were blundering straight upon the assassin, cutting off The Shadow's aim entirely.

A gun spoke, muffled, and the grapplers broke. One sprawled, and his weight met Harry's receiving arms. Through the connecting doorway, the flashes of the electric sign played upon the dying face of the shirt-sleeved victim, as Harry voiced the name:

"Talbor!"

The others were not waiting. They were out through the doorway, racing down the hall, Glenlake carrying the ivory boxes, trying to outrace the killer behind him. It wasn't a race for life on Glenlake's part; it was a dash for wealth. He hadn't seen the assassin's face, but he could picture it as belonging to one of three: Trevoise, Philmont or Harlingen.

Glenlake preferred to keep his own identity unknown. He wanted the nest of ivory boxes and their priceless ruby all for himself. Not hearing shots behind him, Glenlake was sure that his pursuer preferred to overtake him and learn who he was. So he used that fact to his own advantage.

Reaching the stairway, he plunged downward recklessly, on the chance that he could shake the man behind him.

The Shadow, meanwhile, was on his feet again and wrenching Harry from the doorway, out into the hall. There was no time to listen while Talbor phrased dying gasps. Whatever Talbor could tell, so could the two men who had fled. Nor did The Shadow want Harry to become involved in the investigation of Talbor's death.

So he hauled his agent with him, and as they reached the stairway, The Shadow gave Harry an upward shove and an order to get back to his room. Then The Shadow, personally, would take up the chase of the men whose footsteps were pounding the stairs below.

It was too late for such strategy. The clang of an elevator door announced arrivals who had heard the shots. From the corner appeared the excited clerk and the elevator operator, both soon enough to see The Shadow thrusting Harry away. Waving a cheap revolver, the clerk shouted:

"There they are!"

Right then, The Shadow did a surprising thing. He grabbed at Harry, hauled his agent full about in a tight grip

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that swayed them half across the hall. Out of that grapple, The Shadow's arm appeared; his hand drove its heavy automatic hard for Harry's skull.

Harry felt the blow enough to daze him, but no more, for The Shadow pulled it deftly. Then, pitching Harry into the clerk's path, The Shadow was away, loping for the stairs, bound upon his original quest of overtaking two men of crime who had separately indulged in robbery and murder.

Shots blasted after the evasive shape in black. Wild shots, from the clerk's gun. They missed The Shadow literally by yards, for the clerk was stumbling over Harry while aiming for The Shadow.

A strange laugh floated back, and Harry, hearing it, not only knew that his chief was in the clear, but recognized the part that he, personally, was to play.

AT the bottom of the stairs, The Shadow cut through the deserted passage to the rear street, where he caught a view of a corner, half a block away. There, by the flitting glow of the electric sign, he saw Wilbur Glenlake. Though the burly man was too distant for his face to be distinguished, his actions were plain.

Under one arm, Glenlake was clutching something white and square. With his other hand, he was brandishing a gun at a cab driver, who, very naturally, was listening to Glenlake's arguments.

A few moments later, Glenlake was in the cab and it was scooting away. Thereupon, The Shadow sidled off through darkness. He still remembered that, of two men involved in crime, Glenlake was the lesser.

Finding the other man was a tricky problem. As The Shadow reached a corner, a car pulled rapidly away. Farther on was a parked cab, and The Shadow hurried over to commandeer it, when, like the car, it went into quick motion. Then, reaching the next corner, The Shadow spied another man, darting down into a subway entrance. Considering him as likely a quarry as the others, The Shadow hurried in that direction.

Only a deserted platform greeted The Shadow when he reached the bottom of the subway steps. Whether a distant rumble meant that a train had come and gone, taking an unknown passenger with it, was something of a question.

There was an exit, leading to another street, at the far end of the platform. Any one of three suspicious men might be an innocent bystander, rather than the killer that The Shadow sought.

As for the man who wasn't a killer, The Shadow reverted to his case with a low-toned laugh a token of mirth that Wilbur Glenlake would not have relished, had he been around to hear it. For Glenlake, though not a killer, was definitely a key-man in crime, a lead to any others who might be concerned.

His identity, it so happened, was as good as known to The Shadow. For Glenlake, in his haste to seize the first available cab, had made a most grievous mistake, from the criminal standpoint. The cab that he had taken happened to be The Shadow's own; it had brought the cloaked fighter to the scene of crime. Its driver, Moe Shrevnitz, was long-trained in The Shadow's service, which meant that he used his wits without waiting for special orders. Glenlake wasn't the first fugitive that Moe had helped to a getaway, under persuasion.

Such, getaways had a boomerang effect, when Moe was employed. The cabby had helped The Shadow more by taking Glenlake on board than he could have by trying to oppose the flight.

So The Shadow, to while away the time until Moe's report came through, moved out from the subway station and started back to the Hotel Talleyrand, to see how Harry might be making out. Again, The Shadow's laugh was low-toned mirth unheard, from a gliding figure that was invisible in the gloom.

If that laugh portended a future meeting with the fugitive who happened to be Wilbur Glenlake, The Shadow should have reconsidered it.

Death had already struck one man who had tried to cling to the ivory boxes. Such doom, once started, could become a chain, its links so swiftly forged that even The Shadow could not afford to dally while following their ever-moving trail!

CHAPTER IV. A MURDERER'S RETURN

STARING at the body lying in the hallway, Harry Vincent was giving his version of the victim's death, without stating that he knew the man in question to be Alexander Talbor. For Harry was telling his story not just to the hotel clerk and the elevator man. Two others had joined them, officers from a passing police patrol car.

Harry's story stood.

Summed up briefly, he had checked in at the Hotel Talleyrand and gone to his room, on the fifth floor, only to be alarmed by the same shots that others had heard in the lobby. Being closer to the fourth floor, where the shooting occurred, Harry had arrived there by the stairs, quicker than the others who had come up on the elevator.

Of his mysterious assailant, Harry remembered very little. He let the others describe The Shadow, though their sketch was very meager. The thing that really counted was their substantiation of Harry's story. Both witnesses agreed that Harry had done his best to halt Talbor's slayer.

Naturally, Harry did not dispute their blaming of The Shadow. It wasn't necessary. The Shadow might have been anything from a banshee to a puff of smoke, from their version of the matter. The real killer would be found soon enough, Harry believed, considering that The Shadow was so close behind him.

So far, Harry hadn't learned of the divided trail, wherein The Shadow had obligingly let a robber make off in Moe's cab, in order to stalk a murderer, instead. As for the killer dividing into three, each with his own means of conveyance and with sufficient head start, Harry could hardly have imagined it, let alone believe it.

Seldom did one man manage to decamp from a battleground quick enough to elude The Shadow. Hence Harry, in his ignorance, was expecting to see at any moment The Shadow, Suspect Number One in Talbor's death, appear with a cringing murderer in his clutch.

While Harry was awaiting the climax that did not come, the hotel employees were identifying Talbor's body and telling the police all that they knew about their star boarder, which was really very little. That Talbor might have been crime's target, was apparent from the fact that he had demanded a room with a private safe. That his fears were actual, were evidenced by his checking out after midnight.

This brought mention of Talbor's servant, Channing, which interested the police. They learned that the cab had come and taken Talbor's luggage as soon as it arrived downstairs. Channing had been in the cab, while the elevator man helped the cabby put the luggage in the back, hence the servant couldn't have been involved in Talbor's death.

But the description of Channing was very meager. Neither clerk nor elevator man had seen him closely during his stay at the hotel with Talbor.

Having reported Talbor's death, the patrolmen were awaiting the arrival of a police inspector and a physician

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to make it official. To all appearances, Talbor was quite dead, for his dying gasps had ceased and he did not seem to breathe.

They were still looking at the body when the telephone rang in Talbor's suite. The clerk had connected it through the switchboard, in order for the police to call headquarters. Therefore, the call was probably from outside.

Both patrolmen started off to answer it, and the others followed them. Then, the cops did an Alphonse and Gaston act, each gesturing politely to the other, until they compromised by letting the clerk answer. He spoke a few moments, then looked about in puzzled fashion.

"There's no one on the wire," said the clerk. "It sounds like a fake call. Unless" the clerk's tone became worried "unless it's the murderer, making sure that Talbor is really dead!"

One cop grabbed the telephone, and the other crowded close. Clerk and elevator man were both intent, leaving only Harry to take it calmly. Standing by the connecting door, Harry was taking it very calmly indeed, until something occurred to discompose him utterly.

It was a grim reminder of the past so grotesque that, for the moment, Harry thought his imagination was tricking him. Then the thing struck home with forceful reality, for it was coming closer: a repetition of those creaky creeps that had announced two secret visitors, both men of crime!

So tense was Harry that he didn't snap to action until the creeping sound halted. When it did, it was in the far hall, just beyond the doorway where Talbor's body lay. Breaking in upon the men who were toying with the dead telephone, Harry diverted their attention through the other room.

As they swung, they stared, which rather puzzled Harry, since the creeping steps had ended; but when he turned, his surprise ended. The thing that Harry was pointing out was far more astonishing than mere sounds from the dark. Past the shoulders of the others, Harry saw the figure of a dead man rising in the doorway.

Alexander Talbor, come to life!

IN the dimness of the little-used hall, Talbot's shirt-sleeved figure looked thin and frail, its stoop more pronounced than ever. In fact, Talbor seemed to droop, so noticeably, that it was hard to understand how he supported himself in the doorway.

Even odder was Talbor's action. Instead of coming forward, toward welcoming voices, he was backing away across the hall, toward a window that was one of three forming a row along a narrow outside balcony.

Like a living dead man was this victim of recent crime, so much a corpse, despite his motion, that his very appearance threw a warning chill into Harry Vincent. As the others started forward to aid the reviving victim, Harry threw himself madly among them, shoving them right and left.

Harry was just in time.

A withery hand came up bearing a gleaming gun. The men who thought they were rescuing Talbor were placed in instant jeopardy when the revolver opened fire. But for Harry's scattering tactics, new victims would have strewn the floor.

Talbor, a dead man, alive and shooting at friends, instead of foemen! The thing was horribly fantastic, and the men who dodged away from that slow-aiming gun were too startled to appreciate the full impossibility. Only

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Harry reckoned the point that brought a glimmer of the truth.

There had been no gun on the body lying in the doorway. A dead hand that could pluck a weapon from nowhere was something more than ghostly. It could only mean the action of a hidden hand more dangerous than any fantasy that death could supply!

Cutting over to the side of the doorway, Harry lunged through just as Talbor's figure made a backward topple through the low-silled window, its head tilting lifelessly as it went. As the head flopped, Harry saw what was behind it the crouched form of another man, answering the huddled description of the killer who had indulged in earlier crime.

His was the unknown hand that really clutched the gun, for Harry saw a dead fist slipping from the support beneath it. The assassin had returned, explaining the creep that Harry heard. Plucking a dead body from the floor, the killer was covering his own retreat with the form of his own victim.

Harry shouted back to the others. "It isn't Talbor!" he called. "It's the killer, back again! Hurry, and we'll get him!"

The gun poked Harry's way, but it was coming from a difficult angle: around the body of the dead man. Harry lacked a gun, since The Shadow had taken his along, rather than have his agent compromised by possession of a weapon.

But a gun wasn't needed, for Harry had the advantage of mobility against a killer encumbered with the weight of a sagging body.

Hurling himself through the window, Harry grabbed for the man beyond Talbor. He knew the supporter could not be The Shadow, for the cloaked form would have been invisible against the outer blackness. Harry was after the real killer, whose capture would dispel any doubts concerning The Shadow. Driving hard, Harry made a long, strong grab.

Until then, the witnesses did not understand. They still thought that Harry was trying to seize a reviving dead man. Curiously, it was Harry's turn to become bewildered.

A grappler met him, and Harry went half across the balcony rail, doubling to twist from his adversary's grasp. The weight of a lunging figure threatened to carry Harry from his position. Sensing that it would be himself or the other, Harry tried to hurl his foe across the rail.

It was thus that The Shadow saw them from the darkness below. Scouring the street on the chance that a killer had returned, The Shadow had heard the shots and the call that Harry gave. He saw his agent, tugging away from a figure that had swung both arms across Harry's neck, yet which, itself, was precariously balanced.

Up from below, The Shadow jabbed timely shots, missing Harry by inches and clipping the form with which he struggled. Jolted by those bullets, the other man rolled sideward and took a headlong tumble to the cement sidewalk. Even while the figure dived, The Shadow saw what Harry had failed to notice.

This wasn't the murderer! It was the body already identified as Talbor's. To offset Harry's thrust, the killer had hurled the dead man upon him. From below, The Shadow, not having witnessed the amazing revival attributed to Talbor, had been unable to discern the difference until the dead form was on its way.

Now, however, The Shadow saw the real killer, ducking in through the window next to Harry's. Wheeling

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away as the body crashed headlong beside him, The Shadow wheeled in through the rear entrance and up the stairway, to join the chase on the fourth floor.

THE chase had already begun. Crowding to the window where Harry was, patrolmen and hotel help turned as they heard a rapid dash behind them. They were just in time to see the real killer, in from the other window, dodging from sight around the corner of the hall. Their glimpse wasn't sufficient to take stock of him, but they expected a better look when they rounded the corner.

Instead, they found themselves frustrated further. The running man had reached the elevator and slammed its door before they could see him. A rumble told that the car was starting down. Blocked by the closed door, the whole group turned and hurried for the stairs, where Harry joined them.

Halfway up, The Shadow heard the noise from the elevator and the scurry that followed it. He, too, made for the ground floor, confident that he had time to cut off the fugitive killer from the passage leading to the rear.

But the murderer did not take that route. The lobby was deserted, so he sped across it. The Shadow arrived only in time to witness the final whirl of the revolving door, its slowing speed a token that the murderer had dashed through.

When The Shadow reached the street, blinking taillights were twinkling out of sight around the corner, proof that the vanishing assassin had either found a cab, or had kept one waiting for him. He probably hadn't needed to threaten the driver, so smoothly had he managed his escape. For those shots, heard at the rear of the building, could hardly have carried out to the front street.

Cars were coming from another direction, police cars arriving from headquarters, unaware that new strife had happened at the Hotel Talleyrand.

Glancing back through the glass panels of the revolving door, The Shadow saw the first figures from the stairs, those of the grim patrolmen who still thought they had a chance to overtake the mysterious murderer.

By the time the two groups converged, The Shadow was gone in the darkness. Only a flitting shape was visible, as it merged with the darkness of a passage between two buildings opposite. No one heard the low, trailing laugh that betokened the departure of The Shadow.

His own ways those of darkness, The Shadow was leaving this scene of a murderer's return, confident that some other evidence would enable him to cross the path of the unknown man he intended to find.

Often had The Shadow dealt with masters of crime, but none so singular as this unknown who had returned, not for hope of profit but to settle some score with a dead man!

Behind that riddle must lie an answer that would prove a clue to crime itself.

The Shadow knew!

CHAPTER V. FOUR MINUS ONE

IN the carefully tilted mirror of his cab, Moe Shrevnitz was shrewdly watching the passenger in back. In a sense, the passenger was watching Moe, too, for he was ready with a gun in case the cabby showed any signs of rebellion.

But Moe was acting like a man who didn't care to take chances. Huddled above the wheel, driving straight

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ahead, he was risking only those mirror peeks that his passenger didn't notice.

There were times when the man in back almost forgot he had a gun. Those were the times when he fondled a square white box; smooth and glossy, except for the squares that were marked off on its surface. Always, the fondling ended with a show of savagery. Wilbur Glenlake would raise the box, as though he intended to pound it on the floor of the cab.

When those fits seized him, Glenlake would remember Moe. His hand would drop the box and reach for the gun. It was becoming such a habit that Moe knew exactly when to expect Glenlake's fits of temper. Then Moe would busy himself at the wheel and nod his willingness to obey the basso snarl that issued from the rear seat.

At intervals, Moe turned into other streets, all in compliance with Glenlake's orders. How long the fugitive intended to play hide-and-seek with himself, Moe couldn't guess until they neared a corner where another cab was parked. Glenlake pushed his gun through the window, pressed it against Moe's neck and ordered a prompt stop.

"And now," gruffed Glenlake, "you're going to drive straight ahead and keep going, like the devil was after you! Now start!"

The long pause came when Glenlake slammed the cab door from the curb. Obediently, Moe whizzed off toward the corner, but he was using his wits faster than the accelerator. It was easy to guess Glenlake's plan.

The man intended to hurry to the corner on foot and hop into the parked cab, the moment that Moe was out of sight. Considering the length of empty street ahead, that would give Glenlake considerable leeway.

It would also mean that Moe would lose the trail of the man who carried the curious ivory box, and that was something Moe didn't intend to do. So he used those quick wits of his to completely stymie Glenlake's scheme.

Roaring past the parked cab, Moe gave a sideward lean, lifted his left hand from the wheel, waved a little circle, and jabbed his thumb straight ahead. The driver of the other cab saw the gesture and interpreted it in a single word: "Scram!"

A great clan, these hackies. Veterans in the business felt themselves aligned against the world. Well did they know the vicissitudes of their profession, and all were ready to extend the helping hand.

The other hackie didn't know what had produced Moe's warning signal. It could mean things other than the approach of an undesirable passenger. It might be that the cab was parked where it shouldn't be and a troublesome cop on his way to see about it.

Whatever it was, the cabby didn't wait to learn. He pulled away from the curb and followed Moe, leaving Glenlake flat-footed at the corner.

Having the other cab behind him was another help to Moe. He swung right at the next corner, and as he did, he gestured the following cab ahead. Still ignorant of the game, the other cabby obeyed blindly and kept straight on.

Thus Glenlake, farther back, was still staring at the rear of a dwindling cab and didn't know that Moe's had cut off the straight course.

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A quick circle of a few blocks brought Moe back to Glenlake's corner. There, he parked where the other cab had been, but showed himself even more openly. In parking, Moe preferred to come under the glare of lights from the window of a drugstore. The glow gave his cab a benefit that would disavow all doubts.

A very special cab, this vehicle that Moe piloted for its owner, The Shadow. It was painted maroon, a color possessing unusual advantages. By night, when Moe drove most, that deep-red color became black, except when the cab came into bright lights. Then its red hue became conspicuous.

Glenlake would certainly remember the cab as a black one. Seeing it again, he would take it for a different vehicle. Since Glenlake wanted a cab to replace the one that had left him at the post, Moe's would certainly suit him. Moe merely hoped that Glenlake was still around to take the bait.

GLENLAKE was around.

He came from a little side door of the drugstore, carrying two bundles with him. One was square and wrapped in a newspaper that Glenlake had bought in the store. The other was a long, flat package, evidently some other purchase made by Glenlake. It was done up in heavy wrapping paper and tied with string.

Having surveyed the cab from the drugstore window, Glenlake took it without question, unaware of its chameleon qualities. This time, Glenlake didn't display a gun; once in the cab, he ordered Moe to take him to Grand Central Station. As they started, Glenlake gave a careful look at the cab driver's license framed on the rear of the front seat. That license card showed a different name and photograph than those that Glenlake had previously noted. Moe always carried a supply of printed aliases, to be used on excursions in The Shadow's service.

They reached Grand Central by the Vanderbilt Avenue cab entrance. All during the ride, Moe heard rustling sounds in back, which were explained when Glenlake alighted.

Instead of carrying two packages, Glenlake had only one, and it had changed in appearance. He held the square bundle; no longer wrapped in newspaper, it was inclosed in the wrapping of the flat package that he had purchased in the drugstore.

Seeing Glenlake stride into the terminal, Moe took a good look at him and checked the bulldog face for future reference, though that didn't fully satisfy him. Moe wanted to follow Glenlake farther, which was difficult, considering that it was impossible for a cabby to leave his cab in the terminal entrance.

Even to delay there would produce an argument, but a slight traffic tangle gave Moe the opportunity for a short wait. Leaning from the cab, he looked for an ally, and saw one in the person of a porter. Beckoning to the redcap, Moe gestured to the rear seat.

"My fare forgot something," said Moe. "Take it along to him, will you? You won't have any trouble finding him at one of the train gates. He's carrying a package a square one, about this size." Moe gestured with his hands to describe Glenlake's bundle; then added: "Meet me later, over on the Lexington Avenue front, so I'll know how you made out."

Nodding, the redcap leaned into the cab to take the thing that the passenger had left. Moe grinned when he saw what it was. Glenlake hadn't bothered to wrap his drugstore purchase in the discarded newspaper. The flat object that Glenlake had bought was a thirty-nine-cent game, with a lithographed cover entitled: "Cops and Robbers."

Driving around to the Lexington Avenue entrance, Moe ranked behind some other cabs and looked along a

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station corridor, hoping that the porter would reappear and give him some information on the train that Glenlake had taken.

At last, a redcap bobbed from a stairway that came up from the lower level, but when the porter came fully into sight, Moe saw that he still was carrying the "Cops and Robbers" trophy. Which meant that Glenlake couldn't have taken a suburban train, as Moe supposed.

Shoving the cab into gear, Moe made ready to pull out, rather than waste time receiving the redcap's negative report. Being in gear proved helpful, for at that very moment another cab started from the front of the rank. Lights were plentiful, hereabouts, and by them Moe saw the face that peered back from the rear window.

The bulldog face again!

WHETHER Glenlake still had his square bundle, Moe couldn't determine. He recognized only that Glenlake was still pulling the dodge of changing cabs. Maybe he'd gained some pointers from the "Cops and Robbers" game. An old trick, this, of leaving a cab at one station entrance and picking up a fresh one at another.

Though Moe hadn't expected it, he had done the right thing, getting around the block to Lexington Avenue. However, he didn't feel proud about it, considering how nearly Glenlake had slipped him.

Trailing the present cab was easy amid the thick traffic, and its destination was not far away. Turning in among the Thirties, Glenlake's cab rolled into a small public garage that the passenger indicated from the window.

Passing the garage, Moe saw that it ran through to the next street, so he went around the block to forestall any new tricks by Glenlake.

The cab came out first, empty. Moe waited, parked in darkness, until a big sedan followed. Quite sure that it must be Glenlake's own car, Moe waited until it turned the corner, then trailed it.

The course led eastward, toward an East River bridge, and when it veered into the lights, Moe saw that it had two occupants: a chauffeur in front, and a rear-seat passenger who looked very much like Glenlake.

This meant the homestretch; of that, Moe was sure. The shrewd cabby could picture himself in the near future reporting to his chief, The Shadow, giving both the identity and residence of the fugitive who had supplied a tricky, zigzag trail from the vicinity of the Hotel Talleyrand.

In thinking that this would mean trail's end, Moe, however, was very far from right. The seekers of the ivory boxes numbered four, and of that group, Wilbur Glenlake was but the first. Three others yet remained, and until their parts were learned, the riddle of the ivory boxes was to stay unsolved!

CHAPTER VI. THREE PARTNERS MEET

CALMEST of Glenlake's three partners was Laird Trevoise, the retired attorney. He had always enjoyed a reputation as a cool thinker, particularly in courtrooms. At present, Trevoise was in an environment made to his order: the study of his sumptuous Manhattan apartment.

Trevoise was a man with a single hobby, which happened to be chess. He loved the game because of the problems it produced, but he carried his love to an extreme. Not only did Trevoise play chess, he collected chessmen, boards and all, and his study was filled with sets of every description, with more stored in the closet.

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Mulling over an ancient chessboard with squares of inlaid tile, Trevose heard a knock at the study door. It was his servant, announcing a visitor in the person of Jonathan Philmont.

Trevose told the servant to admit the visitor, but, during the interim, the lawyer stepped over to a corner and turned on a little radio. He had just tuned its music low, when Philmont entered.

"Glad to see you, Philmont," spoke Trevose blandly. "I was hoping that someone would drop by for a chess game. Wait until I put this board away and bring out a more practical one. Odd-looking chessmen are sometimes a distraction."

Through his glasses, Philmont watched Trevose go to the closet to exchange the chess sets. There was more than a reflective expression upon Philmont's rounded features. The one-time professor had not forgotten his classroom experience. He knew when people hedged, though, in the case of Trevose, it was difficult to determine it.

When the lawyer returned with a simple chess set, Philmont shook his head.

"I'm not thinking of chess, Trevose," he declared. "My mind is turning to a deeper game."

"No game is deeper than chess," returned Trevose, with a dry smile. "Come, Philmont; if anything is troubling you, it will be forgotten during the play."

When Philmont still shook his head, it was Trevose who became reflective.

"Harlingen likes chess," spoke Trevose. "I've played him many times. As for Glenlake" the lawyer shrugged "he doesn't even know the game. There is nothing subtle about Glenlake."

"What about Talbor?" demanded Philmont, very suddenly. "Did you ever play chess with him?"

"Not since he returned from Thailand," smiled Trevose, "the country which Talbor always insisted upon calling by its old name, Siam." Then, the smile fading, Trevose shook his head. "Poor Talbor," he added. "He will never return to Thailand, otherwise Siam."

Philmont's arms spread wide, so that his hands could grip the corners of the table where the chessboard lay. His own poise was gone when he questioned, hoarsely:

"You know about Talbor?" Trevose nodded.

"Stupid of Talbor," he said, "to let Glenlake kill him and take the ivory boxes."

"You were there!" blurted Philmont. "You must have seen it all! Perhaps it was you not Glenlake who murdered Talbor!"

LEANING back in his chair, Trevose let his eyelids narrow, as he gestured to the soft-toned radio in the corner.

"I was listening to the chess hour," he said coolly, "when the news reports came through. Learning that Talbor had been murdered, I logically blamed the crime on Glenlake."

Relaxing his grip on the table, Philmont eased back in his chair and flattened his hands against the arms. He hadn't committed himself too far. It was his turn to seek an out.

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"I, too, heard the radio," said Philmont. "That is why I came here. Tell me: why do you attribute the crime to Glenlake?"

"I was watching him during the conference," explained Trevose. "I saw the avaricious gleam in his eye when he checked Talbor's action at the safe. Glenlake stole that combination, Philmont, under our very noses!"

Philmont's features formed a rounded smile.

"Quite right, Trevose," he agreed. "I saw it, too. I suppose my reactions were the same as yours. It was best to let Glenlake get away with robbery, should he try."

"But not with murder, however, Philmont –"

"No, not with murder. I guess we were both mistaken there. We didn't think that Glenlake had it in him."

"There is much that Glenlake lacks." Trevose's fingers were drumming the chair arm. "I am wondering, Philmont, if we were ever wise to take him into our little corporation. Perhaps it would be better if he were out of it –"

Trevose's statement came to an abrupt ending something quite unusual, for it was his way to terminate all sentences in conclusive fashion. Philmont noted the deficiency, and his eyes flashed behind his glasses. The very words that Trevose decided not to add had sprung to Philmont's mind. Those two words were:

"Like Talbor."

Had Trevose finished the statement, it would have implied that he considered death the proper cure for Glenlake, who had definitely marked himself a double-crosser. Having noted Trevose's near slip, Philmont felt that he had practically coaxed his partner into a revealing statement until it suddenly occurred to him that Trevose might have made the slip purposely. In that case, Trevose was the prober, with Philmont the man who might betray himself!

Smugly, Philmont dropped his smiling attitude and turned toward the radio as the music ended. He hoped that the next program would supply a diverting point, and it did. The program was a news broadcast.

Just as it began, there was a knock at the door, the servant announcing that Peter Harlingen had arrived. Trevose said to show him in; then, both Trevose and Philmont glued themselves to the broadcast.

A newscaster was giving the details of the Talbor murder, including the sensational sequel of a killer returning to the scene of crime. Trevose and Philmont were not noticing each other, as they listened, but a third man was eyeing both.

That third was Harlingen, who had stepped in quietly from the door. His was the first comment after Trevose shut the radio off.

"What horrible news!" exclaimed Harlingen. "Poor Talbor, murdered!" Like his eyes, Harlingen's face appeared grayish, as he looked from man to man. "It couldn't be that you consider Glenlake responsible?"

Both Trevose and Philmont nodded.

"That is my opinion," replied Trevose dryly. "I formed it immediately after hearing the earlier broadcast."

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"As did I," coincided Philmont. "That is why I came here to see Trevoze."

A steely glint featured Harlingen's gaze.

"There was no earlier broadcast," he asserted. "I have been home listening to the radio ever since I left Talbor's hotel. I would have heard the news before this."

SEPARATELY, Trevoze and Philmont might have taken Harlingen's words as an accusation. Together, they bluffed, each confident of the other's support. Trevoze suggested that Harlingen had been listening to the wrong station. Philmont opined that Harlingen had been mistaken regarding the newscast schedules.

Harlingen looked about for a newspaper, to find the radio column, which would certainly settle the dispute. Catching a quick glance from Philmont, Trevoze rallied to the situation.

"And now, Harlingen," requested Trevoze, "let me ask just why you came here at this very late hour. To play chess, I suppose?"

Harlingen caught the sarcasm, and matched it. Stroking his long chin, he looked at the chessboard and nodded.

"That was it," said Harlingen. "I wanted to play chess. Since more important business is afoot, let us discuss it, instead."

Cards were on the table. All three knew that they were bluffing no longer, though none admitted it. From the way the trio eyed one another, something else was plain. None credited Glenlake with anything more than robbery.

He might have shot down Talbor, in connection with that crime, but he certainly would not have returned to the scene to make sure that the victim was dead, to the extreme of pitching Talbor's body from a window, rather than risk the chance that the man might actually revive.

As they hinted at such points, each man watched the other two, as though expecting one to weaken and admit having murdered Talbor. Not one of the three gave way to such folly. Whichever might be covering up, was doing so to perfection. At length, Trevoze, being on his home ground, took it upon himself to decide the future policy.

"We must talk to Glenlake," Trevoze concluded, "and make him deliver the ivory boxes with the Siamese ruby. After all, they were actually our property."

There were nods of agreement from Philmont and Harlingen, so Trevoze reached for the telephone and called Glenlake's Long Island number. Finished with a brief talk, Trevoze hung up.

"Glenlake isn't home yet," Trevoze informed. "He's had time to get there, an hour or more, since Talbor died."

"Enough time to get there and back," asserted Philmont. "Wouldn't you say so, Harlingen?"

There was a sharp note to Philmont's words, an indictment that Harlingen couldn't fail to miss. But Harlingen was too clever to claim bluntly that he hadn't been to Glenlake's before he arrived here.

"Trevoze could answer that better than I," said Harlingen to Philmont. "He has gone out to see Glenlake. Quite often, I believe."

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The thing was being pitched at Trevoise, and the lawyer accepted it quite gracefully. Looking at a clock that was perched amid sets of chessmen, Trevoise nodded.

"Yes, I could have gone to Glenlake's and back," he declared. "Instead, I was here, working out chess problems until Philmont arrived."

It was Philmont, now, who was taking the burden of the impeachment that he, himself, had started. Having gone the rounds, the subject was dismissed. Rising from his chair, Trevoise picked up the standard chess set and carried it to the closet, to put with the others there.

"No need of bothering Glenlake again tonight," said Trevoise. "He has probably been chasing everywhere, thinking the law is after him. He'll settle down after a night's rest. Tomorrow, we shall hear from him."

"Glenlake is the sort who likes to share his burdens. He'd like the ivory boxes all for himself, but he'd prefer to have companionship in crime. His price, to us, will be our agreement that we acted in his behalf. Wait and see."

HOW much Trevoise believed his own words, was a question. Whether he intended to wait and see, as he advised, was also a matter of doubt. For, after he had ushered Philmont and Harlingen from the apartment, Trevoise turned out the study lights and watched from the darkened window, to see the two arrive on the street below and take their separate routes.

The dry chuckle that Laird Trevoise gave was proof, sufficient, that he knew what was in the minds of others, as well as in his own. Glenlake, in his clumsy robbery, had set the precedent.

From now on, partnership was nil, and the men who had talked of mutual gain would prefer the whole prize, alone. Individual effort was the best. Glendale had proved it, tonight; with all his blunders, he had managed to outrace the law.

It didn't occur to Laird Trevoise that, on the side of justice, there might be someone who could deal in individual tactics quite as effectively as those who preferred crime. There was actually such a person. He was called The Shadow, and at this very moment he was closer to his goal than any of the schemers who sought the ivory caskets as their own!

CHAPTER VII. DEATH MOVES AHEAD

STEPPING from his sedan, Wilbur Glenlake thrust his chauffeur aside and closed the car door for himself. Looking around the garage, he said he would lock it personally. This puzzled the chauffeur, until Glenlake condescended to explain this purpose.

"There are prowlers hereabouts," reminded Glenlake. "The servants have reported them on several occasions. I want you to look around the grounds, very thoroughly. And make sure" he emphasized this point "that there are no strange cars, parked anywhere near!"

The chauffeur set out to his task, willing enough to humor Glenlake's whim. He'd been lax this evening, the chauffeur had, when Glenlake had come to the garage in town.

Upstairs, playing pinochle with the garage men, the chauffeur was late in answering his employer's call. Glenlake didn't tolerate idlers in his household, so the chauffeur had been worrying about his job all the way home.

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There was something else that worried him. Cars had dogged the sedan at intervals, even in the exclusive suburb where the Glenlake residence was located. The chauffeur had spotted the lights in the mirror, but hadn't mentioned it to Glenlake. Nor did he now, for Glenlake had simply specified that the chauffeur was to look for cars parked near the grounds. If there were any of those, the chauffeur intended to unearth them.

None was around. The trailing cars had actually been only one Moe's cab, snaking on and off the trail that the sedan furnished. Having seen the sedan pull into a large, well-shrubbed grounds, Moe had foreseen no trouble learning the name of the owner, so he had sped away to report to The Shadow, through Burbank.

It took the chauffeur fifteen minutes to inspect the grounds in the thorough fashion that Glenlake wanted. Before that period was half gone, Glenlake left the garage. It was fortunate that the chauffeur's flashlight was out of sight; otherwise, it would have revealed a singular thing.

A huddled figure was creeping from the garage, sneaking across the driveway as though fearful of the faint crunches that came from the gravel.

That figure was Wilbur Glenlake. Like a thief in the night, he was seeking his own mansion. His steps were as those that had taken him to Talbor's hotel suite. It seemed that Glenlake was more worried, now that crime had been accomplished, than he had been before he undertook the deed.

Perhaps Glenlake was no longer thinking in terms of the victim, Talbor, but in those of his other three associates: Trevoise, Philmont and Harlingen. Certainly, they were persons with whom to reckon, as their own prompt conference had proven.

On the steps outside a side door, Glenlake stumbled and made a slight clatter as he fell. Still huddled, he scrambled for the bushes, and was there when the door opened.

On the threshold, Glenlake saw his butler, Ferguson, and heard him call to Kingsley, the chauffeur. When a flashlight twinkled off behind the garage, Ferguson hurried out to meet it.

That was Glenlake's opportunity. Still the furtive figure, he slid through the doorway. Only his crouched shoulders were visible as he closed the door behind him. Then Ferguson and Kingsley were coming that direction, to stop rather blankly when they saw the closed door.

It was latched, so Ferguson pounded on it rapidly. Shortly, the door swung open, but instead of another servant, Ferguson and Kingsley viewed Glenlake.

No longer wearing hat and overcoat, Glenlake seemed thoroughly at home; indeed, he was in his testiest mood. When he learned the trouble, he pronounced a "Bah!" and stated that he had closed the side door himself, because there was too much draft.

"I came in through the front door, as usual," stated Glenlake. "I found this door open, and I closed it. You, Ferguson, and your talk of prowlers! If there were any such about, Kingsley would have found them!"

It didn't quite make sense to Kingsley, for the chauffeur had witnessed Glenlake's earlier, and much less confident, mood. However, since he was receiving commendation, Kingsley raised no objection. He simply asked if Mr. Glenlake wanted anything from the car.

"I brought nothing with me!" snapped Glenlake. "Lock the garage, Kingsley, and take another look about, so that Ferguson can sleep comfortably... Come, Ferguson, we are going indoors."

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WHEN Kingsley went back to the garage, he took a look into the car to make sure that Glenlake, often absent-minded, had forgotten nothing.

The car was empty, so Kingsley looked around the garage itself, realizing that it could prove an excellent harbor for prowlers of the sort that Glenlake had forgotten, but whose possible presence now worried Ferguson.

The chauffeur found nothing amiss. A few tools were absent from their chest, but the servants often borrowed them for odd jobs of carpentry. Some rags were scattered on a work table, but Kingsley remembered that he had used a few himself, that afternoon, while polishing a windshield. So the earnest chauffeur decided to make another patrol of the hedge-bordered grounds, and call it a night.

Inside the house, Glenlake was interviewing Ferguson in a little room called the den, just off the living room. The den was on the side of the house where the ground sloped, hence its windows, three in number, were nearly eight feet above the outside level. No one could reach this room except by ladder, and Glenlake noticed with satisfaction that the windows were locked.

He ordered Ferguson to draw the shades. While the butler was so engaged, Glendale inquired:

"Did anyone call this evening, Ferguson?"

"No one called personally, sir," the butler replied. "There was a phone call, however."

"How long ago?"

"Not more than a half-hour. It was Mr. Trevoise."

A sudden change came to Glenlake's features. Momentarily, they showed a hunted expression, which Glenlake hid from Ferguson. Controlling his voice, Glenlake demanded:

"You are sure that Trevoise wasn't here, earlier?"

"He said nothing about it, sir," returned Ferguson. "Therefore, I should hardly think –"

"You hardly ever think!" interrupted Glenlake. "So go, and leave me alone! No, I don't want any coffee. It is too late; I wouldn't sleep."

Glenlake's hat and overcoat were lying on a chair. The butler reached to pick them up, but Glenlake brushed him toward the door.

"Considering how chilly the room is," Glenlake chided, "I may be needing the overcoat. I shall certainly need it if I go out for fresh air, later. Meanwhile I think I shall light a fire. I see that you have built one."

Ferguson turned from the doorway to supply a match, but Glenlake didn't let him approach the fireplace. Thrusting the butler from the den, Glenlake slammed the door shut after him.

A key grated as Glenlake turned the lock; then, Ferguson heard the scratch of the match, as Glenlake struck it on the hearth. Muttering to himself, the butler went back to the side door to confer with Kingsley.

All Glenlake's talk of chilly weather did not hold, for the night was very mild. On the outside steps, butler and chauffeur discussed the curious mood that their master had displayed. It wasn't like Glenlake to act

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fidgety; indeed, the only thing that made sense was his query regarding Trevose.

The attorney still acted as a consultant in Glenlake's legal matters, and there were occasion both Ferguson and Kingsley remembered when Trevose had come to the house, late in the evening, with documents requiring Glenlake's signature.

The low-toned conversation was interrupted by a muffled sound, that was repeated while Ferguson and Kingsley listened. As near as they could guess, it came from the corner of the house; whether inside or outside, was a question. It was then that Ferguson remembered Glenlake's worry about the windows of the den.

"It might be a ladder!" whispered the butler. "Someone could be jarring it against the outside wall by Mr. Glenlake's den!"

"I don't think so," returned the chauffeur. "I'll have a look, though. Stay here, Ferguson."

DESPITE the admonition, the butler took a few steps to the ground, to watch the chauffeur's departure.

With the flashlight turned the other way, thick blackness settled on the door sill. Behind Ferguson's back, that blackness stirred. More than that, it grew. Like a gathering cloud, it encroached upon the lighted space that represented the open doorway.

Then blackness shaped into a figure clad in cloak and hat the sinister being of the night who had already shown his hand against men of crime.

With ghostly glide, The Shadow entered the doorway and went from sight, as he moved along the hall toward Glenlake's den. Having gathered enough from the conversation between Ferguson and Kingsley, The Shadow was on his way to learn the rest of it.

Outside, the gleam of the flashlight marked the chauffeur's return. Kingsley thought that he had heard the muffled thumps again, but they had been lower, and had ceased as suddenly as they began. As for a ladder, there wasn't a sign of any.

Turning the flashlight upward, Kingsley looked for a loose shutter, only to have Ferguson remind him that there was not enough wind to bang it.

A faint breeze did stir, and it was like a breath of doom. Eerie was the silence of this suburban setting at so late an hour. Straining for sounds that they could no longer hear, the butler and the chauffeur caught others, more foreboding. Throbs of motors somewhere, that might mean persons arriving home late, as had Glenlake, except that the distant murmurs choked off suddenly.

A light, moving slowly beyond a hedge, was scarcely more than a dim, passing flicker before it disappeared. Whether it had gone, or blacked itself out, was impossible to say. But the vague sounds and the momentary glimmer put Kingsley in a mood as taut as Ferguson's.

"Mr. Glenlake wasn't thinking just of prowlers," voiced the chauffeur. "Like the one you thought you saw, Ferguson. He said to watch for suspicious cars."

"We shall inform him about them," the butler decided. "That will be the simplest course."

In the darkened hall outside of Glenlake's den, The Shadow was already crouched at the door, listening for

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tokens from within. He heard the crackle of the fire that Glenlake had lighted, plus basso mutters that were unquestionably Glenlake's own. The man was annoyed about something; just what it was, The Shadow could learn only by opening the door and having a look inside.

With gloved hand, The Shadow produced a special pick. Tweezers in miniature, with narrow, pointed ends, they probed the keyhole to engage the key already within the lock on the other side. Gripping, the tweezers twisted.

Inside, the key was turning slowly, though probably Glenlake couldn't notice it, for sounds told that he was at the fireplace, moving poker and tongs as if to stir the fire.

A dozen seconds more, and The Shadow would have been opening that door and peering through the narrow crack. Within that time space, intervention came.

First, the click of a light switch somewhere back along the hall. Then, as The Shadow twisted away from the door, carrying the pick beneath his cloak, he saw two men lunging savagely in his direction.

Chauffeur and butler had discovered The Shadow, ending his opportunity to accost Glenlake unawares. Though barehanded, they were driving with determination, intent upon overpowering an intruder who, in their opinion, was threatening their master's life.

They wanted to save Glenlake. Instead, they saved The Shadow. Had the cloaked investigator crossed the threshold, doom would have been his. For, at that crucial instant, a thing happened in Glenlake's den – a thing so tremendous, that it dwarfed all previous events.

A sharp crackle from the fire was drowned in a terrific roar. Door, windows, even walls, burst asunder in a huge blast that spewed a mass of flame a thousandfold more brilliant than firelight. With that explosion, the whole house rocked, proof of the devastating force that swept the room of doom.

Wilbur Glenlake was gone with the blast, which, but for the intervention of the servants, would have carried The Shadow to destruction with it!

CHAPTER VIII. VANISHED BY NIGHT

WITH the rip of the explosion, The Shadow was turning to meet the combined drive of Ferguson and Kingsley. The Shadow had his own system of meeting such attackers. It was to swoop in swiftly and spill the opposition before it had a chance to even parry. Often had The Shadow used such tactics, even against men with guns. Two unarmed opponents looked easy, and they were.

Easier by far than The Shadow expected, for this was one time when the cloaked fighter outdid himself.

He came so fast, The Shadow, that his lunging hands seemed to stretch yards ahead of his feet. So far ahead, that his arms threatened to lose their sockets. Nor did The Shadow come unarmed. He had started empty-handed, but on the way, he was provided with a weapon in the shape of a missile bulkier than himself.

That missile was the major section of the door. Split asunder by the blast that slaughtered Glenlake, the chunk of heavy woodwork overtook The Shadow, beat down his shoulders, and tangled with the cloak sleeves of his stretching arms, while his hands sought to ward it off.

To Ferguson and Kingsley, hurled back by the concussion, The Shadow seemed a demon incarnate, a man of might who was swinging half a door as easily as if it were a toothpick. On their backs, they rolled frantically

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away to escape the mammoth bludgeon that the cloaked terror wielded.

Their impressions were still erroneous when they saw The Shadow lurch between them. They thought the fury of his drive was carrying him past them; that his hands, jerking forward, were supplying the sweep to the huge cudgel that he seemed to clutch.

Actually, The Shadow's predicament was worse than theirs. He wasn't even gripping the flattish war club that the explosion had hewn from the door. When The Shadow sprawled, it wasn't because he tripped. He was felled by the blow that the door chunk gave his head, despite the warding efforts of his hands.

Coming to hands and knees, chauffeur and butler saw The Shadow rolling on ahead. He came up slowly, clutching the piece of timber only because, to his groggy mind, it was something that might support his rise. Thinking that the black-cloaked Titan intended to take another swipe at them, Ferguson and Kingsley, with one accord, stampeded into Glenlake's den.

There, the pair stumbled over Glenlake's body, amid a pile of debris. It wasn't a pleasant sight, had they taken time to look. Glenlake had taken the full force of the blast. Not only were his arms and legs askew and his head twisted completely about; his body had been nearly sundered, forming a right angle on the floor.

Every window was completely shattered. Pictures had fallen and smashed, along with chunks from the walls. The ceiling was a wreck; from its gaps were dropping bits of white tile from the floor of a bathroom above, while a chandelier was hanging precariously by one wire.

What Ferguson and Kingsley wanted were weapons to serve them against The Shadow. The butler grabbed the fire tongs, only to have them fall apart in his grasp. The chauffeur saw a hammer lying under a shattered table and grabbed it up.

Ferguson discarded a large screwdriver that had been on the same table, and turned to the hearth. There, upon the shattered stonework, he saw the poker, twisted and lacking its handle. Burning embers were all about, some eating holes in the rug. Stamping out those smolders, Ferguson grabbed the poker, or what was left of it, and joined Kingsley.

Out in the hallway, they saw The Shadow and thought that he was groping toward them, until they looked again. Then it became apparent that his stagger was carrying him the other way. For the first time, Glenlake's servants realized that their formidable foe was at a loss.

They'd saved The Shadow from death by their interruption of his visit to the den, but he'd taken the brunt of the bursting door. Neither Ferguson nor Kingsley stopped to consider that The Shadow's proximity to the blast indicated his ignorance that it was due.

To the two excited men, The Shadow was simply the embodiment of all the dread that Glenlake had earlier expressed, and which had grown upon the servants themselves.

SO they went for The Shadow, hammer and poker, as he reeled toward the side door that formed the nearest exit. They overtook him, swinging hard, and only their intensity gave The Shadow respite.

His arms were taking the blows, painfully, and had either attacker waited to swing past such tardy guard, a single stroke would have felled The Shadow. As it was, he kept diverting their slashes and pulling from their grabs, until he reached the outside doorway.

There, braced by an insweep of fresh air, The Shadow showed a flash of his old form. The laugh that trickled

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from his hidden lips carried a hollow note of challenge, as he drove Ferguson back with a shoulder lunge and jabbed a fist at Kingsley, to stop a swing that the latter was making with the hammer.

Then, with a sudden twist, The Shadow was through the doorway as the pair lashed back at him. His laugh carried a parting tone, that was more than a mere token. From his sweep, his adversaries guessed that The Shadow was starting a long leap outdoors, but they didn't expect him to jump right off to nowhere. Nevertheless, The Shadow accomplished just such an amazing vanish.

Springing out through the door and down the steps, The Shadow's two pursuers found nothing! There wasn't even a whispered echo from the night. Kingsley still had the flashlight; he spread the beams in a wide, revealing sweep that covered a semicircle of fifty feet. In all that range, there wasn't a sign of The Shadow!

Nothing, except shrubs that fringed the flashlight's lick; lurking spots that even The Shadow could not have reached in the brief time allowed. That point didn't occur to the chauffeur or the butler. They headed off to scour the shrubs, rejecting a simpler explanation of The Shadow's disappearance.

All during the flashlight's probe, The Shadow had been almost at the elbows of the men who sought him. His lurch into the outer darkness had been a blind effort, with very natural consequences. The Shadow had missed the edge of the steps; going over, he'd folded like a jackknife on the ground below.

In their hurry to find The Shadow, Glenlake's servants hadn't thought of looking beside the steps from which they scoured the farther terrain with their light.

Now The Shadow, rising stiffly, was feeling along the house wall, seeking to be gone before the searchers returned. He was quite willing to leave the scene to Glenlake's servants, since their master no longer lived to answer the pertinent questions that The Shadow would have put.

Shaky though he was, his ears still ringing from the blast and his shoulders aching from the smash of the door, The Shadow was able to navigate, and still had some sense of direction.

At a front corner of the house, The Shadow paused and listened. He was sure he heard sounds resembling the creak of a door, the rattle of a window. He looked for the flashlight and saw it, still amid the shrubbery. The hunters had gone farther from the house, instead of returning toward it. The Shadow pressed a numbed hand beneath his cloak, felt the cold, familiar handle of an automatic, and gripped it.

A sudden stir happened in the shrubs. Ferguson came up into the light, pointing toward the house, shouting to Kingsley:

"Look!"

The chauffeur turned, swinging his flashlight, only to cut off its glow when a gun spoke from within the side door. Ferguson had spotted someone sneaking past that doorway, but it was Kingsley who was smart enough to extinguish the light when the unknown started shooting.

Then The Shadow saw the gun spurts. They were coming from an open window. Steadying his hand against the wall, The Shadow answered with blasts from his automatic.

A difficult target, a mere gun hand, distinguishable only by the flashes from the gun itself. Too difficult for The Shadow in his present unsteady state. His bullets either went wide or grazed the wall too closely, but they accomplished one purpose: the other man's fire stopped abruptly.

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THE trouble lay with Ferguson and Kingsley. Almost to the house, they saw the flashes of The Shadow's gun and mistook them for a flank fire, meant for them. They turned The Shadow's way, and to avoid their rush, he reeled out across the lawn. Hoping to bring the servants to their senses, The Shadow took a pot shot at the dim window.

A man dropped down to the ground, a man whose hands were clutching a gun as they clung momentarily to the sill. A gun and nothing more. His head was turned, and The Shadow couldn't see his face. Nor was there time to try another shot, as the fellow fled.

Sense still hadn't gotten to Ferguson and Kingsley. They were piling The Shadow's way, guiding by his last gunshot.

Again, The Shadow showed a return of form, as he reversed his course and took the only avenue that offered toward the front of the house. He ran straight into a bush, took a long spill across it, and came up again with Glenlake's servants after him, for they had heard his sprawl.

Around the corner, The Shadow would have gotten clear, if the front door hadn't suddenly opened to disgorge a man as hurried as the one who had fled by the window. He was waving a revolver in one hand and spreading his other arm across his face, as he loped for darkness off beyond the house. In that darkness, he fired a few shots that, in his haste, meant nothing.

There was no chance for The Shadow to respond. Against the glow of the doorway, the cloaked fighter was spotted again by Glenlake's servants, and they persisted in seeking their original quarry. So The Shadow was on the dodge again, away from the light, to the tune of starting motors, which meant that other, unknown fugitives were making good their flight.

Halfway across the lawn, The Shadow met another bush clump and stopped short. He began to work around it, for Kingsley's flashlight was sweeping anew and coming much too close. Then The Shadow's edging shoulder struck something solid in the dark.

With a twist, he came about, to swing his gun at a lunging antagonist whose hands made a quick and lucky grip at The Shadow's throat!

It was a hard, swift grapple. Despite his numbed condition, The Shadow could have finished it in his own style, but for those pesky servants who were still on the rove. They heard the struggle and came dashing over, leaving The Shadow no choice but to fling his adversary hard and turn to deal with them.

At last, things broke The Shadow's way. Glenlake's servants didn't even see The Shadow. Instead, they took after a man who sprang to his feet and fled off through a cluster of trees so fast that the flashlight only showed his heels. Left behind in that maddened chase, The Shadow decided to call it a night.

Going in the other direction, he reached a hedge and worked through to where Moe's cab was parked in a dead-end lane. A blocking fence had prevented Moe from taking after the cars that had already gone.

Telling Moe to wait, The Shadow watched through the hedge until he saw the flashlight returning to the house. The servants had ended another futile chase. As soon as they were in the house, The Shadow entered the cab and Moe backed it from the lane. As he did, Moe heard a whispered laugh from the rear seat.

Often, The Shadow voiced that mirth after vanishing by night. This time, it was more than appropriate, since other strangers had vanished also three men who, like The Shadow, had sought something at Glenlake's. Something that wasn't there, since all had left empty handed.

Already, The Shadow was thinking back into the past, considering Glenlake's actions after his flight from Talbor's. Where and how Wilbur Glenlake had disposed of the mysterious box that he had carried, was a mystery to be solved.

In solving that riddle, The Shadow hoped to trace the hand that had somehow planted death for Glenlake upon his arrival home. A death which would certainly link with the earlier murder of Alexander Talbor!

The riddle of five ivory boxes, vanished by night, like The Shadow!

CHAPTER IX. LINK TO THE PAST

DURING the interludes between his battles with men of crime, The Shadow appeared publicly in another guise. His favorite role was that of Lamont Cranston, prominent member of the exclusive Cobalt Club. To all appearances, Cranston was a nonchalant gentleman whose indifference resembled boredom; a very effective pose, since it contrasted so greatly with the reputed manner of Cranston's other self, The Shadow. There were occasions when Cranston was actually and thoroughly bored, and this happened to be one of them.

It was the day after the deaths of Talbor and Glenlake. Lounging at the club, Cranston was in the company of his friend, Police Commissioner Ralph Weston, who was reviewing reports brought by his ace inspector, Joe Cardona. Singular that Cranston should be really bored when these two were on hand, for he had especially sought the club to learn the opinions of Weston and Cardona.

The trouble lay in those very opinions. The police hadn't learned a thing, and they were making it worse by trying to sound out Cranston's views on the subject.

Two subjects, to be exact, for the law considered the deaths of Talbor and Glenlake to be things apart. As a world traveler, Cranston had known Talbor years ago; as a man of finance, he was acquainted with Glenlake. Hence it was difficult to tell whether his weary headshakes referred to one, the other, or both. Convinced at last that Cranston lacked all views, Weston and Cardona reverted to their own. Through politeness and policy, Cranston was forced to listen, though he wished he could go elsewhere. He intended to go elsewhere at six o'clock. Anticipating a know-nothing session with Weston, Cranston had earlier remarked that he had a dinner date with a girl named Margo Lane. Cranston's acquaintance with Margo was always a good excuse for getting away from Weston.

The law summarized the Talbor case thus:

Somewhere in his travels, Alexander Talbor must have made dangerous enemies. At present, New York was receiving an influx of Americans who had hitherto lived in the Orient. Probably Talbor's most dreaded enemy belonged to that group. Learning that Talbor was back in New York, said enemy had popped out of obscurity and avenged himself on the man he hated.

Finding the suspect was a large problem: learning his underlying motive, even greater. Chief support to the police theory was the murderer's return to the scene of crime. He'd wanted to make sure that Talbor was dead, but a few bullets would have settled that question. But to pitch Talbor headlong from a window, thereby bashing him beyond further recognition, was a vicious act smacking of Oriental vengeance.

It reminded Weston of things he had read about: how, in India, they put men to death by letting elephants step on their skulls. When Weston asked if Cranston had ever witnessed such executions, his friend nodded, yawned, and inquired what Weston thought about Talbor's servant, Channing.

The commissioner reviewed that proposition briefly. The police had eliminated Channing. The servant would

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have had better opportunities to dispose of his master. Moreover, Channing was outside the hotel, taking Talbor's luggage away in a cab, at the time his master went upstairs, not more than ten minutes before the tragedy.

So far, nothing had been heard from Channing, which was not at all surprising. The servant had held Talbor's full trust; that much was certain. It followed that Channing would therefore fear that he might share his master's fate, and would be staying out of sight until a killer was brought to justice.

The Glenlake murder was of another variety.

Behind it, the law saw attempted robbery maneuvered by a criminal band. Somehow, an explosive substance had been planted in Glenlake's fireplace. Crooks wanted to blow up the corner of the house, and Wilbur Glenlake with it. In the confusion, they had intended to invade the mansion and rifle it of valuables known to be in Glenlake's possession.

Glenlake's servants had thwarted the robbery. Persons known to be on the ground had fled, unfortunately unidentified. If there was any connection at all between the tragedies of Alexander Talbor and Wilbur Glenlake, it was the presence of The Shadow at both scenes a point which Commissioner Weston did not care to recognize.

Officially, The Shadow was regarded as a myth. Unofficially, it was known that he intervened against criminals of every sort. Reports of The Shadow at Talbor's hotel, and later at Glenlake's house, indicated that he was working on two separate cases. Thwarted on one, he'd gone to see about the other.

Out of all this drivel, the impassive Mr. Cranston heard but one thing of value: the police agreed that Harry Vincent had played no part in crime. They were counting on him only as a witness who might help identify the murderer, if found. So Lamont Cranston, otherwise The Shadow, indulged in an inward smile. After tonight, he could put his star agent back on the case. For the present, he had assigned Harry's duties to another.

ELSEWHERE, men were discussing the deaths of Talbor and Glenlake in connected terms, though all were very cautious in their opinions. Again, Laird Trevoise was having visitors at his apartment; two of them, who weren't interested in playing chess. In fact, to avoid any distraction, Trevoise went to the pains of putting away a very fine set of hand-carved chessmen with which he had been testing out some problems. Trevoise's visitors, of course, were Jonathan Philmont and Peter Harlingen. Since they had come here on their own, Trevoise preferred to let them express their opinions first.

"Regarding last night," began Philmont, as he dangled his glasses from their ribbon. "We were all quite agreed that Glenlake could have murdered Talbor."

"We said more than that," corrected Harlingen, whose face had an expression as sharp as his eyes. "We agreed that Glenlake might have murdered Talbor."

Studying the faces of the other two, Trevoise held his own expressionless. In his driest tone, he voiced the product of their thoughts, when he said:

"Let us dispense with modifications, gentlemen. Put it simply that Glenlake murdered Talbor. Our next question is: Who killed Glenlake?"

In response, the other two became as poker-faced as Trevoise. Again, there was a three-way deadlock. Each pair of eyes showed accusation that gauged itself by the others. Any of the three could have been using that

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stare as a shell to preserve his own composure.

It was a situation far more tense than the night before. Then, a burden thrust on any man's shoulders could have been shrugged away and blamed on Glenlake, who had certainly been in a position to murder Talbor. But Glenlake's death, with Talbor gone, came straight home to the three who now discussed it.

Most men would have found it difficult to remain indifferent to the presence of a murderer. Not these. Two of them, most certainly, were maintaining their composure despite the sang-froid of the third. Again, it was Trevoise who whether a murderer or not felt it incumbent to clear the issue.

"We three are partners," stated Trevoise dryly. "We each own an equal share in five ivory boxes, with a ruby nested in their center. Our only interest is to reclaim our property."

"Right!" agreed Philmont. "But where are the boxes? Glenlake took them from Talbor's hotel, but he did not carry them to his house."

"Thanks for the information, Philmont," put in Harlingen. "Not having gone to Glenlake's, I wouldn't know whether the boxes were there or not."

Philmont took time out to put on his glasses and give Harlingen a very fishy stare.

"If you intimate that I was at Glenlake's," declared Philmont, "it could only be because you were there, Harlingen, and saw someone else, whom you mistook for me!"

As he finished, Philmont turned and directed the same cold stare at Trevoise, who rallied neatly to the situation.

"Why should any of us have been at Glenlake's?" asked Trevoise. "The newspaper reports speak of an attempted robbery, in which nothing was actually stolen. Since there was no mention of the ivory boxes, we can assume that Glenlake did not have them with him. Obviously, he left them somewhere on the way."

"At his office, perhaps," suggested Philmont. "Unless the police have been there already."

"Which they have," informed Harlingen. "They went there immediately after leaving the house, to make sure that another bomb wasn't planted. No, I didn't go to Glenlake's office" Harlingen raised his hand before Philmont could speak "because it wasn't necessary. I read about it in the newspapers."

With a wave of dismissal, Trevoise ended the conference, as though he chose the only course.

"We must wait," he declared, "and learn whatever we can. I was Glenlake's adviser in certain legal matters. I shall probably be the first to learn about the ivory boxes, if they reappear. If I hear anything, I shall inform you."

So convincing were those words, that both Philmont and Harlingen doubted them. When they saw Trevoise step to the closet to bring out another set of fancy chessmen, their doubts increased. Accustomed to controlling more potent emotions, neither Philmont nor Harlingen had any trouble concealing mere disbelief in their partner, particularly because it was a thing that had existed all along.

Taking Trevoise's hint, Philmont and Harlingen left; once outside the apartment, each went his separate way, as Trevoise, himself, observed when he looked from the curtained window of his study. Philmont rode away in a car, while Harlingen started on foot toward the subway.

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Whereupon, Laird Trevose chuckled. He went to the closet, but instead of choosing from among the many chess sets, he took out hat, overcoat, and cane. Then, leaving the lights burning, he went out to the elevator, telling his servant that should visitors stop by, they were to be told that Mr. Trevose was at home but not receiving callers.

Most people phrased the thing the other way about; but not Laird Trevose. With him, bluntness was a habit. When he wanted to be left alone, he said so. The practice was proving of use on this occasion. For Trevose, venturing forth upon a mission of his own choice, preferred to have the fact unknown.

Dusk received Trevose as he left the back door of the apartment house. Ignoring his car, which was parked across the way, he took a cab, instead. For Laird Trevose was bound upon a very special mission, one that only the presence of his visitors had postponed.

That mission involved a link to the past, through which Trevose hoped to claim the five ivory boxes as his own!

CHAPTER X. REPORT UNFINISHED

LOUNGING by a window in the third-floor hallway, Clyde Burke lighted another cigarette, while he kept a wary eye on an office down the corridor. Inasmuch as Clyde was also watching the stairs, the elevator, and the sidewalk in front of the Norwood Building, he had a pretty sizable assignment.

Clyde was used to doing two things at once. As a reporter for the New York Classic, he covered plenty of important stories, and was noted for the inside angles that he unearthed. But no one knew the real inside of those inside angles. Far deeper than the job he did for the Classic were Clyde's accomplishments in the service of The Shadow.

It wasn't a case of letting the Classic down. For every time that he had denied his newspaper a scoop, Clyde could count two or three that had meant sensational news, which The Shadow had ordered Clyde to release. The two jobs clicked like clockwork, just as they were doing today.

The Norwood Building was small and rather obscure, not the sort where one would expect to find important offices. However, it happened to belong to Wilbur Glenlake, or rather, had belonged to him, up to the time of his demise. That was why the office down the hall bore Glenlake's name upon the door.

Though retired from active business, Glenlake had still kept his hands in many enterprises, enough to necessitate an office and a staff. Since the Norwood Building was only partly rented, he had moved into it. From the time the police had searched the office for a bomb that wasn't there, reporters had been in and out, Clyde among them.

Apparently, Clyde was the only one who thought that he could get a story from any of the clerks and stenographers who stoutly insisted that they knew nothing about Glenlake's personal affairs. The rest of the news hawks had gone, leaving Clyde to smoke his cigarettes and wait.

As a replacement for Harry Vincent, Clyde Burke was the natural choice. As soon as Glenlake's death hit the headlines, it was to be expected that reporters would be about. So The Shadow had assigned Clyde to full-time duty, and the longer he went without results, the more Clyde expected them.

Knowing of Glenlake's strange flight of the night before, and the fact that the murder victim had carried a missing prize obtained through crime, Clyde was quite sure that something would develop before the day was done.

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And the day was almost over.

It was after half past five. A few of the hired help were still engaged in straightening out Glenlake's many business threads, and it looked as if they intended to work all evening, for the lights were burning in the office. Most everyone else had left the floor; perhaps everyone, for the only offices that hadn't disgorged their quota looked like empties. Maybe it was about time for someone else to show up and relieve the monotony for Clyde. Such was the reporter's thought, as he looked hopefully from the window and saw a cab pull up in front.

It wasn't the first cab that had stopped during Clyde's brief watch. There was another across the way, but Clyde couldn't tell whether or not it had an occupant. Maybe the man who liked doorways had been in that first cab.

By the man who liked doorways, Clyde meant a strolling individual who moved up and down the street, keeping his back turned most of the time, except when he turned around, always in the shelter of a doorway.

For the present, the newly arrived cab monopolized Clyde's attention. It dropped a passenger and drove away. The passenger not only remained; he came directly into the Norwood Building. The elevator had closed down, so Clyde listened for footsteps on the stairs.

They came, bringing the visitor with them. He was a tall man, with a thin, dry face and appraising eyes, that took in Clyde with a single glance, then turned away.

The man went directly into Glenlake's office. Clyde paused to flick his finished cigarette from the window. As he did, he fancied he saw a head dip back into the parked cab across the street.

Looking along the house fronts, Clyde saw another figure in a doorway. Which meant there were two watchers, after all, both interested in the third man who had entered the building. Good points to remember, though Clyde wished he could gain more. That, however, was impossible, considering how the dusk had deepened.

The next best step was to check on the man who had entered Glenlake's office.

RELYING on the power of the press, Clyde walked along the hall, opened the door and stepped inside. He found the thin-faced man talking to the office help, who were getting their hats and coats. When he heard Clyde enter, the man turned and asked dryly:

"Well?"

Clyde explained that he was a reporter, whereat the thin-faced man smiled.

"My name is Trevose," he stated. "I was Mr. Glenlake's attorney. He used to ask my advice on various matters, among them, what to say to reporters who wanted an interview. My advice on that question was nothing! I am one man who always follows my own advice. Good day, Mr. Burke."

Turning on his heel, Trevose entered a door marked "Private." One of the clerks followed, buzzing in his ear. Clyde caught the phrase: "Personal correspondence," and saw Trevose nod.

Then, noting that the other clerks had gone out, leaving him quite alone, Clyde looked about, saw another door that bore no mark at all; so he opened it and found himself in a small closet.

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Clyde closed the door and waited inside.

It was dark in the closet, but Clyde felt the nudge of another doorknob, so he tried it. Located at the back of the closet, the knob indicated a door that led into another suite of offices, but it was locked from the other side.

Listening at his own door, Clyde heard slight footsteps, and peeked out. He was just in time to see Trevoise sneaking into the hallway.

Emerging from the closet, Clyde reached the outer door and took a further look. Trevoise was peering in and around the hallway, trying other office doors. Very probably he was making sure that Clyde was gone.

Clyde decided to make the most of his present opportunity. He did a sneak of his own into Glenlake's private office, and there on the desk found the personal correspondence that the clerk had mentioned.

All letters bore the postmark of the present day, and every one was addressed to Glenlake. Some envelopes had been opened, but there was one still sealed. It was a plain envelope with no return address in the corner. It bore Glenlake's name and office address, typewritten, and in capital letters, lower left, it said: "PERSONAL."

Clyde held the envelope to the light. Inside was a single sheet of folded paper that looked plain, but it contained something else between the paper folds. Something that was stiff, like cardboard; too large for a calling card, too small to be a playing card. Before Clyde could figure out what it was, he heard Trevoise coming back.

There wasn't time to get through the outer office and into the closet. However, Clyde saw an eligible hiding place. Trevoise had hung his hat and coat on a stand in the corner, and there was space behind it. That, plus the fact that only the desk lamp was burning, decided Clyde. He slid in back of the coat stand, and felt comfortably out of sight when Trevoise entered.

Evidently the attorney had made only a cursory inspection, for he left the private door open and kept listening intently for any sounds from the hall. Meanwhile, he was sorting through the letters, and when his eye struck the one which had attracted Clyde, it showed an interested gleam. Keeping his head tilted, as though listening, Trevoise opened the envelope and drew out the contents. Clyde saw the piece of cardboard, and this time recognized it. It was manila colored, and could only be one thing: a package receipt from the parcel room of a railway station!

Instantly, Clyde linked the thing with Glenlake. Clyde knew all the details of Glenlake's flight; how the man had left Moe's cab and cut through the Grand Central Terminal. Moe had sent a porter after him, but had supposed that the redcap hadn't been able to overtake Glenlake when the latter went on through to Lexington Avenue.

But Clyde was gaining a new and better theory. Glenlake must have stopped at the parcel room in Grand Central and checked his bundle there. No wonder the porter hadn't been able to identify him! No wonder, either, that the mysterious box had disappeared!

TREVOISE was pocketing the parcel receipt with one hand, crumpling the envelope with the other. To Clyde's relief, the lawyer turned off the desk lamp and came to get his hat and coat in the dark.

Then Trevoise was stealing out of the office, evidently in quite a hurry, which didn't puzzle Clyde at all. Obviously, Trevoise wanted to reach Grand Central as soon as possible, to pick up that prize package.

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Clyde didn't follow. Instead, he pounced for the telephone as soon as Trevoise was gone. This office was in the west Twenties, and Grand Central was at Forty-second, on the other side of town. It would be easier to have someone intercept Trevoise at his destination: any one of several agents who wouldn't be recognized by Trevoise.

Tilting the telephone toward the window, Clyde had just enough light to use the dial. He wasn't worried by the clatter the dial made, for he was sure that it couldn't be heard outside the office. The sound didn't matter any more than the ticking of a little luminous-dial clock on the desk, the hands showing a few minutes past six.

At least, Clyde thought that no sounds mattered. Perhaps that was why he didn't notice sounds himself. Creeping sounds that would have been detected by Harry Vincent, had he been the agent on this job.

For those creaks, coming through the outer office, were much like the ominous tokens that Harry had heard, more than once, along the hallway at the Hotel Talleyrand. They stood for stealthy footfalls that carried doom in their insidious stride!

Clyde heard a sound he did notice a methodical voice from the receiver of the telephone:

"Burbank speaking."

"This is Burke," informed Clyde. "I've got something. I'm calling from Glenlake's office. A lawyer named Trevoise was here. He opened a letter marked 'Personal,' and in it was —"

From that point, Clyde's report remained unfinished. Two hands slithered through the darkness, came around Clyde's neck and took him tightly by the throat, changing his next words into an inarticulate gargle.

The startling speed with which those hands arrived, the strength with which their fingers dug, was proof conclusive to Clyde Burke that he was in a murderer's clutch!

CHAPTER XI. CROSSED BATTLE

FOR a few horrendous moments, the world whirled for Clyde Burke. What little light there was, vanished completely, and he was in a realm of pitch darkness. The rattle in his ears resembled a plague of locusts. Clyde's hands, acting on their own, seemed miles away as they clawed at the murderous hands that throttled him.

If ever Clyde had fought for life, it was now. Burbank, of course, knew that something was wrong, but Burbank wasn't near, nor could he summon aid in time to save Clyde. The only factor in Clyde's favor was the killer's wish to deliver silent death; which, at least, would be a slow process.

Though his efforts would lessen as the choking continued, Clyde still had a longer time to live, and intended to make the most of it.

Back and forth, Clyde writhed, seeking valiantly to wrench away from that dooming grip. He twisted, though not in an effort to see his opponent's face. He felt certain enough that the man was Trevoise, for Clyde hadn't forgotten the lawyer's snoop along the hall. It would be like Trevoise to come back and listen at the door, just on a mere whim.

It would be like Trevoise, too, to go the limit with this deadly attack. Clyde already suspected the lawyer of having killed Glenlake, which, judged by known facts, would brand him as Talbor's murderer, too. A double

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killer after a third victim? The thought was pounding through Clyde's brain, along with the whirling blackness and the roaring sound. It added to his frenzy and made him fight the harder.

How Clyde managed it, he never did know, but of a sudden he was free of that torturing grip, gulping a great whiff of air that seemed a magic tonic. Clawing the air, Clyde's hands struck the desk, and as he felt his antagonist pounce anew, he took a frantic action.

He grabbed for the telephone, found it, and tried to articulate the name "Trevoze!" for Burbank to hear. It would be enough, that name, to guide The Shadow on a course of vengeance, should Clyde succumb to the grip that his attacker was renewing. But the grip came too soon for Clyde to cry the name. Tighter than ever, those cruel hands were pressing Clyde into oblivion.

The taste of that one happy breath made Clyde want another, at any cost. He yearned for a weapon, and in his wishing realized that he had one, the telephone. With a lash that carried him half about, even though it didn't loose the killer's grip, Clyde struck out, wide but hard.

His foeman must have dodged, for Clyde felt a sideward tug from the hands. Another swing; this time, the telephone thumped a shoulder. Then the clutching hands did a strange thing. They drew back and gave a hurl, as though they intended to throw Clyde into the hereafter, instead of squeezing him to that destination.

Throw Clyde, the hands did, but only across the room, telephone and all. Hitting the wall, Clyde came staggering to his feet. Blackness about him, a roaring in his ears those illusions persisted. But he could see something vaguely in the blackness, hear the roar changing into other sounds.

Driving forward, Clyde was bound toward the door to the outer office, and as he neared it he swung the telephone hard, to meet his foeman. The stroke landed. Whether the foe was coming in again, or taking to flight, Clyde didn't know. He only knew that the blow went home, though with an odd recoil that Clyde couldn't understand. Tightly though he gripped it, the phone went flying from Clyde's hand, but he felt his opponent slump. Barehanded, Clyde flung himself upon his human prey.

There was the sound of a slamming door amid the dying roar. Forgetting the man on the floor, Clyde found his feet. He tripped over the telephone cord, but couldn't locate the instrument itself. He needed that missile; it was his only weapon. So Clyde groped madly for the desk, blundered into the lamp, and turned it on.

Seeing the phone cord, he ran his hands along it and found the telephone around the corner of the desk. Up with his bludgeon, Clyde swung about, ready to meet all comers.

He saw only one: The Shadow!

SLOWLY, the cloaked fighter was rising from the floor, just within the doorway. Noting the tilted position of the slouch hat, Clyde stared at the telephone in his hand and suddenly understood. That stroke delivered in the dark had felled a friend, not a foe!

Now it all cleared in Clyde's horrified mind. Remembering the roar in his ears, he could identify the other sounds that had disturbed him. One sound, in particular: the tone of a sinister laugh.

The Shadow's challenge, hurled at Clyde's attacker that was why the killer had flung Clyde aside. He'd gone after The Shadow, instead, and the cloaked fighter had gone to grips with him, only to have Clyde intervene the wrong way!

Just to top off all his blunders, Clyde had felled The Shadow, and their mutual foeman had taken the

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opportunity to escape. The slam of the outer door had marked a departure, not another arrival!

As The Shadow steadied on his feet, he looked at Clyde and gave a sibilant laugh. Wavering slightly, the cloaked fighter stepped forward and took the telephone, as though to measure the cord. Then Clyde saw the reason for the telephone's recoil.

It had reached the end of its cord when it struck The Shadow, and that, to some extent, had lessened the force of the swing. Otherwise, Clyde might still be trying to revive his chief.

A whispered laugh issued from The Shadow's hidden lips. It brought a voice from the receiver:

"Burbank speaking."

The Shadow spoke in turn; his whisper was steady. Finishing with Burbank, he turned to Clyde, but kept the phone in hand because Burbank was standing by. Clyde picked up where he had left off.

"Trevose found a parcel check," Clyde explained. He threw a quick look at the clock. "He's halfway to Grand Central by this time, maybe farther."

The Shadow gestured to a phone book, and ordered:

"Find Trevose's number and address."

Clyde looked, but without result. Trevose's number was unlisted. Then came Burbank's voice from the receiver, giving the needed information. Among other items, Burbank kept a handy index of unlisted phone numbers. Trevose's address was on Park Avenue, in the Thirties. It was no farther from Glenlake's office than it was from Grand Central.

The Shadow told Burbank to try Trevose's number. There was a short wait while Burbank put in the call. But he couldn't get a reply.

Clyde couldn't understand The Shadow's purpose, until an odd fact dawned. It seemed that The Shadow wasn't convinced that Clyde's attacker was Trevose.

It must be that The Shadow was playing hunches. One hunch had brought him directly here from the Cobalt Club, and it had saved Clyde's life, so it was little wonder that The Shadow was taking cognizance of another. In the dark, The Shadow hadn't been able to identify Clyde's attacker any more than had Clyde himself. Yet, there was logic in rejecting Trevose.

Not long ago, Wilbur Glenlake had fled, carrying a mysterious package, which had disappeared. Having located that package, Laird Trevose had set out to get it. Assuming that he hadn't lingered long enough to hear Clyde dial the telephone, Trevose would still be on his way. In that case, Clyde's attacker was another man.

Another man, inclined to murder. That viewpoint changed the status of Trevose, putting him somewhat in Glenlake's class. Where lives were at stake, The Shadow was taking no more chances. Clyde heard the instructions that his chief gave to Burbank: namely, that Burbank was to put in a call to Inspector Cardona, a tip-off that would send the ace inspector straight to Trevose's apartment.

Hanging up, The Shadow handed the telephone to Clyde and told him to call the Classic office, give his story, and then set out to Trevose's apartment to learn the situation there.

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Clyde made the call, though while he did, he wondered why The Shadow was leaving so much to others. Clyde began to worry, thinking that the jolt he handed his chief had been harder than The Shadow would admit.

Clyde's qualms ended with his phone call. As he turned to speak to The Shadow, Clyde found that he was alone. Swiftly, mysteriously, The Shadow had departed, in that fleeting style that resembled a weird vanish. Grimly, Clyde Burke smiled. The Shadow wasn't leaving things to others.

When crime threatened, The Shadow preferred to be the first person on the scene, even though he might call in auxiliaries. If any person could forestall impending doom, that being was The Shadow!

CHAPTER XII. LURK OF DEATH

TREVOSE'S dapper servant unlocked the door of his apartment and closed it behind him with a satisfied smile. He looked along the hallway to the study, then stared, much perturbed, when the door opened and Laird Trevoise appeared. The lawyer spoke, in a dry, crisp tone:

"I was listening for you, Rolfe. Why did you go out?"

"Why... why –" Rolfe halted his stammer. "I only stepped out for a few minutes, sir. You see –"

"I see!" Trevoise gave testy interruption. "I was out, and I didn't want to see anyone. So you felt you were privileged to call on some of your friends among the servants in the apartment house. I expected you to be here, Rolfe!"

The servant nodded, rather weakly. This wasn't the first time that Trevoise had called him to task for his one failing that of leaving the apartment without permission. This time, Rolfe feared that his job was at stake, particularly when Trevoise added:

"The telephone was ringing. I heard it outside; but I was too late to answer it. I am particular about such things, Rolfe."

As if in response to Trevoise's statement, the phone began to tinkle again. The servant hurried over to answer it, but Trevoise waved him back.

"Never mind," said the lawyer. "It may be the same person who called before. I should prefer to have him think that I am out, rather than know that I have just come in. I shall notify you when to answer any calls."

Trevoise picked up a book of chess problems, opened it to the one he wanted, and returned stiffly to the study. He closed the door, and Rolfe heard him throw the bolt, as was usual when Trevoise busied himself with chess problems. When Trevoise didn't bolt the door, it generally meant that he expected visitors.

Again, the telephone began its jangle. Rolfe hesitated, and finally went down the hall, intending to knock at the door in case Trevoise did not hear the bell.

Outside the door, Rolfe paused. He heard the click of chessmen on a board; then a long, steady sigh, the sort that Trevoise often gave when settling down to his favorite work. The servant decided that it wouldn't be good policy to disturb Trevoise for the present.

Five minutes must have passed before Rolfe heard a knock at the door of the apartment. Remembering the admonition regarding visitors, Rolfe began to speak as he opened the door.

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"Very sorry," said the servant, "but Mr. Trevoise is not seeing visitors –"

There, the servant halted, frozen. Rolfe wasn't exactly seeing visitors himself. For the shape that filled the doorway loomed like nothing earthly. Certainly, it wasn't one of Trevoise's so-called friends; for neither Philmont nor Harlingen could have masqueraded in this outlandish fashion.

Rolfe saw an intruder clad entirely in black. His head was topped by a slouch hat; his shoulders wore a flowing cloak, with sleeves that gave a nebulous effect, as the figure swished Rolfe's way. So fantastic was the sight, that Rolfe was gripped by the illusion that he could see right through the visitor.

Yet the servant did not class the black-clad stranger as a ghost; not even Glenlake's ghost, which might have been in a wandering mood, where Trevoise was concerned. This shape had too much substance to belong to an ethereal realm. His first fright dispelled, Rolfe took The Shadow for the solid figure that he was, and he decided to block out the intruder.

By then, it was too late.

Before the servant could slam the door, a sinister laugh reached his ears. Rolfe was pressed back by a gloved hand as The Shadow wedged a shoulder through the door. The servant's announcement satisfied The Shadow. If Trevoise had already returned home, the cloaked intruder intended to see him without delay, and could therefore waste no time explaining things to Rolfe.

THRUST back, the servant landed in a corner by the telephone. There, by chance, he encountered one of Trevoise's walking sticks. Gripping the cane, Rolfe started an attack that was smothered instantly.

The Shadow caught the fellow's wrist, twisted it, so that the hand released the cane. From the black cloak came a fist that clenched an automatic and pressed the weapon against Rolfe's chest.

"Show me to your master! At once!"

Those hissed instructions were enough. Immediately, the quaking servant found himself conducting The Shadow down the hall. Outside the study, Rolfe gestured feebly and gasped weakly:

"Mr. Trevoise... he's in there."

The Shadow gestured for Rolfe to knock. The servant did so, timidly, until the gun pressed harder. It was like the touch of a hidden button, that increased Rolfe's knock to a rapid pounding. Beads of sweat glistening on the servant's brow were proof that Rolfe sincerely wished that Trevoise would answer.

"He's in there!" The servant gulped. "He went in only five minutes ago. He ought to answer, Mr. Trevoise should."

The Shadow's hand was trying the door, to find it locked. Carefully, he pressed his gun against the lock itself. He wanted Rolfe to see exactly what happened, for the testimony might prove important later.

Rolfe saw, all right, but misunderstood. His distorted impression was that The Shadow intended to deliver death to Trevoise through the keyhole.

Valiantly, Rolfe hurled himself upon the cloaked intruder, and frenzy strengthened the servant's attack. The Shadow was forced to fling Rolfe along the hallway, where the servant landed with a thumping roll that upset the little telephone table.

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The clatter brought a dash from the hallway; in through the door that The Shadow had left open came a stocky, swarthy man, Inspector Joe Cardona.

It didn't take Cardona long to size up the situation. He'd received Burbank's tip-off just as he was leaving the Cobalt Club. Cardona hadn't even waited for Commissioner Weston, but had simply sent back word to his superior.

When tip-offs were relayed from The Shadow, they had to be followed without delay. So, when Cardona spied The Shadow, he ignored Rolfe completely. Eagerly, Joe queried:

"Where's Trevoze?"

The Shadow gestured to the study door. Cardona reached it on the run. Finding that it wouldn't yield, Cardona began to bash against the door, until The Shadow drew up beside him and pressed him away. Then, for Cardona's benefit, The Shadow gave the demonstration that he had tried to display to Rolfe.

Placing the muzzle of the .45 against the lock, The Shadow pulled the trigger. The single blast blew the lock into junk. The door yielded, and Cardona shouldered through.

On the floor lay Laird Trevoze. The lawyer was dead; Cardona saw that at a glance, as did The Shadow, looking across the inspector's shoulder. Near Trevoze was a low table bearing a large chessboard, with scattered pieces all about it, except for a few that had rolled to the floor along with Trevoze.

The evidence showed that Trevoze, in slumping sideward from his chair, had made a grab at the table, upsetting the chess pieces but failing to stop his fall.

As to the proof that Trevoze was dead, the man's face showed it. Seldom had Cardona seen a face more distorted than the leering one that looked up toward the door. Already, those features wore an ashen gray, as though Trevoze had felt the horror of sudden death as he met it.

CARDONA took slow paces forward, so intent upon the sight ahead of him that he failed to hear sounds in back. The Shadow noted them, those quick-driving footsteps that meant that Rolfe was in again. The servant was coming with the cane. Swinging for The Shadow, Rolfe hoped to beat down the cloaked intruder and then get at Cardona, for he mistrusted the new arrival, too.

The thing that Cardona did hear was the hard sound of a fist meeting a jaw. Joe turned, to see Rolfe sagging after receiving the force of The Shadow's gun-weighted fist. Staring, Cardona forgot Trevoze's body for the moment, to wonder what The Shadow was about.

With a swoop, The Shadow caught Rolfe before the servant doubled to the floor, reeled the fellow's slumping form to a corner, and propped it there so that it couldn't fall.

Cardona had to concede that Rolfe did look funny, standing there with drooping arms and tilted head, a look of surprise upon his senseless face. But this was no time for horseplay, even by The Shadow. Cardona didn't like it, but rather than dispute the point, Joe turned on his heel and stooped to examine Trevoze's body.

Something took Cardona by the neck, so fast that he thought he'd encountered the same invisible assassin who had done away with Trevoze. Whatever it was, it hooked Joe tightly and hauled him upright. Gargling, Joe grabbed at the thing and found that it formed a ring around his neck.

Cardona was spilling backward when The Shadow caught him; thereupon, the throttling gadget left Joe's

throat and clattered to the floor.

It was Trevose's cane, which The Shadow had plucked from Rolfe. For the same reason that he had propped the servant in the corner, The Shadow had hauled Cardona upright before Joe's stoop was completed. The reach of the cane had enabled The Shadow to speed the process at a time when inches might have counted.

For, while Cardona clung to his throat and stared, unable yet to express his indignation, The Shadow coolly demonstrated the reason for his action. Picking up a cigarette lighter from a higher table, The Shadow flicked it and lowered the flame toward Trevose's body, keeping his own head lifted as he did.

Various things might have happened with that flame. It could have produced an explosion, but The Shadow was quite confident that it wouldn't do more than flare. However, nothing of the sort occurred.

Again, the flame might have died suddenly, which it didn't. Instead, it acted in a third way. Its color changed to a distinct green, that gave off a little trail of smoke dyed with the same hue.

Flipping off the lighter, The Shadow turned to Cardona and gave a significant laugh. The low-toned mirth caused Cardona to loosen his hands from his neck and nod solemnly in return.

The Shadow had divined the cause of Trevose's death. The lawyer had succumbed to the effects of a deadly gas. Heavier than air, that vapor had settled to the floor along with the victim, thus assuring the completion of its heinous work.

Forced to slug Rolfe, The Shadow had caught the servant and propped him up where he couldn't inhale the gas. Similarly, the cloaked rescuer had wrenched Cardona from the deadly level where doom awaited.

In the room where murder had already claimed a victim, The Shadow had saved two others from the possibility of death!

CHAPTER XIII. TRAILS ROUND ABOUT

WHILE the facts of death were driving home to Joe Cardona, The Shadow stepped over to the window of the study. There, half obscured by the curtains, he extended a gloved hand to test the window fastening; at the same time, The Shadow called Cardona's attention in his direction.

The Shadow was pointing out that the window was definitely clamped. It was a hinged window, with metal framework, the sort that could be pushed open to the required distance by means of a metal rod that followed the line of the sill. The clamp, in turn, was used to tighten the rod in place.

This clamp was very tight, and the window fully shut. No one could possibly have left or entered Trevose's study by the window route, any more than by the door. True, someone might have entered the study beforehand, and waited there for Trevose. If so, the killer might still be about. Unless he had simply planted the death device, and then gone. In that case, the gas container, not the killer, would be the existing evidence.

With a gesture, The Shadow indicated that Cardona was to begin the search, thus rendering it official. Meanwhile, The Shadow unloosened the window and opened it, producing a gust of air that breezed through the hallway because of the draft from the outer door.

The process effectively disposed of any remnants of the deadly gas. It wasn't a case of disposing of needed evidence, because traces of the murderous vapor would certainly be found in Trevose's lungs.

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Forgetting that the gas had cleared, Cardona made a quick grab for Rolfe as the servant stirred in his corner. It wasn't necessary to help Rolfe, for the fellow caught himself before he fell. The same fresh air that cleared away the gas served to revive Rolfe from the effects of The Shadow's punch.

While Cardona was flashing a badge before the servant's blinking eyes, The Shadow kept close watch upon the door of Trevose's closet. If the killer still lurked on the murder scene, the closet must be his only hiding place. The Shadow doubted, however, that the murderer was still about; people didn't usually stay close, cooped up, when they released a lethal gas.

Having roused Rolfe and ordered the servant to work with him, Cardona drew a revolver and opened the closet door. Trevose's hat and coat were hanging on a hook, along with another cane. Aside from those, the closet contained nothing but a tier of shelves, which were racked with the many sets of chessmen that Trevose had collected as a hobby.

There was no sign of any device that might have contained the poison gas, though The Shadow knew that it probably would not have required a very large container. It was possible to compress a very considerable quantity of harmful vapor into a very small compass, as witness tear-gas bombs.

Maybe that point occurred to Cardona, as he rummaged about the closet, clattering chessboards and knocking over chessmen. The Shadow, meanwhile, was glancing elsewhere. Specifically, he was looking for a mysterious package that Trevose had gone to get a package, which, according to Clyde's elaboration of Moe's report, must have been checked in the parcel room at Grand Central Terminal.

Glenlake had unquestionably wrapped that package before leaving it in the parcel room. There was no sign of any wrapping about Trevose's study. But it was quite likely that Trevose, to make sure of the contents, would have unwrapped the package while bringing it home.

Therefore, The Shadow was actually looking for an ivory box some ten to twelve inches square. There wasn't a sign of any such thing in Trevose's study. Which, of course, led The Shadow to consider other factors.

FIRST, the time element.

The Shadow had expected to get here as soon as Trevose, considering that the lawyer had to take a trip up to Forty-second Street and back, while The Shadow was crossing town in the lower Thirties. But The Shadow wasn't positive about the time factor.

It was based on Clyde's mention of the clock on Glenlake's desk. Clyde had glanced at the clock in the dark; besides, the clock could have been several minutes off. So The Shadow conceded that Trevose might have gone to Grand Central, to pick up the package.

Allowing that, why weren't the ivory boxes here?

One point: Trevose could have changed his mind. In that case, the parcel check would still be the clue. If in Trevose's pocket, Cardona would find it. If not, it might be that Trevose, for some reason, had done something else with it, such as Glenlake's system of mailing it to himself.

Or, if the parcel check failed to show up, it could also mean that Trevose had actually claimed the package containing the ivory boxes, but had left it somewhere along the line, as Glenlake also had done during his flight from Talbor's to Long Island.

Only one thing could have inspired Trevose to ignore, or temporarily dispose of, the prize he had sought: the

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fear that someone had trailed him from Glenlake's office when he took the parcel check.

Already, The Shadow suspected that there were two other persons who sought the ivory boxes. There had been indications of three men outside of Talbor's, and later, three had been in the neighborhood of Glenlake's home.

Today, Clyde Burke had encountered a marauder in Glenlake's office – the man who had escaped despite The Shadow. By then, Trevose had left, but there was still another person who might have trailed him. Had Trevose guessed that he was being tagged, he would have made other plans for the ivory boxes rather than bringing them back to his apartment.

Thinking in terms of two, The Shadow looked from the study window down to the street below. As if in response to his analysis, he saw the very situation that Clyde had earlier noted outside of the Norwood Building.

Two watchers were here, outside of Trevose's apartment house. One was the doorway lurker, but he was slipping from sight in his favorite fashion when The Shadow spotted him. The reason the fellow was taking to a doorway was to escape the observation of a second man, whose head was poking very warily from a cab that was stopping farther down the street.

Street lights were too feeble for The Shadow to get more than fleeting glimpses of the rival pair. However, he was sure that they hadn't observed him, for The Shadow was keeping close to the window curtains. The longer they watched, the better, and it wouldn't have to be very long.

For The Shadow turned immediately from the window and performed a long, rapid glide behind the backs of Cardona and Rolfe, who were looking along the mantelpiece at Trevose's other chess sets.

When Cardona turned to favor The Shadow with a shrug, to indicate a lack of evidence, Joe stared blankly instead. The inspector would have sworn that The Shadow hadn't budged from his location by the window, yet the cloaked investigator was gone. To Cardona, it was another of The Shadow's strange disappearances.

MEANWHILE, The Shadow was making rapid progress to the ground floor. His only obstacle was the lighted entry, but he expected little trouble edging past it and getting out to the street. Once there, he would be able to move in upon the two unknown watchers across the way.

But The Shadow did not get that far. Ill luck, of his own making, prevented him.

An official police car came around the corner, followed by motorcycles with whining sirens. The cops didn't notice the cab across the way, for they saw another stopping in front of the apartment house. As they dismounted and hurried to the cab, Clyde Burke stepped out and waved a greeting to Commissioner Weston, who was getting out of the official car.

Immediately, the parked cab eased from the opposite curb and moved toward the next corner. Simultaneously, the doorway lurker slid from well along the street and headed in the opposite direction. It was bad enough to have two birds flown, but The Shadow was further handicapped.

Accompanied by Clyde, Weston was striding in through the entry, with the motorcycle cops behind them. There wasn't a chance for The Shadow to use that outlet, without a lot of complications. So he reversed his course, found a stairway to the basement, and descended it. Below, he uncovered a back door that led to a rear alley.

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It meant a roundabout trip for The Shadow, so out of the way that he wouldn't have taken it if both men had gone by cab. Moe wasn't available, for The Shadow had sent him back for Clyde, who apparently hadn't waited at Glenlake's office but had taken another cab instead. However, The Shadow still hoped to pick up one of the two trails. His plan was to find the man who had left on foot.

Reaching the avenue where the man had headed, The Shadow looked along it, but saw no sign of his quarry. Keeping to the building wall, The Shadow made a swift trip to the next street, crossed a blackened sector of the avenue and continued the blind trail. One block along the street, The Shadow sighted for another corner, and the trail was blind no longer.

Less than two short blocks away, The Shadow saw a man who was walking hurriedly, yet trying to keep himself unnoticed. His back didn't define him as the man who had left the doorway when the police arrived, but his stride did. Both hasty and furtive, the man was marking himself as the person wanted by The Shadow.

Swift was The Shadow's own stride, though it did not show it. Rather, it was the gait of a lithe panther stalking prey. A black panther, to whom the darkened walls of buildings were as complete a cover as an archway of thick-limbed tropical trees.

Through the jungle that was Manhattan, The Shadow, master of darkness, was closing the space between himself and the man who could tell him the motive behind the death of Laird Trevoise!

CHAPTER XIV. A QUESTION OF KILLERS

THERE were two men who could well have guessed the schemes of Laird Trevoise, and gone to extremes to block them. Those two were Jonathan Philmont and Peter Harlingen, their identities as yet unknown to The Shadow. Each, however, had already revealed a certain individuality when on the move.

Philmont preferred to ride in cabs, or use his own car. Harlingen was more at home on foot, particularly when subway stations were handy. It followed, therefore, that Philmont was the man who had sped away by cab, while Harlingen, the pedestrian, was the one whose trail The Shadow had picked up.

From the way his prey veered suddenly and crossed the street with quickened step, The Shadow knew that the trail was taking another turn. True to form, Harlingen had spotted a subway station and was making for it. Spying the same entrance, The Shadow chose it as his own goal.

It was a local station, little used at this hour, and suited perfectly to The Shadow's purpose. Unless Harlingen should catch a train immediately, his efforts to hide his identity would be ended, for The Shadow intended to trap him on the subway platform.

Often, bad luck could produce good. Harlingen was due for that experience. As he reached the subway kiosk, Harlingen halted; then, instead of going down the steps, he darted past the little structure and dodged from sight.

The Shadow didn't get a look at the darting man's face. Instead, he looked for the explanation of the fugitive's sudden shift, and saw it. A cab was stopping near the corner; the very cab that had pulled away from the apartment house!

It was Philmont's cab, though The Shadow knew as little about its occupant as he did regarding Harlingen. The important point was that the cab contained another wanted man, who, so far, had been the more slippery of the pair. So The Shadow dropped his pursuit of Harlingen and went after Philmont, instead.

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Reaching the near door of the cab, The Shadow mounted the step. The glow of a street light came full upon him, but that did not matter.

The Shadow was blocking off the street's glare from the interior of the cab. Philmont's outlook would prove one of blackness, only.

Blackness that lived, and was already giving a low, sibilant laugh, intended for the cab passenger alone. The driver, slouched at the wheel, hadn't an idea that anyone was on the cab step. Whoever Philmont might be, whatever his part in past crime, The Shadow was arranging a startling surprise for his benefit.

The trouble was that Philmont wasn't there to receive it. To a degree, the surprise recoiled upon The Shadow. The Shadow was actually pointing a gun muzzle into the darkened cab before his keen eyes learned that it was empty!

Then, before The Shadow could draw away, his own position revealed him. It revealed him to a man who lunged from in back of the cab and hurled himself full tilt upon the fighter in black. The attacker was Philmont, and he was swinging a revolver as he came.

He'd ducked around the cab, Philmont had, in order to start stalking Harlingen. Spying The Shadow, Philmont decided to deal with him first, since he was an unknown factor in the game. To shoot The Shadow point-blank might have been to Philmont's preference, but he had reason to use the slugging tactics that he introduced instead.

Philmont didn't care to rouse the neighborhood with unnecessary gunfire, that would also have warned Harlingen of trouble. Furthermore, The Shadow was perfectly set to receive the swing of Philmont's revolver. The cloaked victim, as Philmont already seemed to class him, couldn't possibly get his head clear of the door before the gun stroke landed.

PHILMONT made just one mistake. To aid his downward swing, he sprang upon the cab step. Hearing the creak as the step yielded, The Shadow didn't even try to swing his head away. It was easier for him to get his gun hand free, which he did in effective fashion.

Like a long, black piston transformed into a flying bludgeon, The Shadow's arm came swooping upward, outward, in a hard, all-inclusive backward swing. The fist on the end of that arm was literally hurling an automatic without releasing it, and had the gun met Philmont's skull, it would have rendered the attacker totally insensible.

Philmont's lunge was just a trifle high, and a little short of the arc that the automatic followed. What Philmont received was the thickness of The Shadow's forearm, which landed underneath his chin. The wallop lifted Philmont clear from his feet and placed him squarely on his back, in the middle of the street.

His other arm anchored to the cab window, The Shadow completed his backward turn and saw the sprawled attacker. Philmont's arms were across his face, hiding it from The Shadow's view. The sprawl hadn't jolted Philmont badly; he was trying to roll over and regain his feet. Letting go the cab door, The Shadow started to pounce toward him a lunge that proved ill-timed.

An extra factor was in the game, in the person of the cab driver. Hearing the clatter of Philmont's sprawl, the cabby had looked across his shoulder. What was happening, and why, the cabby didn't know. He still thought his passenger was in the cab, and when people began dropping from nowhere into the middle of the street, this cabby didn't want to stay around. He shot his hack into gear in sudden fashion.

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That start almost finished The Shadow. The cab went right out from under him and turned the cloaked fighter into a human whirligig that performed a somersaulting dive far more sensational than Philmont's.

The Shadow's whirl wasn't appreciated by Philmont, for at that moment the man in the street was starting a frantic scramble from the path of a huge, rattling truck, that gave a great blast of its horn as it veered.

Odd that Philmont should have helped The Shadow, but he did. Eyes glued on Philmont, the truck driver did not see The Shadow, and therefore would have run over him unwittingly if Philmont had gotten clear. The fact that Philmont wasn't clear was the reason for the truck's swerve to the far sidewalk, a course which carried it a foot wide of The Shadow.

Hearing the grind of the truck's brakes, the cab driver made a sharp swing around the corner, dodged the swerve of another car, and ran with two wheels high on the curb, until it stopped. Brakes were shrieking all about the crossing, as other traffic sought to avoid the tangle. A sudden quiet followed, to be broken by the angry shouts of many voices.

Men were dashing up to the tilted truck, to find a flabby-handed driver gesturing weakly across the way. He was saying something about a man who had managed to reach the curb by a scant margin of safety. The trucker meant Philmont, but when witnesses looked, they couldn't see the man in question. That was because they looked at the sidewalk only, not toward a doorway near it.

Philmont, lacking a cab, had chosen Harlingen's door-dodging system. In contrast, farther down the avenue, a rather befuddled cab driver was learning that he had a passenger again, a sharp-toned man who was advising him to pull out from the curb and get going before people began to blame him for the trouble at the corner.

That passenger was Harlingen; he, too, was acting in reverse, by choosing a cab for a change.

As the crowd grew near the truck, it spread almost to Philmont's doorway. Easing out from hiding, Philmont joined the throng; then, as people departed nervously at sounds of a police whistle, Philmont went with them.

Whether he was one of the few that went down into the subway, or a member of the majority, that hurried off along the streets, it was impossible to tell, for he didn't render himself conspicuous. As for Harlingen, by then his cab was out of sight, taking a one-way street that carried it back in the direction of Trevoise's apartment house.

Briskly, police were ordering people and vehicles to get moving, since the accident had produced no crashes or serious results. Everything cleared away except the truck, the driver leaning from its tilted side, talking to a pair of traffic cops who were standing warily back because of the truck's top-heavy slant.

ALL the while, a cloaked figure lay under the very shelter that everyone else was so anxious to avoid. The truck, cutting off the lights from the corner, concealed The Shadow as effectively as a hand-picked hiding place. Quite as helpful was the truck driver's slowness in deciding that he could safely back the lumbering vehicle from its present roost.

By the time the fellow had made up his mind, the darkness beneath the canted truck began to stir. A gloved hand, lifting, found a grip upon the truck itself; another hand, propping itself on the asphalt, felt the automatic that was lying there and gathered in the weapon.

Then, on hands and knees, The Shadow crawled beneath the truck, negotiated the curb and came to his feet. He sought the nearest wall, partly to steady himself, more to gain new shelter. From the darkness of that wall

came a low, whispered laugh.

The Shadow was quite himself again, despite the bruising bash that he had taken. His only regret was the fact that he had lost the crossed trail of two unknown persons who had shown far too much interest in events at Trevose's apartment.

It was still a question of killers, that could not be settled until The Shadow obtained a further lead. Three deaths formed a chain of riddles, and whether they were the work of one murderer, or two, was a definite part of the problem.

Perhaps by delving into past events, The Shadow could make up for a future that had been temporarily thwarted. This wasn't the first time that The Shadow had lost trails he wanted, only to find them anew.

Nevertheless, his laugh was low and grim as he moved into the darkness of the side street. One question more remained unsettled: that of murder itself. Whether its run was finished, still remained a thing of doubt.

For the very source of crime itself the quest of the five ivory boxes was still a clouded issue, the sort that could sponsor doom until its fact was fully disclosed.

The Shadow knew!

CHAPTER XV. CRIME WITHOUT FRUIT

QUITE unaware that The Shadow had set out upon another quest, Inspector Joe Cardona was summing up events at Trevose's apartment in what he considered to be a very ample style. Ample because it had the approval of Commissioner Weston, and pleasing Weston was Cardona's chief business.

Cardona was bearing down on Trevose's servant, Rolfe. He wasn't giving the fellow the third-degree, not openly, but he was making it quite evident that the more Rolfe talked, the better.

When Joe Cardona began to punch short, blunt questions, he was like a tennis player banging shots from the net, keeping his opponent on the run. All through Cardona's jabbing quiz, Rolfe overreached himself in giving answers.

The servant moaned when he admitted that he'd left the apartment shortly before Trevose's return. He'd left the door latched, so that no one could get into the apartment. Trevose, had entered, of course, because he had a duplicate key, but it didn't seem that anyone else could have done the same. Rolfe described how Trevose had appeared from the study, and mentioned the unanswered ringing of the telephone bell.

Then, when Cardona probed further back, the servant told about the earlier visitors, Philmont and Harlingen. He described one as a professor, the other as a scientist, but he didn't know why they had called on Trevose. In fact, Rolfe knew practically nothing about his employer's business which was a point in the servant's favor.

It boiled down to the fact that Philmont and Harlingen had come and gone together; that, afterward, Trevose had left on some business of his own. Returning alone, Trevose had been alive and well when Rolfe saw him; more than that, he had suffered no ill effects by sojourning in his study not until he closed the door for the last time.

When Cardona asked who else had visited Trevose, Rolfe said many persons, but none recently. He knew the names of very few, for most of them were chess players, whose acquaintance Trevose had made and brought

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them home with him. Of late, however, Trevoise had been too occupied with other matters to devote time to chess.

Finding that the servant's story carried the full ring of truth, Cardona stared glumly at the fancy chessboard on Trevoise's little table. There, on display, lay a collection of items from the dead man's pockets, and there wasn't a thing among them that might be a clue to crime.

Joe Cardona was not the only person who held that opinion. Clyde Burke shared it, very definitely. For the heap contained nothing that in any way resembled the parcel check that Trevoise had taken from Glenlake's office.

His mind unencumbered over a parcel check that he knew nothing about, Cardona was able to devote his thoughts to murder, rather than its motive. What Joe couldn't understand was how Trevoise had died from gas in a completely locked room, which had been quite safe at the time he entered it.

Such murder, in Joe's opinion, would depend upon the planting of a death device, most logically one that was fitted with a time mechanism. Such an infernal machine would have to be large enough to contain about a cubic foot of poison gas, and the time device would probably resemble the works of an alarm clock.

But there wasn't a trace of any container, nor its necessary mechanism. Indeed, Rolfe was able to identify everything in the place as belonging to Trevoise. Desk drawers were innocent; a tobacco humidor was tightly shut. When Cardona removed pictures from the walls, he failed to find anything hidden behind them.

When Joe rummaged along the mantel and through the closet shelves, he found only flat chessboards, of various sorts and sizes. Those, and chessmen by the multitude; chessmen that proved solid when Cardona tapped them.

The only remaining course was to talk to people like Philmont and Harlingen and find out what helpful information they could give. So Joe phoned their respective homes, to learn that both were out. That gave the ace inspector a chance to postpone further investigation of Trevoise's death, and when he expressed his desire to do so, Commissioner Weston gave agreement.

OUTSIDE the apartment house, the group waited while Trevoise's body was being loaded into a dead wagon for a trip to the morgue. Cardona was talking to a police surgeon, and Weston was an interested listener. Only Clyde Burke was unoccupied when Lamont Cranston appeared, stepping from an arriving limousine.

As Cranston, The Shadow gave an affable nod to Clyde, then opened conversation with the reporter. Since Cranston was the commissioner's friend, Clyde saw no harm in giving him details of the Trevoise case and its investigation. Thus Clyde, as an agent of The Shadow, was actually reporting to his chief.

After learning that Cardona had uncovered no new evidence, Cranston also heard that Joe had decided not to hold Rolfe in custody. Trevoise's servant was still upstairs, in the apartment. Clyde had hardly voiced that fact, before he caught a warning gesture from Cranston, who turned away and strolled back to his car.

Clyde knew exactly what was coming next. He didn't watch for a black-cloaked shape to glide from the limousine. It was his business to turn attention other directions when The Shadow was on the rove. So Clyde stepped over to speak to Weston. As luck had it, the commissioner spoke first.

"Where's Cranston?" demanded Weston. "I saw him here, a minute ago. Ah there's his car. I suppose he's gone back to it."

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Weston started toward the limousine which The Shadow had so recently left. Mentally, Clyde was trying to find excuses for Cranston's absence before Weston discovered it, when, another interruption came. Cardona supplied it, by gesticulating upward and exclaiming:

"Look!"

Weston looked, along with Clyde. Cardona was pointing to the window of Trevose's study. They'd put out the lights when they left; hence the study should have been dark. Instead, its window was emitting slight blinks, indicating that a prowler was in the room, busy with a flashlight! The Shadow!

Before Clyde could even wonder how his chief had made such a quick trip up to the apartment, Cardona was bolting into the house with a drawn revolver. Flat-footed on the sidewalk, Clyde could only stare, along with Weston, perturbed over the consequences that might be due. Seldom was The Shadow so unwary with a flashlight, and the thing baffled Clyde.

It didn't occur to the reporter that the flashlight might represent some prowler other than The Shadow. Such, it happened, was the case.

Already gliding into Trevose's apartment, The Shadow, looking into a side room, saw Rolfe, gloomily packing a bagful of belongings. Then, turning toward the shattered door of the study, The Shadow spotted the same blinks that others had observed from the sidewalk.

Instantly, The Shadow was stalking toward the darkened room, drawing an automatic with one hand, his own flashlight with the other.

The blinking ended as The Shadow reached the doorway. For one brief instant, the cloaked investigator drew back into the hallway; then, upon quick impulse, he lunged into the room itself, knowing that its occupant was probably coming out and might have spotted the dimming of the hallway light, as The Shadow's own form blocked it off.

It was a right guess on The Shadow's part.

IN his lunge, The Shadow met a lurking figure, a man whose face was indistinguishable in the dark. But The Shadow wasn't worrying about faces not yet. More important was the gleam that met his keen eye: the sparkle of a revolver. The Shadow drove his hand for the arm behind the weapon, and found it just as a trigger finger tugged.

Loud was the report in The Shadow's ear. He could feel the hot breath of the gun muzzle as its flame scorched past his face. Clutching his opponent's arm, The Shadow thrust it higher, wider, as they reeled across the floor.

Another shot spurted harmlessly, straight upward, like the spout of a volcano. Then The Shadow was hauling his foe toward the floor as they tumbled across Trevose's low chess table.

A thing like the dull edge of an ax chopped hard against The Shadow's neck. It was the side of the chessboard, slashed viciously by the man who so far had been unlucky with his gunfire. The improvised weapon was momentarily paralyzing in its stroke, as a neck blow like that could be.

It was as if The Shadow had banged his elbow, except that the numbing effect traveled through his entire body, instead of just his arm. His hand still clutched his gun, but he couldn't bring the automatic about. The next best course was to resort to darkness, until the brief jolt wore off.

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Taking a sprawl was easy enough, so The Shadow didn't try to halt it. In fact, he put more heave into it than he expected.

To The Shadow, the floor seemed soft when his numbed frame struck it. His roll was simply a revolving drift, punctuated by the blast of a gun fired wildly by a foe who hadn't an idea that The Shadow had purposely tumbled. The shot struck the wall, five feet above The Shadow's head.

The Shadow felt the hot burn of the smashed bullet when it landed on his shoulder and seared through the cloak folds. The token was a good one, for it proved that The Shadow's brief numbness was past.

With a challenging laugh, The Shadow invited another shot from his adversary, for the cloaked marksman's own gun was coming upward, ready to pick any revolver spurt as a target. But the other man didn't fire. Instead, he bolted for the door. Coolly, The Shadow's hand aimed its .45 toward the fugitive as his darting figure showed against the doorway.

Then The Shadow's finger restrained its pull. There were two targets; not just one. In through the doorway flayed another fighter: Rolfe. Like The Shadow, the servant was meeting the man who was coming out. Rolfe couldn't know who the prowler was, for he'd encountered him within the fringe of darkness, but the servant didn't intend to lose this fray.

As the two men battled back and forth, slapping the chessboard between them, Rolfe kept shouting for help, hoping that his yells would carry to the street below. Meanwhile, The Shadow was rising to his feet, about to lunge into the midst of the fray.

Rescue for Rolfe, capture for the unknown battler were The Shadow's two purposes. He was waiting only until the pair reeled into the hallway, where the light would enable him to tell them apart.

Help was closer than even The Shadow supposed. A shout came along the hallway, and the voice was Cardona's. Joe struck the fighters squarely in the doorway, and they sprawled apart, one pitching back into the room, the other landing in the lighted hallway.

Halting his own drive, The Shadow watched Cardona's action, saw Joe dart a look out to the hall, then spring about and lunge for the man within the room.

Obviously, Cardona was coming to Rolfe's aid, and would therefore be after the other man. It followed that Joe had identified the hallway fighter as the servant; hence he was seeking the man still in the darkened room. Knowing that the man in question still had bullets in his gun, The Shadow saw immediate menace for Cardona.

Without an instant's wait, The Shadow flung himself through darkness, struck the rising figure that he found there and spilled the man before he could possibly aim Cardona's way. Met by the sprawling figure, Cardona hurled himself downward, and found The Shadow along with his prey.

The thing developed into a three-way tangle, that might have been anybody's fight if The Shadow hadn't whispered an identifying laugh. Hearing that mirth, Cardona wrenched free, leaving the capture to The Shadow.

The scuffle ended, a few seconds later, when Cardona heard a head thump the floor. Next, a figure was rising limply; not of its own volition, however. It was the form of the wanted man, hoisted by The Shadow. With a flabby topple, the prisoner landed squarely in Cardona's arms, and Joe dragged him triumphantly to the doorway.

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IN the light, Cardona stared, aghast. His prisoner was Rolfe! Joe had picked the wrong man, and to make it worse, The Shadow had trusted in his judgment.

Frantically, Cardona looked along the hall, hoping to see the man he really wanted; but by that time, the unknown had made a successful flight. The only persons who appeared as Cardona stared were Commissioner Weston and Clyde Burke.

Dejectedly, Cardona explained his mistake to his superior.

"I heard Rolfe shouting," stated Joe, "and when I got here, I saw a couple of guys battling each other with the chessboard. One fellow landed right there" Cardona pointed across the hall "and he had a chessboard with him.

"Come to think of it" there was a rueful note to Cardona's gruffness "I didn't see his face, on account of the chessboard. What he was doing was pointing his hand into the room, waving for me to hurry. That's why I, like a dumb cluck, thought that he was Rolfe! So to make it even dumber, I went after Rolfe, which was just what the guy wanted!"

Cardona didn't add that he had misled The Shadow, also giving a fugitive full opportunity to get downstairs and out the back of the building before Weston and Clyde came in from the front and hurried up. It was better for Joe to keep The Shadow out of his story, rather than to admit another blunder.

But it seemed that The Shadow was going to be included, anyway, when Weston shoved into the study and fumbled along the wall for the light switch.

"I wouldn't turn on the lights, commissioner," began Cardona. "You see –"

"See what?"

Weston put the query as he clicked the switch, and Cardona, staring blankly, saw nothing. There wasn't a sign of The Shadow anywhere in the room. Suddenly noting the open window, Cardona decided that his cloaked ally must have used that exit.

Joe was wrong.

In the hallway, Clyde was supporting Rolfe, trying to rouse the groggy servant, when a hand tapped him on the shoulder. Clyde turned to see Lamont Cranston, whose hawkish features wore just the traces of a smile.

"I'll take him, Burke," spoke Cranston calmly, "and you take these – down to the car."

By "these," Cranston referred to a bundled hat and cloak that he had just swept from his shoulders. He'd stepped from the dark study while Weston and Cardona were arguing about the light switch. Cranston was no longer The Shadow; that part was over for this evening.

Inasmuch as Weston and Cardona planned to find and question certain friends of Laird Trevoise, it would be policy for The Shadow to go along, as Cranston. There were two friends of Trevoise that Rolfe had named: Jonathan Philmont and Peter Harlingen.

Two friends. Two men whose paths had crossed while The Shadow trailed them. Friends and fugitives might be identical. Similarly, either of those men could be the prowler who had returned to Trevoise's study, to make a private search, after the police had gone.

From those facts and possibilities, The Shadow intended to learn more!

CHAPTER XVI. TWO OF A KIND

JONATHAN PHILMONT lived on the ground floor of a brownstone house. The building belonged to him, but he rented the upper stories as apartments, and from the proceeds hired a serving man, who also acted as janitor of the house and was termed such.

It was the janitor who had answered the phone when Cardona called, and when Joe arrived on official business, the janitor simply said again that Philmont hadn't returned.

Posting a detective to wait for Philmont, Cardona suggested a trip to Harlingen's hotel. It proved to be a small place, like the Talleyrand where Talbor had lived. A clerk downstairs checked on everyone who entered or left the place, and when he said that Harlingen was still out, he meant it.

It was then that the calm-mannered Mr. Cranston supplied a suggestion. He'd heard of Harlingen, as an experimenter in the X-ray field. Since Harlingen wouldn't keep his machines around the hotel, he probably had them elsewhere. So Cardona questioned the clerk, who phoned the manager and a few other people, finally getting results.

"Harlingen has a place he calls a 'lab'," informed the clerk. "Here's the address" the clerk wrote it on a sheet of paper "but they say he doesn't have a phone, there."

Harlingen's laboratory proved to be the upper floor of a very shabby East Side garage. It was reached by a little stairway between the garage and a dilapidated house next door. Lights in the laboratory windows indicated that Harlingen was in the place, and when Commissioner Weston rapped imperiously, his knock was finally answered.

The man who answered was obviously Harlingen. He was wearing a white coat and a pair of gloves, that looked heavy when he took them off. Those gloves were probably coated with a lead compound that Harlingen used when working with his X-ray devices.

At first, Harlingen's eyes were sharply suspicious of his visitors, but when Weston introduced himself, the scientist gave a casual nod and gestured for the group to enter. He led the way through a little anteroom, to the lab proper, where a battery of odd-looking X-ray machines was lined along the wall.

A man was examining them. He was a polite-looking sort, a man with roundish face and eyes that beamed through a pair of spectacles that had a ribbon attached to them. With utmost complacency, Harlingen introduced his friend, stating:

"Gentlemen, I would like you to meet Professor Philmont."

It was like winging two birds with a single stone, only to have both flip the missile with their feathers. Being friends of Trevoise, it was natural that Philmont and Harlingen should be friends of each other.

Their presence at the lab gave every indication that they had come here directly after leaving Trevoise, and that Philmont was much interested in a scientific demonstration by his good friend Harlingen.

Weston let Cardona break the news about Trevoise. Both Philmont and Harlingen took it with horrified surprise, but in no sense did they overdo the act. That is, if it could be called an act, at all.

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The keen eyes of Cranston were upon the pair, and behind that gaze lay all the probing prowess of The Shadow. Yet, even that gaze could not detect betrayal on the part of either man. In professing ignorance of Trevoze's untimely fate, Philmont and Harlingen seemed genuine.

Such an act required practice, and The Shadow had an idea as to how it could have been done. One man could have tried it on the other. Assuming that one of these two had murdered Trevoze, his companion still might prove to be entirely innocent. If either had wanted to remain quite cool when the pinch came, his best plan was to seek the other's company for a while. As a poker-faced pair, those two were tops.

PHILMONT'S smiles had ended; Harlingen's display of suspicion was gone. Both looked moody over Trevoze's death, and they answered questions freely. In that matter, however, the two varied. Philmont was verbose, almost absent-minded, when he gave his testimony, as a professor would be. Harlingen spoke precisely, wasting very few words. Both lied to perfection.

They had left Trevoze's apartment together, so they claimed, and had come directly to the laboratory. This didn't fit at all with The Shadow's conclusions, for each passing minute made him more positive that these were the pair whose trails had crossed.

There was just enough in Philmont's manner easy, idle, yet at moments catlike to mark him as the man who had been in the cab. As for Harlingen, there were moments when he paused near the X-ray machines, as though ready to draw back between them, in the fashion of the doorway lurker whom The Shadow had trailed on foot.

Sifting these indications, The Shadow was looking for another. He wanted to identify one of these two as the man who had come back to prowl Trevoze's study with a flashlight. However, the lighted laboratory was no fit scene in which to uncover such a trace. Never did The Shadow's mental pointer veer enough to mark Philmont or Harlingen, at the expense of the other.

Both Philmont and Harlingen had known Trevoze, so they said, because they, too, were interested in chess.

When Cardona bluntly remarked that Trevoze hadn't been playing chess of late, quoting Rolfe as his authority, the two men shook their heads at the servant's ignorance.

"We never played chess with Trevoze," explained Philmont. "We helped him with his problems."

"Supplied him with chess problems would be a better term," put in Harlingen. "Poor Trevoze! He would spend hours at the board, unraveling problems that we worked up offhand."

"White to mate in three moves," nodded Philmont. "That was the one we gave him this evening."

"With only a rook and a pawn," added Harlingen, "against a knight and a bishop."

A point occurred to Cranston. If such a problem had actually intrigued Trevoze, he certainly hadn't been working on it at the time he died. On the chessboard that a prowler had later carried as a weapon, The Shadow had seen a full set of men, except for the few that Trevoze had knocked over in his fall.

Counting the necessary kings, there were only six pieces needed in the problem mentioned, a good many less than the thirty-two that made up a complete chess set.

Thus it happened that when Lamont Cranston left the laboratory with the other visitors, he declined a ride in Weston's official car, and took his limousine, instead. More than that, Cranston, in his casual style, invited

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Clyde Burke to ride along with Weston and Cardona. Thus lofted into such high company, Clyde understood the reason.

The Shadow wanted his agent to keep the commissioner and the ace inspector fully occupied when their official car pulled away. By so doing, Clyde could prevent them from noticing that Cranston's limousine was leaving empty.

The scheme worked, not only with Weston and Cardona but with a pair much sharper than they. Philmont and Harlingen had come downstairs to see the visitors off. Eyes on Weston's big car, they didn't notice Cranston's car, nor the gliding shape that left it. When Philmont and Harlingen turned around, a shrouded, unseen shape was near them, almost at arm's reach from their doorway.

That same strange figure, the cloaked form of The Shadow, stalked them up the dim stairs to the laboratory. When Harlingen closed the outer door, it didn't latch, as he supposed, for the reason that a thick hem of black cloth was jamming in between.

Listening until he heard the two go through to the lab, The Shadow slid a thin wedge of metal in with the fold of cloth and pressed the door catch open. Entering silently, he closed the door behind him and glided toward the laboratory.

There, he found the connecting door unlocked. Inching it open without the slightest creak, The Shadow looked in on Philmont and Harlingen.

THE two were holding a post-mortem that included more than Trevoze's death.

"Your testimony was a trifle erroneous, Harlingen," Philmont was saying, in indulgent fashion, "when you said that you came directly here from Trevoze's apartment. Of course, I did not see fit to dispute your –"

"Naturally not," interrupted Harlingen. "It would have ruined your own alibi, Philmont."

"But I did come directly here, to wait for you."

"So you stated, but the only reason they believed it was because I claimed that I was with you. As for myself" Harlingen gave his chin a rub "I didn't believe you, Philmont."

Wagging his dangling glasses, Philmont studied Harlingen a short while; then dropped the question in favor of a more pointed subject.

"Do you think that Trevoze picked up the ivory boxes somewhere, Harlingen?"

"Frankly, I wouldn't know," responded Harlingen. "I was expecting you to tell me, Philmont."

"Five ivory boxes," mused Philmont. "A lovely nest of them, with a very fine ruby in the center. The gem belongs to both of us, Harlingen."

"So do the boxes," reminded Harlingen. "Talbor said so. With Glenlake and Trevoze both dead, like Talbor, the boxes are ours if we can find them."

Philmont put on his glasses, to look straight and steadily at Harlingen.

"If Glenlake killed Talbor," asserted Philmont, "and Trevoze disposed of Glenlake –"

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"Then someone must have murdered Trevoze," broke in Harlingen, his own eyes sharper than Philmont's. "Someone who also wanted that ruby, very badly. It's curious, how quickly murderers breed."

Harlingen's tone carried accusation, as though he defied Philmont to go him better. So Philmont did.

"There might be only one killer," suggested Philmont coldly. "One man, who has already eliminated three, and might go still further. Have you thought of that?" Harlingen started to nod, then caught himself. Philmont arose and turned toward the door.

"I've been thinking of it," said Philmont, his tone very sober; "and it worries me, Harlingen. That's why I'm going to hire someone to help me with those articles I'm writing. Someone like that young chap, Burke, who was along with the commissioner. An alert man, who would prove handy in a pinch."

"Exactly my sentiments," agreed Harlingen shrewdly. "I need a laboratory assistant. Not one who can only catalogue X-ray plates; that will be only part of his duty. I want someone to accompany me, back and forth from my hotel, through this dangerous neighborhood."

Seeing Philmont nod, Harlingen removed his white coat and suggested that they leave together, for their mutual security. Philmont's only choice was to agree, so he did.

When the pair emerged from the steps beside the old garage, and walked away together, a black-cloaked figure stalked them. In throwing nervous glances back along the street, neither noticed the weird shape that followed them. Not that The Shadow was invisible; on the contrary, he moved so openly at times that Philmont and Harlingen each should have seen him.

But they weren't looking for anyone like The Shadow. Each was thinking solely of the other, in terms of murder. It was policy for each man to appear as if on guard, hence it was impossible to judge what was really going on in the separate minds of those two men; but there was one point of similarity.

However much their purposes differed, as might their pasts, both summed up the present situation in the same fashion. It was this: a murderer and his prospective victim were walking along the street together; friends for the present, they were ignoring the future.

It was easy to understand why a murderer should enjoy the company of a coming victim. The problem was why either Philmont or Harlingen should like it the other way about. To that, The Shadow had a very simple answer.

Death would not strike either of the pair until one, at least, learned what had become of the five ivory boxes and the gem that the nest contained. When that happened, the impending menace would fall upon a hapless victim.

Seldom had The Shadow encountered a situation more bizarre than this. It was a problem to which very few minds could find a prompt solution. The Shadow's keen brain belonged among those few.

Already, the master genius had made his plans, for whichever man deserved it Philmont or Harlingen. Like a ghost of the night, The Shadow dropped the trail and made his silent departure, letting the two walk on together.

No laugh stirred the darkness into which The Shadow faded. The cloaked avenger was reserving his sinister mirth for the moment of his final triumph over crime!

CHAPTER XVII. LOST AND FOUND

CLYDE BURKE liked his new job.

You could like a job without liking the man you worked for, as Clyde had learned in two brief days. Those two days were enough for Clyde to fully appraise Jonathan Philmont and mark him on the wrong side of the ledger.

If Clyde had been asked for an opinion, he would have classed the professor as a killer. For never had Clyde seen a man more coldly calculating than Philmont, in the task that the fish-eyed man had undertaken.

It seemed a coincidence, Clyde's job with Philmont. On the day after Trevoise's death, Clyde had gone around to Philmont's to get a human-interest story on the career of the professor's dead friend. Philmont had dodged the Trevoise subject, and in the course of things had offered Clyde an opportunity to aid him in preparing a book on Oriental customs.

Quite in keeping with his comments to Harlingen, that offer to Clyde, for the professor had specifically mentioned the reporter as an eligible assistant. Maybe Philmont was just showing off for Harlingen's benefit; on the contrary, he might have been sincere, in stating that he needed someone always on hand to help ward off hidden danger.

At any rate, The Shadow hadn't forgotten Philmont's sentiments, so he had sent Clyde around to test them. And Clyde, at present, was busy filing stacks of clippings with which Philmont supplied him; all of them newspaper items that had to do with anything Oriental.

Clyde didn't regard it odd that Philmont was chiefly interested in recent clippings. The professor explained that he was trying to be up-to-date, and Clyde accepted the statement.

Philmont was being up-to-date, all right, but his interest in Oriental matters did not include quaint customs. He was hoping to find something that might give him some clue to the fate of the Siamese ruby that had vanished with its fivefold nest of ivory boxes.

The ground floor of Philmont's house formed one great library, arranged with many crannies. Most of these were walled only by shelves of books, but there was one that formed a room in itself. Philmont called the room his "nook," and he frequently retired there, leaving Clyde in the library proper. Always, when he went there, Philmont took some newspapers with him.

It was dusk, this day, when Philmont came from the nook and found Clyde in an alcove, sorting a huge pile of printed items that had arrived by special messenger from a clipping bureau. In kindly tone, Philmont suggested that Clyde go out to dinner, and finish his work later.

Clyde was suspicious of Philmont's kindly tones, for a glance at the professor's eyes showed that the words weren't meant. Nevertheless, Clyde took the hint and went to get his hat and coat.

So natural was the action, that it satisfied Philmont. From the hallway, Clyde heard the professor going back to the nook, and caught the sound of the closing door. Easing into the big library, Clyde chose a darkened alcove, and waited. His guess was that Philmont had an appointment with someone.

MEANWHILE, another agent of The Shadow was trying his hand at a new job. Those newspapers that so intrigued Philmont had carried an advertisement for a laboratory assistant in X-ray work, experience not needed. Harry had applied for the job, among the early candidates.

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From what he had learned from The Shadow, Harry had known that the job would be his, the moment that he scanned the other applicants. Of the dozen, Harry was the huskiest, and the advertiser, Peter Harlingen, had picked The Shadow's agent instantly.

Unlike Clyde, Harry didn't like the job. Filing stacks of X-ray plates was rather dumb work, especially because Harlingen was always changing his mind about them and telling Harry to reclassify the lot.

A different assistant might not have realized it, but Harry knew that Harlingen was keeping him busy for some special reason, that had nothing to do with X-ray plates. Nevertheless, Harry again in contrast to Clyde rather liked Harlingen.

At least, he was getting to like Harlingen, until a certain thing happened, shortly after dusk.

That afternoon, Harry had tried to open a rear window in the laboratory, only to find its catch tightly jammed. Harlingen had told Harry to leave it as it was; that the window never had been opened. So Harry was blithely stacking plates in the anteroom, and figuring on another hour to go, when he came across a plate that lacked a label.

Knocking on the lab door, Harry received no answer. Entering, he found the place empty. Immediately thinking in terms of the rear window, Harry went there and examined it. He found that Harlingen had gotten there first. The clamp was loose, and on the sill lay a pair of telltale pliers, left by Harlingen for future use when he returned.

Lulled by the thought that Harlingen had actually hired him as a bodyguard, Harry overlooked another possibility. Harlingen was really using him for alibi purposes, counting upon Harry's future testimony to cover certain secret excursions. For Harry, opening the window for the first time, discovered that a narrow ledge lay just below it, and beneath the ledge was a low wall, behind the garage. Ledge and wall formed a pair of stepping-stones to and from the ground.

This called for a report to Burbank, and lacking a telephone, Harry couldn't make the call. Deciding that, with Harlingen gone, his own absence wouldn't be noticed, Harry closed the window and went downstairs.

Once there, it struck him that a trip to Harlingen's hotel, by way of Philmont's house, would be quite in order. But Harry decided first to put in a call to Burbank from the nearest pay station.

The trip by way of Philmont's was appropriate, for things were already stirring there. Clyde, parked in his alcove, heard the ring of Philmont's doorbell. The professor answered it, and came back with his visitor. Between open shelves of books, Clyde watched the two go into the room that Philmont termed the nook.

Since Philmont left the door open, probably to listen for any other visitors, Clyde could see all that happened, particularly because a fire was burning in the fireplace on the opposite side of the close-walled nook. Philmont always had a fire there when the nights were chilly, as they had been ever since Clyde took the job.

What interested him much was Philmont's visitor. The fellow was a taxicab driver, who wore a much-frayed uniform. He looked like an independent cab owner, which was proved in the course of conversation, which also produced the fact that the cabby's name was Marsha.

"ABOUT the advertisement in the newspaper," said Philmont, after a preliminary chat. "The one in the 'found' column. You have brought the cigarette case that was left in your cab?"

Marsha nodded, and said: "Yeah."

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Philmont reached for the cigarette case, and the visitor produced it, but felt that he should offer explanations while he did.

"It was this way," said Marsha. "I found the thing, see? Wedged down behind the rear seat, so there was no way of telling how long it had been there. I'm an honest guy, Mr. Philmont, so I kept looking in the papers to see if the thing was advertised as lost."

Philmont nodded. He was examining the cigarette case closely. Even at his distance, Clyde could see the cold, calculating glint of Philmont's eyes against the firelight, looking at Marsha, as though interested in the story, Philmont began to weigh the cigarette case in his hand.

"Well, professor," continued Marsha, "a lot of guys had lost cigarette cases, but this wasn't theirs. I wish I'd got paid for all the detours I made, looking them up. One old guy thought it was his, at first. Then he said that his was only silver, but this was platinum, because it was so heavy. An honest old gent."

"Very honest," agreed Philmont dryly. "Because this case is platinum." He turned it over as he continued to weigh it. "I wouldn't have wanted to lose it."

Marsha showed pleased surprise.

"It's yours, then!" he exclaimed. "I'm glad I did what the old gent suggested. He said to put an ad in the 'found' column. Maybe you won't believe me, Mr. Philmont, but I didn't know there was a 'found' column, until he told me."

"I believe you," declared Philmont. "I think that this should prove it."

Drawing a twenty-dollar bill from his pocket, Philmont handed it to Marsha. The cabby protested that it was too much money, but Philmont didn't agree. He ushered Marsha out through the library into the hall.

Still in the alcove, Clyde waited for Philmont's return. When the professor failed to appear, Clyde sneaked around to the next cranny.

From that vantage point, he saw Philmont. Alone in the hallway, the professor was prying into the cigarette case with a knife. For the first time, Clyde realized why Philmont had prolonged the weighing process.

The professor had discovered that the cigarette case was heavier on one side than the other, something that wasn't apparent when the case was shut, but which Philmont had ascertained when he opened it.

There was a click as the prodding knife lifted a tight-fitting flap from the inside of the cigarette case. Clyde had heard of trick cases, with special compartments to hold valuables, and this proved one of them. The thing that dropped from the hidden cache into Philmont's waiting hand, was a flat metal key.

For at least three minutes, Philmont examined the key, while Clyde watched. Then, with a deep-throated chuckle, the professor turned, picked up his hat and coat and left the house so suddenly, that Clyde was caught flat-footed. The slam of the door jarred Clyde into rapid action.

There wasn't time to call Burbank; Clyde would be lucky if he caught up with Philmont, considering the speed of the professor's stride. So Clyde headed for the front door, not forgetting that wariness would be wise when he reached the front steps.

Peering as he opened the door, Clyde saw Philmont getting into a cab across the way. He was saying

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something to the driver, but Clyde wasn't close enough to hear it. What Clyde wanted was a cab of his own, and he saw one farther down the street, parked in front of a little lunchroom next door to a bookshop that Philmont patronized.

Descending the steps casually, Clyde reached the other cab, only to find it didn't have a driver. A quick look into the lunchroom revealed the missing cabby, none other than Marsha.

Evidently the lucky cabby had decided to eat on the strength of the twenty-dollar reward, but he was still staring at the menu. So Clyde shoved open the lunchroom door and called: "Cab!"

Marsha responded, as Clyde hoped he would. Sliding from his stool, he hurried to the door at Clyde's gesture. As they were both getting into the cab, Clyde explained matters, in suitable terms. A friend of his had started off in another cab, Clyde said, and he wanted to catch up with him. Naturally, Clyde didn't specify that Philmont was in the other cab. He didn't regard the cold-eyed professor as a friend, even though Marsha might.

INTENT upon spotting the cab ahead, Clyde didn't note what was happening along the street. From a doorway, very close to the place where Philmont had found the ready cab, a man stepped into sight and turned in the opposite direction. Whether that lurker had paid particular attention to Clyde, was still a question. Certain it was that he had noted Philmont.

For this man, too, was in a hurry, even though he didn't choose to ride in a cab. He was bound in the direction of the nearest subway station, and his stride seemed confident. Evidently he felt that his chosen means of locomotion would prove as efficient as Philmont's.

By the time he rounded the corner, the man was making no further effort to hide his identity. His face showed in the light, the face of Peter Harlingen. Sharp was the look on those even sharper features. Peter Harlingen was wearing the same expression as he had on that night when he and Jonathan Philmont had walked together.

On this occasion, both were traveling alone, but from Harlingen's keen smile, it seemed that their trails might cross, as they had on a certain occasion when both had taken flight.

But flight was not the game this evening. Something else was in the cards.

Another man had found a clue to the five ivory boxes. That man was Philmont, and he was on the way to get them. In turn, Harlingen had guessed his rival's motive and was bound on the mission of claiming his share, and more, of the prize that both desired.

The Shadow had assigned two agents to the task of watching that tricky pair, while he investigated elsewhere. Whether or not Clyde and Harry would accomplish their assigned duties, the future alone could prove!

CHAPTER XVIII. WHERE RIVALS MET

BY the end of several blocks, Marsha had picked up the trail of Philmont's cab and was anxious to overtake it. But Clyde, leaning through to the front seat, told him there wasn't any hurry, so long as they kept the other cab in sight. Clyde merely wanted to know where his friend was going, and meet him at his destination.

They were rolling along Seventh Avenue, when Marsha leaned back and gave the opinion:

"Looks like that friend of yours is going on a longer trip. His cab is stopping over by the Pennsy Station."

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So it was, and Clyde decided to stop, too. He shoved a dollar bill in Marsha's hand, told the cabby to keep the change, and suggested that they swing the corner, so that Clyde could get out more conveniently.

Marsha obliged, though it struck him as odd that Clyde was letting the other cab get out of sight. It didn't occur to Marsha, even yet, that Clyde's so-called friend was Philmont, and that Clyde didn't want Marsha to see him.

Rounding the corner on foot, Clyde encountered his own problem of lost and found. He'd found Philmont, only to lose him, cab and all. Sure that Philmont had alighted, and then dismissed his cab, Clyde looked for the most logical place where the professor might have gone.

It wasn't the entrance to the Pennsylvania Station; the nearest spot consisted of a flight of steps leading down into the subway. Descending the staircase, Clyde reached the bottom, but saw no sign of Philmont. After a moment's hesitation, Clyde went through the turnstile to the local platform.

Far up ahead, Clyde saw a man who could be Philmont. Hurrying closer, Clyde identified the professor. The roar of an arriving express drowned Clyde's footsteps; as for keeping out of sight, that was easy. Philmont had stopped in front of a tier of lockers, so Clyde halted at the end of the bank and peered around the corner.

Philmont was still moving from locker to locker, looking at their numbers, when the express pulled away from the other platform. Then Clyde caught the gleam of Philmont's eyes, as the professor, looking through his glasses, saw a number that he wanted.

From his pocket, Philmont produced the thin key, shoved it in the locker and turned it.

Even before Philmont's eager hands were drawing out the thing he found within the locker, Clyde had pieced the all-important answer. This locker must be where Trevose had parked the ivory boxes, after claiming them with Glenlake's parcel check!

Suspecting trouble, Trevose hadn't wanted to carry his prize home, but he had been equally unwilling to leave the boxes in the parcel room. He'd wanted them in a safer place; one where he could pick them up less noticeably, and where there was no chance for any careless clerk to tamper with the valuable prize.

So Trevose, coming by subway to Thirty-fourth Street, had used one of the automatic lockers to hold the thing that he had gained. He'd put the locker key into his cigarette case, hiding it in the trick compartment.

Something must have been worrying Trevose badly, or he wouldn't have lost the case in Marsha's cab, which he had obviously used to get to his apartment. Such thoughts, however, belonged to the past, and Clyde was thinking of the future, and it concerned Philmont.

From the locker, the bespectacled professor was taking a square package, done in wrapping paper and tied with string. One look at it, and Philmont was on his way again, carrying the square bundle under his arm.

Clyde, following promptly, saw Philmont tear away a bit of wrapping, to note what was inside. Philmont's eyes showed a cold satisfaction.

Out by a subway entrance, Philmont turned a corner and looked for a cab. He was on a side street, under the looming pillars of the giant Pennsylvania Station. The spot was inconspicuous, which suited Philmont, except for one thing: there were no cabs parked here. To hail one, Philmont had to step to the curb, which he did. One cab came along and stopped, but there wasn't another in sight.

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So Clyde played a hunch. Quite coolly, he stepped up to tap Philmont on the shoulder.

CLYDE might just as well have tossed a batch of bombshells right into his own lap. Things happened in such a hurry that they left the reporter dazed.

There was a shout, as a man came springing from the subway exit that Philmont and Clyde had so recently left. The arrival was Harlingen, and he was drawing a revolver. Philmont didn't stop to look Harlingen's way; he climbed right into the cab and shouted for the driver to get started. In his turn, Clyde grabbed the door as Philmont slammed it.

Harlingen's gun talked. Its shots couldn't have clipped Philmont, safely in the cab. Clyde was the only target, and an easy one, should Harlingen find the range. But Harlingen only fired one shot, and it whined high above Clyde's head. Another man had lunged from the subway exit, and had tackled Harlingen.

The tackler was Harry Vincent. In spilling Harlingen, Harry was extending timely aid to his fellow agent, Clyde Burke. But the menace from Harlingen was small, compared to the next that came Clyde's way.

From the window of the cab, Philmont thrust a gun point-blank, preceding his trigger action with a venomous snarl that promised sure death.

With the ivory boxes in his possession, Philmont was no longer the man who indulged in mental lapses. He was the quick, catlike creature that could prove deadly when it found its prey. To Philmont, Clyde was proper prey. Having followed Philmont from the house, it seemed obvious that Clyde had reverted to his calling as a news-getter. He had learned so much, that Philmont could not afford to let him live.

Harry spied Philmont before Clyde could turn to view the close-up menace. Forgetting Harlingen, Harry drove madly to Clyde's aid, pulling an automatic as he came. Harry's attempt was belated; he hadn't a chance to forestall Philmont's point-blank shot. It took another hand to rescue Clyde, a hand that seemingly arrived from nowhere.

A long path of light swept the curb, coming from the headlamps of another cab that had just rounded the corner. With that sweeping glare came a weird, challenging laugh, startling Philmont with its fierce crescendo. The rise of vengeful mirth was broken by a gun burst that skimmed a bullet past the very window of Philmont's cab and ricocheted from the metal post that flanked the windshield.

The Shadow was the sponsor of that distant gun jab, a shot amazingly close, considering the long range. The next shot from The Shadow's gun would have been closer, so close that it would have found Philmont as a target, had his position stayed the same. What saved Philmont was the action of his cab driver. The fellow didn't have the foolhardy inclination of his passenger.

In response to The Shadow's shot, the cab spurted away. Savagely, Philmont was pouring gunfire from the window as he went, and he meant the deluge for Clyde. As the cab skirted the corner, Philmont saw Clyde sprawling from the curb, with The Shadow's cab stopping beside him. Philmont was confident that some of his shots had driven home.

Fortunately, they hadn't. Thanks to The Shadow's intervention, Harry had reached Clyde in time to bowl him from the sidewalk. His own wits snapping to action, Clyde had thrown himself into a long sprawl, while Harry rolled the other way. Intent upon winging Clyde, Philmont hadn't seen Harry's low, hard-hitting drive, for Moe Shrevnitz had blinked off the headlights of The Shadow's cab.

Satisfied that he had disposed of Clyde, Philmont turned to the cab driver. The fellow had been too busy

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getting started to observe that Philmont had figured in the shooting. Hence Philmont, cagey as ever, calmly put away his gun and told the cabby where to take him. Naturally, he didn't give his own address; he gave another in the neighborhood.

Back at the scene of battle, Harry was looking for Harlingen. He thought that the fellow must have ducked back into the subway, until The Shadow gave a warning laugh and wheeled the other way. A sweep of The Shadow's warding arm and Harry was rolling from the curb, along with Clyde, while The Shadow blazed a rapid answer to shots that came from somewhere among the pillars of the Pennsylvania Station.

Shots ended as suddenly as they had begun. Sweeping to the pillars, The Shadow found the space behind them empty. There wasn't time to begin a random chase, because police sirens were whining from everywhere. Whipping back to the cab, The Shadow shoved Clyde and Harry aboard, then joined them. As Moe whizzed the corner, almost under the headlights of arriving patrol cars, agents of The Shadow heard a strange, understanding laugh from the hidden lips of their cloaked chief.

CHAPTER XIX. DEATH'S DESTINATION

HAVING put a curb to battle, The Shadow was up against a situation that he had often met before. Last to leave the ground, he, and not his foemen, had become the object of a police pursuit. It didn't bother The Shadow, not with Moe at the wheel. Moe could take that cab through places that looked impossible. He could turn on a dime, leaving a nickel change. He had a way of dodging through traffic that looked as solid as a stone wall. And Moe would try those things, and do them, when The Shadow was riding with him.

The cloaked passenger could spot such opportunities blocks ahead, and point them out so calmly and accurately that Moe never missed them. At present, The Shadow was doing it, with Harry as an interested witness. Clyde didn't exactly notice the process. He'd taken a hard header from the curb, and was still trying to shake off his daze.

Clyde's condition prevented him from mentioning a very important fact: that Philmont had acquired the package that contained the ivory boxes. Harry hadn't emerged from the subway until Philmont was actually in the cab, box and all, whereas The Shadow had not arrived until even later.

Those points were important more so than Clyde supposed. Clyde didn't realize that Moe's efforts to dodge the police cars were carrying them in the wrong direction. It wasn't until Moe had really shaken off the chase, by weaving among the twisted streets of Greenwich Village, that Clyde muttered something about Philmont and the boxes.

Instantly, The Shadow was alert. Gripping Clyde, he called for a quick, complete report. Jarred from his daze, Clyde gave it. Speaking to Moe, The Shadow ordered a stop at the next corner. There, The Shadow gestured Harry from the cab, telling him to take Clyde with him.

Harry was to contact Burbank and order another tip-off to Cardona. Word that would start the law on a new, quick trail to Philmont's, where The Shadow intended to go personally, as fast as Moe could take him. For once, The Shadow hoped that mere minutes would prove vital, because, in that case, such minutes would still exist.

If Philmont had already arrived home as he could have, by this time, even with some minor detours it might be too late for either The Shadow or the law to handle his pressing case.

NOT long after The Shadow had begun his lone trip to Philmont's, the phone bell jangled in the hallway of the professor's house. Philmont didn't answer it, as he sometimes did. When the bell kept on ringing, the

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slow-moving janitor finally came up from the basement and answered it. An officious voice declared that it belonged to the police commissioner, who wanted to talk to Philmont. So the janitor went through the library and knocked at the closed door of the nook. Hearing nothing but a sharp, crackly sound that he took for the noise of the fire, the janitor turned away. Halfway across the library, he halted, thinking he had heard Philmont call.

But it was only the fire again; this time, its sound was the hiss of damp logs, that the janitor could hear quite clearly from outside the locked door. Going back to the phone, the janitor told the impatient commissioner that Professor Philmont wasn't home.

Weston's response was brief and blunt. The janitor wasn't to admit a person to the house until the police arrived, and they would be there very shortly. Even while the janitor was hanging up, the siren of a patrol car sounded out front. Opening the door, the janitor admitted a pair of officers and told them about the commissioner's call.

Their only instructions being to hold Philmont when they found him, the policemen came into the library. Both cops were standing about, with the janitor watching them, when Inspector Cardona arrived only a few minutes later. When he learned that Philmont wasn't home, Cardona glanced suspiciously at the door of the professor's nook.

"You're sure the professor isn't in there?"

The janitor shook his head warily, in response to Cardona's question. Thinking to be on the safe side, the man admitted that Philmont might be. That was quite enough for Cardona.

Knocking loudly, and getting no response, Joe drove his shoulder hard against the door. The cops joined him in the effort; the door gave and all three went through, Cardona landing first.

Professor Philmont was at home.

He was lying prone upon the floor, books strewn about him. Beside him was a shattered reading lamp. A few feet closer to the fireplace was a small mahogany table, overturned, with its surface already blistered from the scorching heat of the fire.

Sniffing the air, Cardona could smell the odor of burning varnish. Joe looked at Philmont. Not for a moment did he doubt that the man was dead. Philmont's face was hideous, more so than Trevoise's had been. Maybe it was the firelight that gave those features a coppery tinge, but that didn't account for the fact that Philmont's face looked bloated.

This was death's destination, as The Shadow, somehow, had foreseen!

ABOUT to stoop beside the body, Cardona remembered the menace that had been at Trevoise's. In this case, the fire was burning normally, on a level with the dead body, but it might be that Philmont had been poisoned by some noninflammable gas. So Cardona compromised by shoving his foot against the prone figure, to see if a prod would make Philmont stir.

Something else stirred, close by Cardona's ankle. Joe didn't see it, but he heard the hiss it gave. A sharp hiss, that might have been mistaken for a sputtering log, if it hadn't been so close. But the men behind Cardona spotted the motion that the inspector did not see.

Springing forward, two patrolmen were yelling a futile warning, as they saw a serpent's head rear up and lash

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at Cardona's leg. Against the firelight, every detail was completely etched, even to the licking jab of the snake's approaching fangs. There wasn't a chance for either man to stop that deadly thrust, nor did Cardona have a chance to spring away.

What saved Cardona was the sharp blast of a gun, from the doorway. It wasn't a tremble of Cardona's knee that made his trousers leg quiver. The thing that caused it was the passage of a skimming bullet. Like magic, the darting head of the serpent vanished, leaving only the coils of a writhing body. From the fireplace came the thud of a bullet's wallop, followed by the clatter of chipped stone.

The doorway itself supplied the strange, solemn laugh that could have been a knell for Philmont. But Cardona took it as a message for himself, a reminder that The Shadow's hand was ever at the disposal of his friends. Turning about, Cardona could have sworn that he saw a cloaked shape in the doorway, retiring to the dimmer library.

Then blackness cleared itself. Too late to halt Philmont's death, but in time to save Cardona's life, The Shadow had accomplished all that was possible for the present. His departure tokened that all was safe for Cardona to begin the investigation of another murder, as seemingly impossible as that of Trevoise.

Impossible it did seem, when Cardona reviewed the details for Commissioner Weston and Lamont Cranston, after they arrived. Like the gas at Trevoise's, the deadly snake seemingly could not have been stowed in the room where death occurred. The snake had been identified as an asp, of an Oriental variety, a viper whose bite produced almost instant death.

But there wasn't a possible way whereby the creature could have been stowed in Philmont's nook, a room that had no windows and which was always locked. The fireplace was no answer, for after smothering its fire, Cardona found that the damper was constructed like a grate, its holes too narrow for the short, fat-bellied snake to have wiggled through, if dropped down the chimney.

What added to the riddle was the fact that Philmont must have been in the nook for several minutes before the snake attacked him. Evidence showed that he'd bolted the door, as well as locked it, and the books on the floor indicated that Philmont had spent some time delving into his favorite study of Oriental customs. These volumes, particularly, dealt with Oriental art, the construction of inlaid ornaments and cabinets.

Though others regarded the context of the books as unimportant, the point did not escape Cranston. He understood that Philmont had been specifically interested in the intricate workings of trick boxes, that could only be operated by those who knew the secret.

Perhaps that was why Cranston's fixed lips delivered a soft, whispered laugh when he left Philmont's house, alone. Yet that in itself was hardly enough to have produced the mirth that was The Shadow's.

A listener, had there been one, might have assumed that The Shadow was actually pleased because the evidence showed that Philmont, like others before him, had dropped the ivory boxes somewhere, before returning home to study the subject of their hidden mechanism.

There was a reason why The Shadow could be pleased. Though death had moved ahead of him, the trail of the ivory boxes still existed. A trail which, found again, could place the blame of four murders upon the evil plotter who had engineered those amazing crimes!

CHAPTER XX. CRIME'S ULTIMATE

DURING the next few days, Harry Vincent had much to think about while he worked ploddingly in Harlingen's laboratory. A marked change had come over Peter Harlingen, dating from the night when Jonathan Philmont perished.

For the first time, Harlingen showed moods. At moments, he seemed actually troubled, even saddened. There were other intervals when Harlingen displayed elation, but it was usually short-lived. He had the air of a man who had embarked upon an enterprise, only to regret the cost.

Such, at least, was Harry's impression, though he had to admit that it was prejudiced. Such admission was fair enough, considering how open and shut the case had become.

Five men had shared a mammoth ruby, nested in five ivory boxes. Four of those men were dead, and the boxes remained to be found. To Harry, it was obvious that Harlingen must regret the absence of the boxes, not the men.

The other night, Harry had gotten back to the lab ahead of Harlingen, who had returned through the window route, to be there when Commissioner Weston paid a visit to break the news of Philmont's death.

Harlingen had coolly stated that he hadn't left the laboratory, phrasing it so that Harry would support such testimony. All Harry had to say was that he had not seen Harlingen go out, so Harry made the statement.

Considering the close friendship between Harlingen and Philmont, the police pressed the matter no further, so Harlingen's alibi stood. And now Harlingen wasn't bothering about alibis any longer. He left the laboratory often, after assigning Harry to some task, and from the way things were drifting, Harry had an idea his job wouldn't last much longer. It was late on this particular afternoon, when Harlingen gave Harry a stack of new X-ray plates and then went out, not stating when he would be back.

In the dusk, Harlingen glanced casually about before getting farther on his way. His look along the street failed to include a cloaked figure that glided from a doorway and moved after him.

Harlingen had indeed changed; he was no longer using doorways on his trips. Since he was neglecting such hiding places, The Shadow was using them instead.

Harlingen's trip took him to the bookshop near Philmont's house. Perhaps Harlingen had thought about the bookshop before; if so, he had preferred to stay away from the neighborhood until talk of Philmont's death had dwindled. It was safe, at this late date, to mention Philmont without rousing suspicion, so Harlingen did.

The bookseller had much to say about Philmont, who had been a steady customer, always in and out, inquiring about the oddest of books. Smiling reminiscently, the bookseller recalled how often Philmont had walked out with books, forgetting to pay for them but always remembering it afterward.

"The shop was practically his," declared the bookseller. "In this business, it is best to give some customers certain privileges. I only wish that I had more like Professor Philmont."

Very casually, Harlingen inquired if Philmont had ordered any books, that hadn't been delivered. Shaking his head at first, the bookseller finally went to a deep shelf at the rear of the shop and looked among some bundles. He brought out a square package, which he studied in surprise.

"Why, this is marked for Philmont!" he exclaimed. "I wonder how it came here!"

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Before Harlingen could stop him, the bookseller was opening the package. Partly to Harlingen's relief, and somewhat to his disappointment, the package contained only books. There were five of them, uniform in binding, boxed in a set. About to draw one out, the bookseller found that it was tightly wedged in the cardboard box.

"I'll send them back as they are," the bookseller decided. "I don't suppose there is much call for a set of books dealing with the customs of Siam and Indo-China."

"A rather timely subject," observed Harlingen. "How much is the set?"

The books proved expensive, but Harlingen purchased them. He'd been holding the boxed set, and its weight impressed him. Moreover, he was sure that he could hear a slight click every time he tilted the volumes. The smile that Harlingen restrained, except for the corners of his lips, told much that he didn't mention.

He was quite sure that Philmont had personally wrapped these books and put them on the rear shelf. He could also guess the time when it had happened. Harlingen placed it right after the last ride that Philmont had taken in a cab.

THINKING in terms of cabs, Harlingen picked up one as soon as he left the bookshop. It happened to be Moe Shrevnitz's and its driver caught a signal from a black-cloaked figure just outside the store.

Harlingen didn't glimpse The Shadow, who was only at the fringe of the lighted window. Harlingen was too interested in books, or, rather, in his purchase, for he did not regard the two things as the same.

All during the ride, Moe kept watching Harlingen in the mirror, noting the impatient gestures that the man made when he handled the tight-packed books. Once this ride was over, Moe would be going back to get The Shadow, and he had a lot to tell his chief. Moe had just spent an hour with another cab driver, named Marsha, who had been telling him some interesting things.

Harry was in the anteroom when Harlingen entered. Setting the books carelessly aside, Harlingen looked at the plates that his assistant had filed and gave an approving nod.

"That's enough for this evening, Vincent," decided Harlingen. "I'd rather subdivide the groups, before you continue further. So you can leave as soon as you want."

Harry took the hint and left as far as the bottom of the stairs. There was one thing that Harlingen had forgotten; he'd provided his new assistant with duplicate keys to the laboratory. Probably, Harry's simplicity in the matter of the alibi had made Harlingen trust him. Whatever the case, Harry decided to make the most of that trust, in a way that Harlingen wouldn't expect.

Returning upstairs, Harry unlocked the door and entered softly. Both Harlingen and the books were gone from the anteroom, so Harry proceeded to the lab. He didn't have to worry about Harlingen hearing him, for one of the X-ray machines was providing a steady buzz.

Through the half-opened door, Harry saw Harlingen gleefully clutching a cubical ivory box, its sides made up of symmetrical patterns. On the floor lay the remains of dummy book covers, that Harlingen had torn apart to get at the prize inside. But Harlingen didn't intend to use rough tactics with the nest of ivory boxes.

Instead, he placed his prize on a stand, to wheel it in front of the X-ray machine. Clever of Harlingen, this. By X-raying the nest of boxes, he would be able to locate the hidden metal catches that made it so difficult to open the nest.

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Pushing the door quite wide, Harry moved steadily toward Harlingen. Despite the buzz of the machine, the man detected the approach and spun about, a glare on his sharp face. He was reaching for a gun, only to find that he was facing one. Harry's automatic bulged straight between those glaring eyes.

Coolly, Harry frisked Harlingen, and found that he didn't have a gun, at all. Realizing it for himself, Harlingen scowled, as though regretting the oversight.

"Naturally you wouldn't need a gun," gibed Harry. "You thought you were on the homestretch. All of your friends were dead, so further murder wasn't necessary!"

Harlingen started to growl a protest, but Harry cut him short. He ordered the scientist to turn around and proceed with his work.

"I'd like to look at those X rays, too," stated Harry. "Maybe they will explain a lot of things. Remember, too, that I have this!"

SHOVING his gun forward, Harry jabbed it against Harlingen's back, and the helpless man began to push the stand in front of the buzzing machine. Then, so quickly that Harry couldn't understand it, his gun was flying through the air and he was following it.

Harlingen heard the clatter and turned about. He saw Harry in the grip of a cloaked arrival, who was spilling him across the room. Recognizing The Shadow, Harlingen blinked, bewildered, for he'd supposed that Harry was working for the cloaked investigator, once Harry had declared himself.

Then, as Harry sprawled, The Shadow whirled in Harlingen's direction. Frantically, Harlingen tried to dive away, shoving the rolling stand with its ivory box right in front of the X-ray machine. Harlingen was going that way, too, when The Shadow overtook him.

Gloved hands plucked Harlingen as they had taken Harry, and carried the fellow in a great back somersault, away from the X-ray machine. As Harlingen flattened, The Shadow landed with him, both close to where Harry was lying sprawled. If ever The Shadow had superprowess on split-second order, this was the time.

With a resounding crackle that rose to an actual roar, a great sheet of flame enveloped the laboratory. White flame that enveloped the ivory box and the X-ray machines about it. Flame so terrific in its streaking heat that metal melted under its devastating flare.

Away from the circle of that deadly spurt came a strange laugh, as the volcanic orgy faded. The laugh of The Shadow!

CHAPTER XXI. THE FIVE BOXES

NEVER had Harry Vincent seen a man more dazed than Peter Harlingen, when the X-ray experimenter was brought to his feet. Harlingen had played a lot with those rays, but had never seen them produce such devastating results. Had he been near the flame, it would have burned him hideously, with death an immediate result.

Realizing that, Harlingen looked at Harry, who was somewhat bewildered on his own. He hadn't expected this thing to happen, either. Only The Shadow had foreseen it, at the moment when it was about to happen. So sudden had it all been, that the vanished blaze seemed almost a product of vivid imaginations until The Shadow pointed.

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The ivory box was gone; in its place lay nothing but a blistered lump of grayish material atop a stand that was tilted on its half-melted legs.

Then The Shadow spoke.

"A false box," he stated, "made to look like ivory. It contained a thermite unit, set to ignite under X rays. You behaved true to form, Harlingen, when you decided to X-ray your prize."

Harlingen was even more bewildered.

"Philmont also did the expected thing with his box," The Shadow added. "He set it by the fireplace, while he referred to books on Oriental boxes. His box was obviously of celluloid composition, containing the deadly asp. The heat of the fire disposed of the box in a single puff, and the snake, already stirred by the warmth, struck instantly."

It was dawning on Harlingen that his experience wasn't the only mystery. The Shadow had explained the source of Philmont's death, and now, to Harlingen's further amazement, The Shadow was delving still deeper into the past.

"Trevoze picked up a fake box, too," explained The Shadow. "Trevoze liked problems; he was the sort who would probe the box until he found the hidden catch. He found it, and the box opened wide. It flattened, along with interior flaps, to form a chessboard.

"There was a set of chessmen, too, inside the box, but they were not all. The airtight box that became a chessboard was also loaded with the gas that killed Trevoze."

Staring, Harlingen asked in hollow voice:

"What about Glenlake?"

"A very simple case," defined The Shadow. "He was the sort who would pry at the box crudely, and finally try to smash it open. His box was filled with an explosive, and provided with percussion caps. When Glenlake became impatient, he pounded the box and blew himself apart, along with it."

The Shadow motioned toward the door, and Harry steered Harlingen in that direction. All the way to the street, Harlingen kept muttering about four boxes, all fakes, designed for death. He'd almost forgotten that there were five real ivory boxes, a nest with a Siamese ruby in their midst. The Shadow was soon to remind Harlingen on that point.

They rode in Moe's cab to an obscure, old-fashioned house, where The Shadow gave instructions to his fellow passengers. Alighting, they went to the front door, where Harry rang the bell, though Harlingen thought it useless, for the windows all were boarded over and the house seemed empty.

During a lull in the ringing, Moe tooted the cab horn. After Harry rang the bell again, results came. The door opened, very slightly, and stopped against a chain bolt. A voice spoke, quickly:

"Is that your cab, Marsha?"

A strange laugh followed, coming from within the house itself. A gloved hand came in front of the startled eye that peered from the door crack and drew the chain bolt. There was a sudden scuffle indoors; it was ending as Harry and Harlingen entered.

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In the light of a gloomy hall, they saw a stooped man, with thin gray hair and drawn face, helpless in The Shadow's clutch. With a thrust, The Shadow sent his prisoner into a chair, where the stooped man stared, totally surprised by The Shadow's simple stratagem of entering by prying loose a boarded-up window while others had been attracting attention at the front door.

It was Harlingen's turn, at last. With a hollow gulp, that showed his own surprise, Harlingen exclaimed, "Alexander Talbor!"

THIS was indeed a novelty, a dead man coming back to life after a reign of murder. But Harry hadn't any hope that the same would apply to Glenlake, Trevoise, and Philmont. For this man wasn't Talbor, as Harry had seen him.

There had been fakery in Talbor's death, but not through the use of ingenious boxes. The Shadow prompted Talbor to disclose the truth, by voicing in weird whisper:

"Come, Talbor, tell us about your servant, Channing."

An ugly leer widened on Talbor's lips.

"Why not?" he snarled. "You've learned too much, so more won't hurt. I wanted the Siamese ruby for my own, and knew that I would have to kill to get it."

"To kill," prompted The Shadow, "beginning with yourself, so far as others knew."

"Of course," agreed Talbor. "They'd have suspected me, if I hadn't been the first to die. So I had Channing register for me at the Hotel Talleyrand. Channing thought it was just a matter of convenience, but it established him as myself."

"Except with four of us," broke in Harlingen, "your partners, who knew you."

"That's why I went back to make sure I'd really killed Channing," gloated Talbor. "I made more than sure, by pitching him from the window. He'd already been identified as myself, by people who didn't know the imposture. I wanted to make sure that no one who might know those like you, Harlingen would ever see the body in recognizable shape."

From then on, Talbor's story fell into a perfect line. He'd let Glenlake note the safe combination, so he would steal the first false box. The real nest of ivory boxes had left with Talbor's luggage, to where Talbor was waiting, while Channing was upstairs posing as his master, not guessing that Talbor would soon return and kill him, when Glenlake took the robbery bait.

It was Talbor who had mailed that parcel check to Glenlake's office, where he knew that Trevoise, as the dead man's attorney, would find it. But the package had been checked, not at Grand Central but in the Pennsylvania Station, where Glenlake would normally have taken a train to Long Island.

There was a gleam from The Shadow's eyes as Talbor's story reached that stage. Trevoise could have reached the Pennsylvania Station easily from Glenlake's office, but not from Grand Central. The Shadow had already checked the error, in that case. It was one of the incidents that had enabled him to crack the case.

"You and Philmont were both around," said Talbor to Harlingen. "I thought one of you might have trailed Trevoise to the station. That's why I parked another box in a parcel locker in the nearest subway station."

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Talbor didn't have to explain how Philmont had gone for the deadly box. It was Talbor, of course, who had "lost" a cigarette case in order to influence Marsha, the honest cabby, into hunting for its owner. Talbor had advertised the case as lost. When Marsha had brought the case, Talbor had switched it for the one containing the locker key, and had advised the cabby to advertise it as found.

But his use of Marsha had proven Talbor's undoing. Worried by Philmont's later death, Marsha had asked Moe's advice, as one cabby to another, and Moe had learned where Talbor lived.

To watch the progress of his schemes, Talbor had often been around. He'd dodged into Trevose's study, to snatch the chessboard that had once looked like an ivory box, because he didn't want anyone to examine its under surface. It was Talbor who had fired those shots at The Shadow from the pillars of the Pennsylvania Station.

With Philmont gone one direction and Harlingen the other, The Shadow had known that another hand was in the case, thus confirming his earlier conclusions.

As for the fake box at the bookshop, Talbor had known Philmont's habits well enough to plant it there as bait for Harlingen.

His story fully told, all that remained was for Talbor to produce the five ivory boxes, which he volunteered to do. Rising wearily, he moved into a side room, under the point of The Shadow's gun. From a window seat, he brought the nest of boxes. At The Shadow's order, Talbor clicked the hidden springs of each box in turn.

Out of the innermost box, Talbor dumped the great Siamese ruby into the gloved hand of The Shadow. Then, with a pitiful expression of resignation, he gathered up the loose boxes as though to nest them once again.

THIS was Talbor's moment. A blaze of defiance swept him. Hurling himself about with frantic speed; he flung the boxes at The Shadow, who raised an arm to ward off their battering hail.

Then Talbor was off for the front door, beginning a flight that would have proven futile, had he been dealing only with The Shadow. But there were others Harry and Harlingen who thoughtlessly gave Talbor aid.

Taking up the chase, they blocked The Shadow, but only as far as the front door. There, the cloaked fighter overtook them, flinging them both aside. From the sidewalk, Talbor heard The Shadow's laugh and turned, firing the first shot from a gun that he whipped from his pocket.

A wild shot, that hasty one. The next would have been The Shadow's, had there been time. But other men were on the scene Inspector Cardona and a crew of detectives, brought here by a final tip-off that The Shadow had ordered. They were springing from all sides, to surround the frantic murderer, and Talbor, in his madness, thought that he could fight them all.

There wasn't time to argue. Guns blasted before Talbor could change his aim from the unseen Shadow to the visible foemen. Under that fusillade, Alexander Talbor, man of fivefold crime, wilted and sprawled dead.

Five ivory boxes five dead men. Fitting it was that the last of that chain should be Talbor, the murderer, and not Harlingen, his intended victim. Of those who had been partners, one, at least, remained to witness the triumph of The Shadow's justice.

Strange was the laugh that stirred the darkness, as it issued from the doorway of the old, grim house that was no longer a killer's lair. Mirth that promised doom to all who dealt in crime, as had Alexander Talbor. The laugh of The Shadow!

THE END