

# **HILLS OF DEATH**

Maxwell Grant

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# HILLS OF DEATH

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## CHAPTER I. JERSEY MURDER

THE lights of the filling station were dimmed amid the drizzle, as the small coupe nosed toward them. It wasn't until the driver identified the round, dull glow of a gasoline standard that he was sure the place was actually a service station.

The discovery brought him satisfaction. Picking a way among the back roads on a hazy night was bad enough; it was worse when the needle of the gasoline gauge had wangled almost to the empty mark.

Pulling in between the gasoline standard and the shack that served as service station, the driver of the coupe honked his horn; then settled back to light a cigarette. The dim lights showed a wise face; eyes that were observant, but friendly.

Though young, the man at the wheel of the coupe had an oddish poise. His experienced air caused many persons to class him as a newspaper reporter, which, in fact, he was. This traveler along the back roads of New Jersey was Clyde Burke, roving news-getter for the New York Classic.

Clyde was eyeing the service station as he lighted his cigarette. It looked like a one-man establishment; and the poorly-painted sign above the door testified to that effect. It bore the name: "FRED'S SERVICE

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STATION," and the man who came from the little building was evidently Fred, himself.

He was the sort of service station proprietor that Clyde expected to see in a remote location like this. Fred was tall and lanky; he wore puttees, khaki trousers and an old sweater, topped by a black poncho. His face was dreary, weather-beaten; that of a man who had taken up his present occupation as a last resort.

There was something else, though, that Clyde noted instantly. There was a worried look on Fred's face as the fellow saw the coupe. He seemed to be expecting some one that he didn't want to see. His lips grimaced momentarily; then their expression changed. Clyde's car wasn't the one that Fred thought it was. That was why Fred gave his wan grin of relief.

"Fill her up!"

Clyde's brisk order brought a nod from Fred. Clyde's appearance added to the man's relief. That made the reporter more anxious to learn what was on the fellow's mind.

While Fred was busy at the gasoline standard, Clyde alighted from the coupe and strolled over to open conversation. His first words were a question:

"Do you have a telephone?"

Fred looked up suspiciously. He noted that Clyde was light of build, although wiry. He didn't seem the sort who would be making trouble. Nevertheless, Fred wasn't taking chances.

"Yeah," he returned, gruffly. "I got a telephone. Only it ain't a pay station. People don't use it, generally –"

"I want to call New York." Clyde produced his reporter's card. "The operator will give us the charges. I'll pay them."

Fred saw the reporter's card by the glow of the tail-light. His expression showed a sudden eagerness. He wanted to talk to some one, and Clyde seemed eligible. Fred thumbed toward the service station.

"Will you wait inside, sir?" he questioned. "I'll pull your car around in back."

Clyde nodded, Fred's request told him exactly what he wanted to know. Fred was awaiting the arrival of another car. That was why he wanted the space clear.

Obligingly, Clyde went inside. He was seated in a chair by a battered desk when Fred joined him.

"TELL me something." Fred wasn't wasting any time. "Are you out here looking for a story?"

"In a way – yes." Clyde spoke frankly. "We picked up a tip, down at the newspaper office, that some New York mobbies were heading out this way. Just where they were going, and why, we don't know. So far, they haven't made any trouble."

Clyde was outspoken, because he was confident that Fred was no crook. What he didn't tell Fred was that the Classic knew nothing about the tip in question. Though Clyde was actually a newspaper reporter, he also filled another job. Clyde Burke was an agent of The Shadow, the superfoe to all men of crime.

It was The Shadow who had learned of gang-car trips across the Jersey meadows. For the past four days, The Shadow had been watching a crew of hoodlums that he expected would start forth. Meanwhile, he had sent

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Clyde and other agents on tours of investigation, hoping that they might learn the probable destination of the crooks.

Clyde was thinking of those facts as he watched Fred. The man's eyes were staring out through the door, with a far-away gaze. He was nodding over what Clyde had told him. Suddenly, Fred voiced, in awed tones:

"To-night's Wednesday!"

Clyde awaited an explanation of the statement. For a few moments, Fred hesitated; then broke loose.

"Listen, Mr. Burke" – Fred remembered Clyde's name from the reporter's card – "every Wednesday night he comes here, see? A fellow in a coupe; only it's bigger than your car. With Jersey license plates, instead of New York. He never says nothing – just holds up his hand, spread like this, meaning he wants five gallons of gas.

"I've seen him close enough to guess what he is. He's a Turk, that's what! With a round face, yellowlike – and a mustache, like this." Fred drew his forefinger straight across his upper lip. "And he never smiles. Keeps his lips straight; just like the mustache."

Fred sat down. He watched Clyde, saw that the reporter was intent. That was because Clyde knew there must be more to the story. Filling station men didn't worry about steady customers having a foreign appearance and refusing to open conversation. Fred's next spell of hesitancy wasn't a long one.

"Here's what happens, every time." Fred leaned forward in his chair. "The guy don't pull out right away, see? He smokes a cigarette – sometimes two or three. They smell like pure Turkish; I whiffed the smoke once, when I was close.

"Then, all of a sudden, a car goes by from the opposite direction. A sedan; but I never got its license number. That's what the Turk's waiting for, though he don't show it. Maybe he finishes his cigarette; sometimes he lights another, to bluff me. But he pulls out, circles back, after he's seen that car pass. And when he gets to the bend" – Fred pointed – "he stops to pick up something!"

Fred arose and paced the cramped floor, nodding wisely. He had told his story, and he considered it air-tight. The tale impressed Clyde, too. Cars were infrequent along this lonely road. The fact that the Turk always waited until one had passed was sufficient proof that the mystery man was awaiting that machine.

"I shoulda called the State police." Fred glanced ruefully at the telephone. "It's too late, though. The Turk's about due. That means I got to wait another week."

"I have an idea." Clyde arose. "Don't call the State police at all; not until we know more about the case. Maybe I can find out something."

"How?"

"By getting down to the bend and seeing what the fellow does there. If he –"

A splashing sound interrupted. A car was wallowing in from the rain-soaked road. Fred pointed quickly to a little side door beyond the desk.

"It's him!" gulped the weather-beaten man. "Better duck out, Mr. Burke –"

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CLYDE was off before Fred completed the hint. Once outside, he sneaked to the front corner of the little building. From his vantage point, Clyde saw Fred going out to a large coupe that had parked beside the gasoline standard.

The mystery car had arrived. Events repeated themselves exactly as Fred had described them. Clyde glimpsed a darkish face that moved back into the car as Fred approached. A hand showed at the window to gesture for five gallons. While Fred was putting gas into the tank, the man in the car lighted a cigarette.

Fred received his money and came back into the shack. The man in the car had finished one smoke. Clyde could see the tiny flare of a match, as he lighted another. Hurrying to the side door, Clyde opened it and beckoned to Fred.

"I'm going down to the bend," whispered Clyde. "If I don't come back, call this number. Tell the person who answers that you're calling for me; and give him the details."

The written telephone number that Clyde slipped to Fred was an unlisted one, important to The Shadow's agents. The man who would answer a call there was Burbank, The Shadow's contact man.

Fred put a question: "This number's the newspaper office?"

Clyde shook his head. He told Fred not to worry about it; just to call the number. Fred agreed; but made another proviso.

"Maybe I ought to call the State coppers, too?"

"Don't do that," interrupted Clyde. "If you've got to get in touch with the police, call Joe Cardona, the New York inspector. He knows me."

Leaving Fred, Clyde rounded the back of the shack and picked his way through the underbrush. His route was silent; for the ground was heavily soaked. Soon out of earshot from the Turk's coupe, Clyde found a sudden urge for speed. From down the road, he could hear the rapid rhythm of an approaching motor.

A sedan whizzed past, too swiftly for Clyde to do more than glimpse it from the bushes. It went by the service station; and by the time Clyde was near the bend, he could hear the coupe pulling away from Fred's.

Just off the edge of the road, Clyde waited while the coupe pulled up. It stopped some thirty feet beyond him.

Clyde watched the driver get out and use a flashlight. He was looking for something just off the paving. Stealing out to the roadway, Clyde saw the flashlight glimmer on a muddy satchel. The man picked it up and came back to the coupe.

That was when Clyde performed an impulsive move. Behind the coupe, he was out of sight. There wasn't time to accost the mystery man; moreover, Clyde doubted the wisdom of seeking an encounter. He had time for something else: the right trick in this pinch. Tiptoeing along through the drizzle, Clyde reached the back of the coupe, just as the car started.

With a long grab, Clyde clutched the handle of the rumble seat and shoved one foot upon a bumperette. He gained another hold while the car was gathering speed. Clinging, flattened, the reporter was off on a trip that promised strange adventure.

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BACK at the service station, Fred was listening to the last sounds of the coupe's departure. By the light of the gasoline standard, he studied the slip of paper that Clyde had given him. Memorizing the phone number, the fellow tore the paper to shreds. A look of suspicion came over his features.

Fred was thinking that perhaps Clyde had joined the man in the coupe. Maybe the reporter's visit was a trick to find out how much Fred knew.

With an ugly mutter, the lanky man went into the shack and picked up the telephone. He was about to call the State police, when he remembered something that Clyde had said, about calling Joe Cardona.

Just part of Clyde's bluff, thought Fred. All right, he would call that bluff. A chat with Joe would fix it.

Lifting the receiver, Fred told the operator to connect him with New York police headquarters. Fred grinned, thinking he would soon be exposing the methods of a fake reporter.

Fred's sudden mistrust was to prove his misfortune. He had trouble getting connected with Cardona; his call took longer than if he had telephoned direct to Burbank. That delay was to prove fatal, for Fred's own actions were putting him on the spot.

"Hello!" Fred was shouting at some one on the other end of the wire. "I want to talk to Inspector Cardona... Yeah. Cardona. I got some important news for him..."

Fred couldn't hear what was happening outside. A long touring car had slithered up to the front of the service station; men, peering from its interior, could see Fred at the telephone. A pair of huskies slid out from the car; muffling their raincoats about their chins, they sneaked up to the doorway.

"Hello, inspector!" Fred was talking again, while the watchers drew revolvers from their coat pockets. "I'm a guy that's got a filling station, over in Jersey. I want to tell you about a car that stopped here... What's that?... Say, I want to talk to Inspector Cardona! Get him on the wire..."

Fred turned, holding the telephone. He was muttering angrily, because of the wrong connection. His words were audible, until his eyes happened to gaze through the doorway. Then, Fred's lips kept moving, but they were soundless.

Goggle-eyed, the lanky man was staring into the muzzles of revolvers. He saw the intruders step through the doorway, their merciless eyes beady as they watched him. Fred clamped the telephone receiver to his ear; the horror on his face was proof that he could hear no one on the other end of the line.

The invaders didn't wait for Fred to get his connection. What they had heard was enough to settle their policy. This temporary interval was their opportunity. Before Fred had a chance to plead for life, the pair acted in concert. Stubby fingers pressed revolver triggers. Each weapon stabbed a single shot at six-foot range.

Fred's lanky body doubled. The telephone clattered from his hand and bounded on the floor. One second later, Fred's sprawling body thumped beside it. Ugly eyes watched the man's last squirm. Leering lips gave chuckles.

Killers had finished a man who knew too much. It had been easy to deliver cold-blooded death at this remote spot. This was one crime, they thought, that would never be traced. Their guess was a good one, so far as the law was concerned. But those killers were not considering another factor in the case.

Murderers were to pay for their deed, much sooner than they would have deemed possible. Speedy vengeance was due in this isolated place where men of crime had gained an evil triumph over a helpless victim.

### CHAPTER II. CLUES IN THE NIGHT

THE sharp shots from Fred's shack were like a signal to other mobsters who waited in the touring car. One thug craned from behind the wheel, while two more sprang from the rear of the car. Reaching the door of the shack, the new pair was met by one of the murderers.

"We croaked the lug," growled a killer. "He was piping through a call to Joe Cardona! We'll listen to hear if Joe gets it. You guys take a gander in back of the shack. See if there's a buggy there."

The pair circled the shack. The killer in the doorway started in to join his companion, when he heard a warning "Psst!" from the driver of the touring car. The killer beckoned to his pal, who was listening at the telephone. The latter set the instrument on the desk and came to the doorway.

"Thought I heard a bus driving up!"

The warning words came from the touring car. The killers stared toward the roadway. They heard nothing, saw nothing. The drip-drip of the rain smothered the sounds that might have reached them. Hazy night added a blanket to obscure something that they might have observed.

A huge roadster was edging in from the roadway, coasting along with its motor stilled. The big car halted just short of being seen. From it emerged a shape that was lost in the darkness. Shrouded in night's blanket, an invisible arrival took stock of what he saw.

From his point of observation, that visitant spied the little side doorway near the rear corner of the shack. Clyde had left the door slightly ajar. Light gleamed through. Using that glow as an objective, a silent stalker approached through darkness.

One murderer was back at the telephone; the other was searching Fred's body when the door inched inward. A killer heard a slight creak; he whipped his revolver in the right direction as he stared instinctively toward the little door. The barrier swung wide.

On the threshold stood a shape of blackness – a cloaked figure that had materialized from night. Burning eyes peered along the line of a leveled automatic. That sight brought a hoarse shout of recognition from the killer's lips:

"The Shadow!"

HAVING rapped two killers on the actual scene of murder, The Shadow intended to hold them for the law. The telephone offered prompt communication with the authorities; and while the police were on the way, The Shadow would have opportunity for another task.

He could learn from his prisoners why they had come to this remote spot. The Shadow had a way of making ratty captives talk.

The murderers knew it. They recognized that The Shadow must have trailed them from New York. Only the foggish thickness of the drizzle had given them chance to lose The Shadow for short intervals. They were beginning to regret their hasty murder of Fred.

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These thugs had some reason why they didn't want to talk. That was why they acted with sudden desperation.

One killer was crazed enough to open fire at The Shadow; a futile attempt, because the crook had no time for accurate aim. The other murderer chose a course that was equally unwise. He made a mad dive for the open doorway at the front of the shack, forgetful of the fact that The Shadow could easily drop him as he fled.

Luck favored the killers, where sense failed them. Without knowing it, the man who opened fire blocked The Shadow's aim for the rogue who was attempting flight. Rather than let one crook get away without punishment, The Shadow performed a sudden twist of tactics.

Instead of dropping the first crook with a point-blank shot, The Shadow wheeled out through the side door and cut for the front corner of the shack. The firing crook stopped short, gaping at the incorrect thought that his shots had driven off The Shadow.

For a moment, the killer was ready to follow; then he changed his mind. He ducked out through the front door, in hope of reaching the touring car.

Both killers were to learn their mistake, with promptness. The driver of the touring car saw them dashing toward him; he glimpsed The Shadow at the corner of the shack and gave a shout of warning. The murderers turned to deliver a hectic fire, that they began too late.

The Shadow's .45 spoke its own message. Two gun stabs were all that he required to stagger the fugitives. The first shot sprawled one thug on the running board of the touring car, where the crook clutched a wounded shoulder. The second bullet found the next man's gun arm. The killer dropped his revolver; he howled as he reeled toward the car.

The man behind the wheel had dropped low into the seat. He was sliding the car into gear, ready for flight, without waiting for his crippled pals to get aboard. That suited The Shadow.

The fierce laugh that shivered from his lips was an urge for the scared driver to hurry away and leave the actual murderers behind. That one fugitive could serve, later, to open a new trail to the big-shot who had sent this murder crew into action.

THE SHADOW'S policy was proof that he had made a miscalculation. He had not had a chance previously to learn the exact number of crooks in the touring car.

Arriving late, he had seen nothing of the pair that had gone to the back of the service station. They, in their turn, had not guessed that The Shadow was responsible for the firing that they had heard.

The pair had discovered Clyde's car. Starting the coupe, they came speeding around the corner of the shack just as The Shadow shifted off into the darkness. The glare of the headlights showed his cloaked form squarely in their path.

With raucous shouts, the thugs tried to take advantage of their lucky opportunity. The crook at the wheel tried to run The Shadow down, while the other leaned out with a revolver, to fire if The Shadow leaped away.

With split-second speed, The Shadow dodged the double menace. From his position, the gunmen expected him to dive to the right. The man in the driver's seat yanked the wheel in that direction, while his companion stretched wide from the window on the right. Both guessed wrong.

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With a long bound, The Shadow went straight across the front of the oncoming car. He couldn't quite clear it with that spring; but the thump that he took from the left fender was a glancing one. Instead of rolling beneath the tires, The Shadow took a long pitch off into the darkness.

Flattening in the mud, The Shadow rolled over, in case his foemen had seen his landing spot. He came to hands and knees, still clutching his automatic. It would have gone badly with both crooks, had they stopped to battle further. They were wise enough, however, to keep on their way.

All that The Shadow saw of the coupe was the final twinkle of the tail-light as it twisted past trees that lined the open road. He didn't even have time to recognize the car as Clyde's coupe. Coupled to that was another disappointment.

The coupe had cut across the touring car's path; in so doing, it delayed the touring car long enough for the crippled murderers to haul themselves aboard.

When The Shadow fired at the touring car, it was also on its way, blotted from sight in the haze. Both cars were in the clear, wheeling away in mad flight.

The Shadow remembered the telephone in Fred's shack. By a simple call, he could have the killers bottled. That would leave him free to investigate these surroundings, where valuable evidence might be found.

The telephone, itself, could be a clue, for The Shadow had noticed that the receiver was off the hook. There was still a chance to find out who Fred had been calling at the time when he was slain.

THE SHADOW hurried into the shack. He could hear clicks from the receiver before he reached it. Once the receiver was against The Shadow's ear, he recognized the excited voice that was coming across the wire. Joe Cardona had heard the shots over the telephone. The inspector was clamoring to know what had happened.

The tone that Cardona heard must have awed him, for Joe's babble ceased the moment that The Shadow spoke. In calm, whispered words, The Shadow announced his identity; then told Cardona exactly what had occurred. There was a short silence; after that, Cardona broke loose with a gruff-voiced thanks.

The New York inspector told The Shadow that he would promptly notify the New Jersey State police regarding the murderers. He added that the New York police would be on the watch, in case the thugs tried to head back into Manhattan.

Hanging up the telephone receiver, The Shadow stooped beside Fred's body and began a search. He found nothing in the way of a clue. Unfortunately, Fred had torn up the paper that Clyde had given him. Those scattered fragments, lost outside, would have told The Shadow much of the entire story.

The call to Cardona was evidence that Fred had uncovered something that he thought the New York inspector would like to know. Whatever it was, it probably concerned some person unknown who had made a stop at the filling station.

That deduction was the reason why The Shadow went out to the gasoline standard and began examining tire tracks that he found there.

The Shadow saw marks that represented the touring car and the small coupe that he had not identified as Clyde's. Beside them were other tracks, that indicated a middle-size car. The Shadow traced them; discovered that a car had pulled in from one direction and circled back the same way.

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Entering his own car, The Shadow started along the road. He was using a yellowish fog-light, tilted toward the hard surface. Rain had washed away the traces that The Shadow wanted, until he neared the bend. There, on the muddy shoulder of the road, were the same tracks that he had seen before.

Alighting, The Shadow discovered footprints. He recognized that the driver of the mystery car had stepped to the ground to look for something. The Shadow lost no more time. He drove along the road, his hawkish eyes on the lookout for more evidence.

THE trail was a blank one for nearly two miles. At that point, The Shadow saw a road that led to the left. It was a dirt road, muddied by rain despite the overhanging trees. Tire tracks showed in the mud.

On the ground, The Shadow examined the marks of the tire treads and made a careful measurement. They were the evidence he wanted.

The mystery car had gone along the dirt road. A map showed that the journey might prove a long one, for the road was poor and had intersections within the next five miles. There was a chance that the car might have stopped somewhere along this obscure road. It was also possible that if the car, had continued through, The Shadow might gain on it, during the five-mile course.

The Shadow was at the wheel. Gears meshed silently; the big roadster took smoothly to the dirt. The car gained speed along the lonely road. The Shadow was off on the quest that Clyde Burke had taken, a quarter-hour ago.

The Shadow's keen brain recognized that his trail might prove important; there was evidence to make it so. But The Shadow had gained no inkling that his agent was already involved. He was to learn of Clyde's part, later.

Finding an agent active on a trail was usually of advantage to The Shadow. This time, such a discovery was destined to produce disaster.

### CHAPTER III. BROKEN STRATEGY

CLYDE BURKE had expected difficulty in clinging to the slippery back of the coupe. Instead, he had experienced no trouble. There had been a swift ride to the dirt road; after that, the car had rolled along at a very moderate pace. The man at the wheel was driving carefully.

The car had covered scarcely more than three miles in its quarter hour of travel, and Clyde was benefiting by the driver's care. He felt entirely secure on his perch; and with the gait no more than fifteen miles an hour, he resolved to break the monotony. There was a chance, Clyde decided, to learn more about the driver.

Gaining a good grip, the reporter pulled himself up to the rear window and looked into the interior of the car. Through the glass, Clyde could see the driver's wide shoulders and thick neck, but he couldn't get a good look at the mirror, which showed the fellow's face.

As he shifted his position for that purpose, Clyde happened to glance downward. What he saw, gripped his full attention.

The dash-light was a bright one. It showed the seat beside the driver. There lay the satchel that the man had picked up from the highway. The bag was a fair-size one; it bulged so much that the clamp must have broken when it was pitched from the sedan that Clyde had seen go by the bend. The bag was wide open, its contents visible.

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Clyde saw bundles of checks, that he recognized as the sort used in international exchange; bundles of currency, in American notes and bills of other countries. The bag was literally stuffed with wealth; but from the surface view, it was impossible to estimate the total.

Nevertheless, the sight held Clyde's eyes glued. That was why he failed to notice another pair of eyes, that peered suddenly toward him from the mirror above the windshield. Dark eyes, set in a flat, yellowish face; their sudden glint told that they had spotted the unwanted passenger on the back of the coupe.

Had Clyde looked at the mirror, he would have recognized that the driver of the car was actually a Turk, as Fred had said. But Clyde's opportunity went before he had a chance to take it. The Turk turned slightly so that his face could not be seen in the mirror. He was careful to give no inkling that he knew Clyde was on the back.

From that moment, the Turk began a cool campaign to lull Clyde into a false belief of security. He kept the car at its easy-rolling speed, picking the best spots of the road. When Clyde shifted back from the rear window, the Turk did not even notice it. He was confident that sight of the open bag would keep Clyde right where he was.

That was all the Turk wanted. It was the build-up for a coming stroke of strategy.

AT the end of a half mile, wheel tracks ran from the left of the road. They marked the entrance of a private byway that led through the woods. The Turk swung deliberately into the wheel tracks; brought the car to a stop in front of bars that lay between two fence posts. He opened the door beside him and stepped from the car.

This time, Clyde saw the Turk plainly; for the man made no effort to obscure himself as he walked into the path of the headlights. He took down the fence bars; carried them, one by one, to the darkness beside the rutty road.

Each time he lugged a rail, he paused to stack it before he returned. Those intervals – the first two – were the strategy that deceived Clyde.

Drawn high on the back of the coupe, Clyde watched through the window, expecting the Turk to come back into the light. Clyde allowed a half minute, because of the other delays. The thirty seconds had passed before Clyde suddenly suspected that something different had occurred. On a quick impulse, he shifted downward from the back of the coupe.

There was a splash, five feet away, just as Clyde's feet hit the ground. The reporter swung about, to see the Turk spring from a puddly spot. The yellowish face looked ruddy, demonish, in the glare of the red tail-light. The fellow was coming for Clyde; the reporter's only course was to meet him.

Quick punches were Clyde's method. The Turk's big arms warded them off. The grab that he made for Clyde was the quick clutch of a wrestler's. Clyde tried to dodge, but he was backed against the car.

He stabbed a hard punch; it landed beside the Turk's jaw, but it lacked the weight to stop the fellow. A second later, Clyde's arms were pinned.

The reporter didn't succumb as easily as the Turk expected. Clyde was wiry, and proved it when his husky foe started to drag him from the bumperettes. A hard twist; Clyde was free enough to engage in a furious grapple.

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He heard the Turk's breath hiss harshly, as though the fellow relished such a fight. Clyde found out why, when the Turk displayed more wrestling tactics.

Every clutch resulted in a fall for Clyde. The Turk threw him around the muddy road, off into the underbrush, with heaves that would have been knock-outs on a wrestling floor. The soft turf was Clyde's salvation. Each time, he managed to be out from under, when the Turk came thudding upon him.

The finish came when the Turk finally missed a throw. The husky slipped on a patch of skiddy moss; went plopping backwards, hanging on to Clyde. Instead of wrenching away, Clyde saw a chance he thought would win the combat. He threw his own weight on the Turk, caught the man's neck and flattened the fellow's big shoulders on the ground.

There wasn't any referee to give Clyde the verdict; so it didn't count. Instead, the Turk's big hands smacked upward, took Clyde in a grip that nullified the neck hold.

Clyde twisted, writhing in a torturing clamp that would have done credit to a python. He felt himself roll over, to land on his back with a hard thwack. This time, he had no chance to get away before the Turk's full weight planked on him.

When the big man arose, Clyde was lying limp and dazed.

THE Turk grunted; picked up his prisoner and carried him over one shoulder to the coupe. With his free hand, the man put the opened satchel on the floor and sprawled Clyde in the front seat. He turned on the dome-light, studied the face of his exhausted prisoner.

From a deep pocket, the Turk produced a small hypodermic syringe. He jabbed the needle into Clyde's arm. Circling the car, he took his place behind the wheel.

He watched the reporter for a few minutes; decided that the dope was taking effect. Turning out the dome-light, the Turk started his car ahead. He did not stop to replace the fence rails.

Despite the rain, the Turk had the window open beside him. He was listening intently as he drove slowly along. At one place, the thickness of the overhanging boughs produced a hush despite the heavy rain. It was that quiet that gave the Turk his chance to hear a sound from behind his car.

The Turk had gained the sudden impression that another car had stolen into the woods behind him. Somewhere along this narrow, twisted road, a clever pursuer had doused his own lights, to creep up behind the coupe.

That, whether or not the Turk knew it, was a piece of strategy often used by The Shadow. Clyde's battle had given his chief a chance to close in on the trail. It was seldom that any one detected The Shadow's ruse; but the wily Turk had done so, thanks to the intermittent behavior of the rain.

Just as he had trapped Clyde, so did the Turk prepare a snare for the unseen follower in the car behind him.

The coupe came to the end of the private road. It was simply a twisted cross-cut through the woods, that terminated in another barring gate.

The Turk stopped; opened the door beside him. As he alighted, he drew Clyde over to the driver's seat. The reporter hunched there; the dope had put him completely to sleep.

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Leaving the door ajar, the Turk stepped forward. He took the fence rails one by one and pitched them from the road. The procedure was swift; the Turk was back to the car in less than a minute. As he arrived there, he paused. Giving the door a slight slam, he huddled low beside the fender.

The trick was neat. Apparently, the driver had returned to his car. A few seconds more, the coupe would be on its way. This was the one chance to halt it. The Turk expected a challenge, and it came.

A tall figure suddenly blurred the window beside the wheel. A whispered voice spoke, as a gloved hand thrust inward with an automatic. An instant later, The Shadow's eyes saw the hunched position of the man at the wheel.

With an upward move of his wrist, The Shadow tilted Clyde's head backward. In the glow of the dash-light, he gained a startling sight. The Shadow was staring at the face of his own agent, gaining his first knowledge of the fact that Clyde Burke had first found this trail.

A BACK-LASH was The Shadow's next move. He recoiled from the side of the car so suddenly that he was clear of the step when the husky Turk came hurtling from the darkness.

The Shadow had no time to aim. He was still twisting at the moment of the Turk's arrival. As big hands shot toward him, The Shadow let his automatic drop. His clamping fists hooked the Turk's forearms; halted them short of their mark. The fighters locked in a terrific fray.

The Turk had toyed with Clyde, during that earlier struggle, trying throws as the quickest method toward victory. With The Shadow he used headlocks, exerting a strength that had bone-crushing power.

The Shadow displayed the same tactics, meeting his opponent's efforts with equal skill. They wallowed through the mud; rolled to a grassy slope that lay between two big trees.

There, The Shadow took a deliberate sprawl, falling away from the Turk's hard lunges. Instantly, the Turk hurled himself upon his flattened adversary. Arms first, his hands going for The Shadow's shoulders, the Turk made an accurate plunge in the darkness. So accurate, that it served the very purpose that The Shadow had intended.

Hands, thrust upward, landed like steel clamps upon the Turk's descending arms. The Shadow's right leg, doubled upward, struck like a lever against his opponent's chest. An overhead kick gave impetus to the Turk's drive, sent the big man on a long somersault.

The Turk's spin was so swift that he never gained a chance to claw The Shadow.

There was a rolling clatter in the darkness. That stilled as The Shadow came to his feet and started to find his adversary. The Turk was sprawled beside a tree; close to him was a large rock, projecting from steep, slippery ground.

The Turk was groggy; but he rallied as The Shadow gripped him. He was ready for one last defiant effort.

The Shadow had another jujutsu trick to take care of that. He twisted the Turk sideways; faded away to spill the fellow with a clipping scissors throw. All that The Shadow needed was a brace; he shoved his shoulders against the big rock.

The Turk lunged. The Shadow's legs clipped; his foe did a sideways tumble that ended in a helpless sprawl. But with it, the Turk was due for unexpected victory. All The Shadow's weight was against the big rock. That

solid brace gave like a collapsing wall.

The rock overhung a gully. Its foundations loosened by the rain, the big stone was ready for a topple. It ripped from the mossy soil, went crashing downward like a Juggernaut, clearing a swath through the saplings that lined the edge of the steep ravine.

The Shadow went with it. The hole that the rock left was a large one; it swallowed him before he could clutch firm ground. The depths of the gully were like a vortex, that sucked its victim downward. The path that the huge stone cleared left nothing that could stop The Shadow's plunge.

THE groggy Turk heard the echoes from below; the clatter of the rock as it bashed the bottom of the gully. He came to his feet and crept to the brink, where he felt the sudden slant of the ground past the edge.

Echoes had stilled from the depths; but the Turk did not listen long to the patter of the rain.

Instead, he groped his way to the spot where his car stood. Pushing Clyde away from the wheel, the Turk took the driver's seat. He started the coupe out through the open fence. Once in the clear, he did not pause to bar the way behind him.

Again, the mystery driver was carrying Clyde Burke as a helpless prisoner, along with a satchel of wealth. This time, The Shadow was no longer on the trail.

### **CHAPTER IV. THE LAW'S SEARCH**

A DOZEN minutes after the coupe's departure, there was a stir in the depths of the gully. A tiny flashlight flicked from close to the ground. On one elbow, The Shadow dully studied the rocky bed that had been his landing place.

The Shadow's fall had been a slanted one, a distance of some thirty feet. He had handled the spill with the skill of a professional tumbler; but a jolt against a hidden stone had stunned him at the finish.

He couldn't gauge how long he had lain there; but the steady sweep of the rain had certainly helped to revive him.

The main move was to get back to the roadway above the gully. The Shadow picked a path where small trees offered hold. He swayed dizzily at times, during the upward climb; but he was steady when he reached the top. Groping to the rutty road, The Shadow found his own car.

The big roadster was intact. The Turk hadn't wasted time to put the car out of commission. Chances were slight that The Shadow could overtake him. Nevertheless, with Clyde a prisoner, that was The Shadow's only course.

Discarding his cloak and slouch hat, The Shadow picked a raincoat from the rumble seat and slipped it over his water-soaked shoulders. He drove the roadster through the gate, came upon a dirt road like the one that he had formerly traveled. His fog-light showed the coupe's tire tracks. The Shadow followed them.

Half a mile produced a narrow hard-surfaced highway. The Shadow saw tracks that told the coupe's direction. Those marks were to prove the finish of the trail. Within a half mile, The Shadow came to a crossroad, with a fork beyond it. There wasn't a mark on the macadam to tell which way the coupe had gone.

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Consulting a road map, The Shadow made a choice and took that road. He came to another crossing; while he deliberated, he saw the lights of an approaching car coming from the right.

Before he could start, he heard a shrill whistle. The car halted beside The Shadow's roadster and a pair of New Jersey State police came from it.

One of the officers used a flashlight; it showed The Shadow's face. The police saw a thin, hawklike visage beneath a felt hat; below, the collar and tie of a tuxedo collar that projected from the raincoat. They were impressed by the appearance of the roadster's driver; particularly, the quiet manner of his gaze. They asked for his license.

The Shadow produced it. The State trooper stared when he saw the name on the New York card. He looked at The Shadow's face, recognized it as one that he had seen in newspaper photographs.

"Kent Allard!" exclaimed the officer. "Say – you're the famous aviator, aren't you? The fellow who was down in Central America all those years?" (Note: See "The Shadow Unmasks," Vol. XXII, No. 5.)

The Shadow smiled as he gave a nod of admission.

"Sorry to have troubled you, Mr. Allard." The trooper returned the license card. "If there's anything we can do for you –"

"There is. I am trying to find the highway to Manhattan."

The State cop grinned. This was a good one: Kent Allard, the famous aviator, lost in the maze of New Jersey highways!

"We'll show you the way, Mr. Allard," said the trooper. "Better keep along with us, so other patrols won't stop you. We're covering all the roads to–night."

"How does that happen?"

THE officer explained. There had been a murder at a filling station. The victim had been calling New York police headquarters when he was slain. A New York inspector – Joe Cardona – had learned that Manhattan thugs were responsible. The Jersey police were looking for them.

"We've got those fellows bottled," declared the trooper. "Every main road covered. We're searching every secondary highway, on the lookout for suspicious cars."

Kent Allard became thoughtful. He remembered a coupe that he had seen a short while ago. One with a New Jersey license plate; he recalled the number in uncertain fashion, not quite sure of it.

The news impressed the troopers. They decided to report it, particularly when Allard said that the car had cut in from a dirt road.

The Shadow had named the license number of the Turk's coupe; and his uncertainty was merely a pose. He had spotted the number, figure for figure, during his approach in the darkness.

Following the patrol car to the main highway, The Shadow decided that he had taken the only feasible method to aid Clyde, for the present. A search of his own would be impossible, with patrol cars all about. It was best to let the law do the work.

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They were hunting for thugs, but they would certainly halt the Turk's coupe if they saw it. The fact that the number had been reported would force a questioning of the driver and whoever happened to be with him. That could produce Clyde's rescue.

LESS than two hours later, Kent Allard strolled into the exclusive Cobalt Club, in Manhattan. He was dressed in fresh attire; he looked about in quizzical fashion, as if seeking some one.

An attendant approached, to inform him that Police Commissioner Weston was in the grillroom.

Going down a flight of steps, Allard saw Weston seated at a corner table with Joe Cardona. Both the commissioner and the inspector gave greeting when Allard joined them.

"Hoped you'd be here, Allard," announced Weston, briskly. Then, with a smile: "We've just learned that your memory isn't quite as good as it might be."

For a moment, Allard's face looked puzzled. Then, the answer dawned.

"You've heard from the New Jersey police?"

Weston nodded; turned to Cardona, with the comment: "Tell Mr. Allard the details, inspector."

Cardona gave them, in methodical fashion. The Jersey police had finally caught up with two cars on a main highway. They had wrecked the first one, a touring car, with bullets, when the occupants had opened fire. The three men in it had been killed. They proved to be New York gunmen; but they had given a surprisingly poor battle.

Allard made no comment at that point, but he could have explained a detail that Joe hadn't heard in The Shadow's telephone call. The murderers had been more effectively crippled than Cardona supposed. The Shadow's bullets were responsible for their inability to put up a hard fight.

There was another car, Cardona added; it was a coupe that had made a get-away, heading for the Jersey hinterlands. The State police hadn't managed to get its license number.

"Too bad," remarked Allard. "It may have been the suspicious car that I sighted on the back road. I reported that number, you know."

"We know," nodded Cardona, "but this wasn't the car. From what the State police did see of the license, they decided it was a New York plate. The car you saw had a Jersey tag, Mr. Allard."

"Quite true."

"And it hasn't been seen. The State highway department checked on the number. Your guess wasn't right, Mr. Allard. The number you gave them belongs to a car from Atlantic City. It's owned by a real estate man; he's at home and the car's in the garage where it belongs."

Allard chuckled at his own supposed error. He saw a road map on the table and began to study it. Cardona had marked it with a pencil. He explained that the marks represented spots where the Jersey police had barricaded the roads.

"They're still looking for a coupe," reminded Cardona, "and they may pick up the one you saw. Only, the tag won't have the number you thought, Mr. Allard."

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ONE hour later, Allard left the Cobalt Club, after Commissioner Weston had received another report from New Jersey. Nothing had been seen of either coupe. Allard had received that news in an indifferent fashion, but it meant much more to him than Weston supposed.

Soon, a light came on in a darkened room. Ghostly, bluish rays provided a strange light upon a polished table. Hands crept beneath that glow, long-fingered hands that moved like creatures with a will of their own. From one hand glimmered a deep-tinted gem, a rare girasol of ever-changing hue.

The Shadow was in his hidden sanctum. Above the light was the burn of keen eyes; the air was tinged with the strange whisper of an inimitable laugh. The hands spread a map upon the table.

Fingers gripped a pencil, to mark the network of New Jersey roads with barriers identical to those that Joe Cardona had indicated for Kent Allard.

The Shadow was considering the mystery of the vanished coupes. One car was easily explained. It was Clyde's car, with a New York license; the machine that thugs had stolen from in back of the service station.

When that car had fled, The Shadow had logically supposed that it belonged to Fred, the service station man; for The Shadow had not had a chance to spot the New York tags. From Cardona's report, The Shadow had later learned that Fred, living alone at the service station, was unprovided with an automobile.

The riddle involving the Turk's coupe required another answer. The news from Atlantic City gave it. The Turk was driving a car that had counterfeit license plates. That fact was most important, for it enabled The Shadow to carry his analysis further.

Any one driving a car with false license tags would be due for trouble, if he encountered police at any time. Though The Shadow had not seen the satchel on the floor of the Turk's car, he knew that the man must have been bound on some important errand; he also surmised that the trip had not been the first that the Turk had made to Fred's service station.

The risk of a meeting with the law told two things about the mystery car's journey. First, it could not have come far; second, it must have kept exclusively to side roads.

That accounted for the car's later disappearance. The Turk had been lucky enough to reach his destination before patrollers met him. That left a limited area where the fellow's hide-away could be. Chances were that the Turk had taken Clyde to the same place, within the cordon that the New Jersey police had so promptly formed.

The Shadow studied the map, looking for loopholes. There were none. With the point where he had fought the Turk as a central spot, The Shadow found that all side roads had been barricaded where they met main highways. The one difficulty was the size of the space between.

It formed an irregular area, shaped roughly like a long diamond. The nearest point, a crossing of two main arteries, was only twenty miles from New York. But the far point at the diamond, another highway junction, was more than twenty miles west of the first one. From north to south, the space measured about twelve miles at the widest, tapering sharply as it neared the east and west extremities.

Roads were numerous in that area, and the State police had confined their search to those byways. A more extensive search was necessary – one that must be undertaken by picked men, working in systematic fashion.

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It might require a week for an undercover crew to complete the scouring of that district; but there was a chance that some member of the search party would happen upon the objective soon after the hunt began.

THAT possibility decided The Shadow's next move.

Hands reached for earphones. A voice came over a wire:

"Burbank speaking."

The Shadow's hand marked sections on the map, as he spoke orders to the contact man. The Shadow was sending word to all his agents, through Burbank, assigning each man a section of territory to be covered. With those orders, The Shadow added details regarding contact between the searchers. All reports were to be relayed to a central point of the area.

The map looked like a patchwork design, when The Shadow had finished his instructions. Gaping from the exact center of the marked area was the largest block of the lot: a diamond that formed a core of the entire territory. That space was significant. It was the ground that The Shadow had chosen to search in person.

The bluish light went out. Deep stillness existed in the thick blackness of the sanctum. The room seemed empty, until a sibilant tone told that a presence remained there. That tone was a sinister laugh, mirthless in its rasp, foreboding doom to men of crime.

That laugh left shuddering echoes. When those reverberations had faded, the sanctum was actually deserted. The Shadow had departed to resume his quest, aided by a full quota of trusted agents. Efforts would be ceaseless, until Clyde Burke was found.

The law's search had ended. The Shadow's hunt had begun!

## CHAPTER V. THE HIDDEN STRONGHOLD

WHEN Clyde Burke awakened, he found himself in surroundings that seemed singularly pleasant. That was due to the dreams that he had experienced. His brain teemed with a medley of fantastic images, produced by the dope that had quieted him.

Clyde was stretched on a divan, in a room that was lavish with rare furniture and expensive Oriental rugs. Soft light glowed from an ornamental wall-bracket. Clyde saw a large door that looked formidable; he noticed suddenly that the room was windowless.

That accounted for a constant coolness that filled the place. Clyde realized that the room was air-conditioned, and in that state, it was entirely cut off from the world. He was in a veritable prison cell, despite its de luxe appearance.

A chaos of bewildering nightmares still troubled Clyde. He could picture hideous, fanciful creatures that had surrounded him. They seemed to people this very room, as if ready to spring forth and begin new torment. Clyde felt an irresistible desire to be gone from these premises.

He sprang for the door, to stumble before he reached it. Regaining his feet, Clyde rattled the doorknob. The door wouldn't open. It was locked and its bulk made it impregnable.

The spasm of horror passed; Clyde collected his scattered impressions and managed to reach a chair. He noted his attire; it was real enough. Clyde was wearing his own clothes, except for shoes, coat and vest.

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Those garments were resting tidily upon a chair.

Clyde managed to grin. At least he was real, even if the place wasn't.

Clyde's first act was to search his own pockets, to see what they contained. They proved empty; some one had rifled them of their entire contents. That didn't worry Clyde; he couldn't think of anything he carried that would connect him with The Shadow.

Tracing the past, Clyde assembled sensible thoughts from his confusion. He remembered the drizzly drive along the New Jersey roads; the stop at Fred's filling station. He recalled the trip on the back of the coupe, with the struggle at the finish.

All during those recollections, Clyde fought to discard thoughts of nightmarish faces that kept cropping up from his dreams. Sometimes, those impressions gripped him so strongly that he could scarcely resist them.

Clyde remembered the sinister mustached Turk who had battled him; he identified the fellow among the faces from the nightmare. The whole room seemed to cloud; Clyde shut his eyes as he gripped the arms of his chair.

With his eyes shut, the room seemed whirling. Faces tormented him; dancing figures gestured and pointed. Clyde could fancy the babble of jeering tongues. Tilted in his chair, he lost his balance; he felt himself falling, as he actually was. But that short drop to the floor was like a plunge into a limitless abyss.

Clyde felt his final thud. He was surprised that it was such a light one. The jolt cleared his thoughts; the vicious faces faded. Then came hands, that raised him. Strong arms, but easy in their lift. Clyde felt himself settle back into his chair. He opened his eyes.

THE stare that Clyde gave was as fixed as a hypnotic gaze. He was looking squarely at a face that he remembered from that last chaos of thoughts – the one face of the lot that actually existed. The man who had raised him from the floor was the flat-faced Turk who had conquered him in last night's battle.

Oddly, sight of the man in the flesh was something that steadied Clyde's broken nerves. If any of the other faces had proved real, Clyde would have gone berserk. But this one, actual and alive, drove away impressions of the others. It brought back Clyde's sane thoughts. His lips smiled relief as he settled back in his chair.

The Turk spoke placidly, in English, but with a slow, choppy accent. His query was a careful one, tinged with concern:

"You feel better?"

Clyde nodded. He tried to answer, but his voice was choky, inarticulate.

"I am Yakbar," spoke the Turk. "You come with me?"

The last sentence sounded like a question; but Clyde realized that it was probably an order. Finding his voice, Clyde parried:

"Where do you want to take me?"

"To see the master," returned Yakbar. "He has said that I must bring you."

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The Turk's tone was firmer. Clyde decided it best to visit the master mentioned by Yakbar. He started to get up from his chair; he would have tumbled but for Yakbar. The fellow caught Clyde and guided him to the door. This time, it stood open.

There was a trip through a short passage; a turn into another, with doors along the way. At last, they reached the end of a short corridor. There, Yakbar knocked at a final door.

A deep voice gave command to enter. Yakbar opened the door and urged Clyde through.

Clyde saw a room much larger than his own; but it, also, was windowless. It was furnished like an office; behind a big desk, Clyde saw a man of impressive appearance. He was elderly; his tight-skinned face denoted that, as did his shock of pure white hair.

But there was power in the long, scrawny hands that lay upon the desk; persuasion in the challenging, blackish eyes that glittered from the old man's countenance.

As Clyde stared, the white-haired man arose; he extended a hand for a shake across the desk. Clyde felt a powerful grip; he heard the boom of heavy-toned words, that were repressed with a peculiar effort of the old man's lips, so that they became a drilling purr:

"Good afternoon, Mr. Burke! I am Doctor Nicholas Borth. It pleases me to welcome you as my guest. Be seated, I request you."

CLYDE took a chair that Yakbar offered him. All the while, the reporter retained his stare toward Borth. Clyde had met men of many nationalities, and thought himself an expert at placing any foreigners; but Nicholas Borth baffled him. Either Borth was a man who had no country, or he was one who was at home in any land.

Doctor Borth seemed to relish Clyde's bewilderment, for his smile was an indulgent one. There was something friendly in the old man's manner – enough to make Clyde ask:

"How did you learn my name?"

"From these." Borth produced an envelope and slid Clyde's belongings to the desk. "You may reclaim them, Mr. Burke, for they are your property. But wait" – Borth raised a restraining hand – "I have not yet finished with introductions."

Borth gestured to his right. Clyde looked, to see a girl step from beside a filing cabinet. Her eyes met Clyde's; with that glance, Clyde felt a pleased impression.

The girl's face had a loveliness, along with a frank expression. Her eyes had a sympathy, that was shown also by her lips. She was a blonde, and Clyde was positive that she was either English or American.

"This is Miss Delban," introduced Borth; then, as Clyde came to his feet: "Be seated, Mr. Burke. Miss Delban is my secretary. She has much to do here. For the present, however" – Borth's smile was a dry one – "she will join us."

With that, Borth turned to the girl and indicated a chair. He added the comment:

"Have your notebook ready, Diane."

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Diane Delban. Clyde intended to remember that name, as well as the girl to whom it belonged. Diane's manner, the open look that she gave were meant to tell Clyde that he had one friend in these strange surroundings.

Clyde was prompt to catch that expression. With it, he sensed a warning that was easy to understand.

It would be best for Clyde to comply with any request that Doctor Borth might make. The piercing eyes that shone from Borth's withery face were the sort that could harden if they found occasion. Clyde felt sure that Borth was capable of dealing harshly with any person that he considered an enemy.

As for Yakbar, Clyde had already encountered the Turk's methods. The bone-crushing wrestler might prove murderous, if it came to a struggle in Borth's headquarters.

Clyde's speculations ended as Borth purred a question. The restrained rumble was a demand for information.

"You are a reporter, Mr. Burke," declared Borth. "Tell me, just how did you happen to embark on your present adventure?"

"I was lost in the back roads," replied Clyde. "I happened to stop at a filling station. I was there when Yakbar's car arrived."

"And then?"

"Yakbar waited. I wondered why. I saw his face; I wondered why a Turk was in New Jersey. Just on a crazy impulse, I climbed onto the back of his car."

Clyde's story was a partial statement of fact. He was intimating that his purpose was to obtain a newspaper story. Just how far Borth believed it, Clyde could not tell. The wise-faced doctor eyed Clyde steadily, but showed no change of expression.

"I shall give you a story, Mr. Burke," announced Borth, "and it will be a very good one. Provided that you do not make it public until a future date that I shall specify. Is that agreeable?"

Clyde decided that it was. Borth leaned across the desk; resting his chin in his hand, he spoke emphatically.

"The location of this headquarters must remain a secret!" declared Borth – "for a very simple reason. I am the representative of certain wealthy Europeans who were forced to flee from their homelands, because they were persecuted by tyrannical governments. They found refuge in England, bringing fortunes in jewels.

"Even there, they feared spies. They decided to convert their wealth into money, by sending the gems to America. They entrusted me with the task of selling the gems – for which I receive a nominal commission, which will amount, however, to more than a million dollars.

"In order to protect myself, I have operated from this hidden stronghold; and that policy has proved wise. Criminals in this country have learned of my possessions, and are seeking to acquire them."

The story sounded plausible; Borth's convincing tone gave it a true touch. There was one point, however, that didn't click with Clyde. Borth must have guessed it, for he promptly covered the detail.

"Last night," he stated, "Yakbar made a regularly scheduled trip to pick up funds that were due from the sale of jewels. While I employ many selling agents, none know the location of this headquarters. Trusted persons

## HILLS OF DEATH

bring checks and cash at stated intervals; but they always drop them at a place where Yakbar finds them."

That explained the matter of the satchel. Cannily, Doctor Borth had taken it for granted that Clyde had seen the money bag. He added a final statement:

"I have told you the whole story, Mr. Burke. If you wish, I shall have Miss Delban support my testimony." He turned to Diane. "Have I included every point, Diane?"

For a moment, Clyde saw the girl hesitate. She looked toward Clyde; then turned her eyes in Borth's direction. It was to the doctor that Diane said:

"You have given the facts, Doctor Borth."

THERE was a pause, while Borth stroked his tight-skinned chin. He was thinking about Clyde's presence here. When he spoke, his tone was smooth.

"Yakbar feared that you might be an enemy," Borth told the reporter. "That is why he brought you here. I am quite willing to release you, with the proviso that Yakbar take you, blindfolded, to a place some distance from here. Afterward, you will be free to relate your adventure here, for I shall soon leave this headquarters and return to Europe.

"Unfortunately, my plans are still uncertain. I might find it impossible to communicate with you at later date. Therefore, I suggest that you remain here for a few days. If you do" – Borth's tone was like a promise – "I might furnish you with more facts. Are you willing to remain, Mr. Burke?"

Clyde caught a nod from Diane. It indicated that there was actually but one choice: that was to accept Borth's invitation. Clyde did so, but with reservations.

"If I remain," he asked, "will I be a guest or a prisoner?"

"A guest," assured Borth. "Your room will be unlocked. I must specify, however, that if you come from your room, you must remain on this floor, exclusively!"

Clyde was about to ask what penalty would follow if he failed to abide by the terms. He decided to omit that question; but Borth again caught the thought and gave the answer.

"Should you take unfair advantage of my hospitality," the doctor added, "your status will become that of a prisoner. Those terms are fair, Mr. Burke. Do you accept?"

"I accept."

Doctor Borth bowed when he heard Clyde's reply. Rising, the doctor again indicated the objects that belonged to Clyde. While the reporter was pocketing them, Borth ended the interview with the abrupt declaration:

"Yakbar will conduct you back to your room. We shall dine in half an hour, Mr. Burke."

As Yakbar held the door open for Clyde's departure, the reporter looked back toward Doctor Borth. Past the elderly man, Clyde saw Diane. She was holding the notebook in which she had copied shorthand notes of everything that Clyde and Borth had said. For the first time, the girl was entirely clear of observation by either Borth or Yakbar.

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Diane's lips framed words that she could not utter aloud. Clyde was unable to catch their import, but Diane's expression told him much. Her face was eager; tinged with anxiety. She was beseeching Clyde to be careful; at the same time, she was making it plain that he must somehow manage to talk with her alone.

That, Clyde decided, was something that he would accomplish at the first opportunity. No matter how hazardous the quest might be, it might produce facts that Doctor Nicholas Borth had craftily refrained from mentioning to his guest.

When Clyde finally left this hidden abode, he would carry more news than Doctor Borth expected. Clyde intended to have a complete report for The Shadow.

### **CHAPTER VI. CLYDE GAINS NEWS**

ONCE back in his room, Clyde began to examine the articles that Doctor Borth had returned to him. Such an item as his New York reporter's card had served him in good stead. Whatever enemies Borth avoided, reporters certainly could not be classed among them.

After pocketing his belongings, Clyde noted his watch. It showed the time as half past six; Clyde thought the watch was stopped, until he saw the second hand moving steadily. That made him remember Borth's greeting.

The doctor had welcomed Clyde with the words "Good afternoon"; and, later, he had mentioned dinner.

This wasn't Thursday morning, as Clyde had first supposed. It was Thursday evening. Clyde had slept all through the day. No wonder he had awakened dopey! Yakbar must have given him an oversized injection.

While Clyde was thinking about Yakbar, there was a rap at the door. It was the Turk, himself, announcing that dinner was ready.

Clyde took that news eagerly, for he foresaw another meeting with Diane. He was disappointed. Yakbar led him to a dining room opposite the office, and there Clyde found Doctor Borth alone.

The dry-faced doctor gave no explanation for Diane's absence. He simply chatted with Clyde on other subjects, while Yakbar served an excellent dinner.

Borth mentioned a point that he had forgotten. He thought it best that Clyde's office have some explanation for the reporter's absence. Clyde agreed with that; when Borth supplied him with a telegraph blank, Clyde thought a while, then wrote out a message.

He didn't have a chance to code anything into the wire; he simply stated that he was seeking a special story and would return before the end of the week.

That apparently satisfied Borth. The doctor said that he would have Yakbar send the telegram from a nearby city. That left Clyde completely in the dark. Judging from the hours that he had slept, Clyde believed that he might be as far as five hundred miles from New York.

With Borth chatting about everything except the subject of his guarded gems, Clyde began to feel the after-effects of the dope. He was almost asleep, sitting up, when they had finished dinner.

Borth suggested that his guest take another rest. Clyde went back to his room, alone; once there, he stretched on the divan and went to sleep.

## HILLS OF DEATH

Whether or not Clyde had used good judgment in letting Borth send the telegram, was something that only the future could tell. As he slipped into his drowse, Clyde decided that the doctor could have sent one anyway, with Clyde's name on it; so it didn't much matter.

Somehow, this hidden lair, with its lavish furnishings, constant coolness and unchanging light, was a place where worry could not come until something happened.

IN fact, Clyde had gained the feeling that time stood still in the abode of Doctor Borth. It wasn't the dope that caused that peculiar sensation, for Clyde experienced it again when he awoke, this time without the troublesome recollection of hideous nightmares.

Fishing his watch from his vest pocket, Clyde noted the time. The timepiece said quarter of twelve.

Was it still Thursday evening; or did the watch signify the close approach of Friday noon?

Puzzling over that question, Clyde realized why he had gained the odd impressions about the passage of time. Daylight never penetrated to these windowless rooms. In such a cavernous dwelling, even a watch could not be called accurate.

There was another problem, Clyde had a distinct idea that something had awakened him. He groped for a recollection of a noise that he must have heard. While he was trying to place it, the sound came again – a soft, hasty rap–tap at his door.

The knocks ended, as though frightened away. When they did not recur, Clyde decided to investigate.

He found the door unlocked as Doctor Borth had promised. The corridor was lighted, but empty and profoundly silent. Clyde closed his door behind him; he stole along the corridors, the tufted carpeting stilling his footsteps.

He was puzzled about the doors, until he reached the one that opened into Borth's office. Clyde tried that door; it opened almost at his touch.

The office was empty. Once inside, Clyde decided that he had not violated Borth's terms. The white-haired doctor had simply specified that Clyde remain on this particular floor. That proviso itself was a puzzler. Picturing this as an underground abode, Clyde wondered how other floors came into it.

Looking around the office, Clyde gingerly tried the drawers of filing cabinets; he found them locked. The same was true of the desk drawers. Clyde's only discovery of any interest was a clock on the desk, its dial marked with twenty–four hours instead of only twelve.

Clyde knew that such clocks were sometimes used in Europe; and evidently Borth had brought this one with him. It was most useful in a place like this; and it had a space below the dial that showed the date.

From it, Clyde learned that his recent sleep had been a short one. It was still Thursday evening, although midnight was very close.

There was a door in a corner alcove. Clyde tried it, found it unlocked. He saw a circular stairway, leading farther underground. That explained Borth's warning regarding the limits to which Clyde could go. The opportunity, however, was one that Clyde could not let pass.

## HILLS OF DEATH

Dim light glowed from the bottom of the staircase; those metal steps invited Clyde's descent. With no one about, a trip below seemed worth the risk.

CAREFULLY, Clyde went to the bottom of the steps; built solidly, the staircase gave no clangs. Below were short passages – a maze resembling the one above, but without doors at the sides.

Stealing along stone floors, between close-hemmed walls, Clyde at last saw a door ahead. Sight of it brought a quick intake of his breath.

The door was a bulky barrier of steel, with a combination like that of a vault. Beyond it could lie the treasure store that Doctor Borth claimed was in his keeping!

Clyde hadn't estimated how much that wealth might be; but from Doctor Borth's mention of commissions, Clyde figured that the total value ran into millions. It didn't seem likely that the vault door would be unlocked, but it was worth a chance to try it. First, though, Clyde stole back to a passage and listened to make sure no one was on his trail.

He fancied that he heard a stir from a side passage, where some one might have stepped at sound of his return. Complete quiet followed, and Clyde was reassured. He decided to have a quick look at the vault; then return upstairs. He started boldly on his mission.

A dozen feet short of his objective, Clyde heard an excited whisper that struck a warning to his brain. He turned half about; before he could take another forward step, hands seized him. Clyde looked into the anxious face of Diane Delban.

"No farther!" exclaimed the girl. "I feared that you had come down here. You must go upstairs again, at once!"

Diane's tone told of real danger if Clyde advanced toward the vault door. But her anxiety for him to return upstairs was less important. Clyde leaned against the wall; he smiled slightly as he studied the girl's face. He saw a chance to learn new facts by continuing the girl's alarm.

"Tell me," questioned Clyde, "was it you who tapped at my door?"

"Yes," replied Diane. "I wanted to talk to you. I couldn't stay long at your door. I might have been observed there."

"By Yakbar?"

"Yes. Or by the others."

"The others? I thought that Yakbar was the doctor's only servant."

"There are others," declared Diane. "Many others! Like you, Mr. Burke, I once believed that Yakbar was Doctor Borth's only servant. That was when I met Doctor Borth, in London, where he told me the same story that you heard this evening.

"I came to America with Doctor Borth. For a while, we stayed at a hotel in New York. Then he spoke of enemies; we moved here" – Diane paused – "wherever this place may be. But it was just before we came here that I learned what his real business was; and who the enemies were that he feared."

## HILLS OF DEATH

Diane's eyes met Clyde's. Her hands pressed the reporter's arm. Steadily, the girl stated:

"Doctor Borth is a counterfeiter! He finishes work in one country, then goes to another. He floods every land with false currency, and departs before the law can apprehend him!"

CLYDE recalled recent reports of bad money in New York. He hadn't thought it a serious wave, because "queer" money peddlers were always starting anew, after one batch had been suppressed. But in this case, Diane's revelation pointed to a gigantic swindle. Managed by Doctor Borth, from a stronghold such as this, a counterfeiting enterprise could give the law a long run.

"Doctor Borth tested some of the false money in New York," explained Diane. "I had some with me; I was questioned by government men. I promised them I would learn where it was manufactured. At last I know" – Diane pointed – "for I have seen beyond that door! But there is no longer a way for me to communicate with the authorities."

Clyde considered all that Diane had said. The ring of truth in her story was definite; but Clyde decided that he could prompt new recollections if he seemed unimpressed by the girl's story. With a shrug, he remarked:

"Perhaps you have misunderstood Doctor Borth. You may have mistaken certain facts – "

Diane's eyes interrupted with an outraged gaze. She lost none of her loveliness when she gave that silent challenge. On the contrary, the look gained Clyde's admiration. He recognized the girl's bravery, although he tried not to show it.

Diane was wearing a dressing gown of navy blue. From a pocket of it, she produced a slip of paper that looked like a newspaper clipping. She gave it to Clyde.

"Read this," urged Diane. "Then tell me if you can trust Doctor Borth!"

The clipping was from a morning newspaper, that had evidently been delivered some time late in the day but prior to Clyde's interview with Borth. Clyde read startling news: a complete account of the murder at the filling station.

The exact time was mentioned. Clyde recognized that Fred's death had taken place soon after his own departure. Mention of a telephone call to New York police headquarters told Clyde that Fred must have called Cardona instead of Burbank.

The kill was attributed to New York mobsters, who had fled in two cars. One was obviously Clyde's; but there was no mention of The Shadow. Clyde did not guess that his chief had arrived to wage battle. To Clyde, there was one pressing problem that concerned the present.

That was to escape the toils of Doctor Borth; to contact The Shadow and bring his vengeance upon the conniving fiend who had come from overseas. With that escape, there would be rescue also. Diane must be brought in safety from this abode where she was as much a prisoner as Clyde.

From that moment, Clyde resolved, no time could be wasted. Every thought must concern the vital issue. Clyde and Diane would be fighting for a common cause: the ultimate overthrow of the nefarious Doctor Borth.

## CHAPTER VII. THE LOWER DUNGEON

THE clipping clenched in one fist, Clyde held up his other hand in warning. He and Diane listened, to make sure that they were not overheard.

Satisfied that they still had time together, Clyde gave the clipping back to Diane. As he did, he gritted the question:

"Did Doctor Borth try to explain this to you?"

"He did," returned Diane. "He said that it was proof that he had enemies."

"Proof for you – but not for me!"

"That is exactly what Doctor Borth said. He told me that it would not be good policy to show you the clipping. You might – as he put it – misunderstand the facts. He reminded me that you were a newspaper reporter; that you would twist the facts if you knew them."

Clyde's look was quizzical, as if he wondered whether Diane had felt the same. The girl's smile proved otherwise.

"I saw through the sham, Mr. Burke," declared Diane. "When I agreed with what Doctor Borth said, it was purely to keep him unaware of what I knew. Those enemies, as he calls them, were killers in his own employ. They weren't seeking a trail to this place, and, therefore, anxious to murder a man who might have spoken and spoiled their game. They killed to keep the law from learning anything regarding Doctor Borth himself!"

Diane's hands became limp. There was a choke to the girl's grieved tone, as she added:

"If I could only have sent word! The government men are waiting to hear from me. But it is impossible for me to leave here. I would be missed immediately."

"How about the servants?" undertoned Clyde. "Are there any who can be trusted?"

"Two, perhaps. But I have not sounded them. It would be useless, since their position is the same as mine."

There was no use in debating the Borth question any longer. Clyde knew that he had heard Diane's full story. The proposition was to find a way whereby this place could be revealed. Clyde started a suggestion.

"If I could leave here," he began, "without Borth knowing all that I have learned –"

Diane interrupted with a headshake.

"Doctor Borth does not intend to release you, Mr. Burke. He said as much to–night. Still, there might be a way –"

The girl paused, her forehead furrowed. Again, her hand pressed Clyde's arm. Her tone was an earnest one.

"If you were imprisoned," she told Clyde, "as Doctor Borth threatened, I could release you. I know a route by which you could leave!"

"But if Borth knew that I had gone from –"

## HILLS OF DEATH

"He wouldn't know. He would appoint a guard to watch your cell. I am sure that there is one, at least, who would report that you were still confined."

The idea sounded good. Clyde's nod told that he was game. Diane insisted, however, upon one provision.

"You must carry my message directly to the government men," said the girl. "I promised them a confidential report; I even memorized a code that I am to use. They are the only ones who could surely trap Doctor Borth. Any false step could mean escape for Doctor Borth; and if he should learn –"

"Your life would be at stake," finished Clyde, solemnly. "I understand" – he paused; then added the name – "Diane. I promise that I will carry your message, without visiting either the police or the newspaper once."

DIANE rewarded Clyde with a trusting smile. She did not know that Clyde's promise excluded the matter of contact with The Shadow. If Diane had heard of that mysterious being, she had not connected Clyde with him.

There was no time for Clyde to mention The Shadow to Diane. A plan had been arranged; the one course was to put it in operation.

"I've got to cross the old doctor," declared Clyde, grimly. "Suppose I let him find me down here, Diane. That would get him sore, wouldn't it?"

Diane nodded. Before she could speak, her ears caught a sound. It came from a distant passage, somewhere near the stairs. Diane's ears were keener than Clyde's, for she whispered a prompt warning before he heard the muffled approach.

"It may be Yakbar!" exclaimed Diane. "We must make him think that I have trapped you! He is one rogue who would never desert Doctor Borth!"

Hurriedly, the girl moved to the outer end of the passage. Clyde saw her draw a small revolver. She was watching for Yakbar, intending to cover Clyde the moment that the Turk arrived close enough to see her stage the act.

Clyde forgot a detail of the past. To help the cause along, he again started to approach the vault door.

"Stop where you are!" Diane shrilled the order in a tone that carried anguish. "Instantly or I fire!"

She shrieked the words at Clyde; he didn't realize that it was thought of his safety that impelled the sudden cry.

Blundering, Clyde would have gone still farther toward the vault door, if Diane had let him.

Quick-witted in emergency, Diane added sting to the needed threat. She tugged the revolver trigger; a bullet ricocheted from the wall beside Clyde's ear.

Astonishment brought Clyde to a standstill; he took a back step as he turned about to face Diane. For a moment, he thought that the girl had turned against him, an instant later, he saw that Diane had saved him.

The floor was sliding open between Clyde and the vault. Split halves were slithering beneath the wall, leaving a gaping pit below. That last step had put Clyde upon a trap; his withdrawal, thanks to Diane's shot, was all that rescued him.

## HILLS OF DEATH

Yakbar arrived to find Clyde faced about, his back to the blackened hole. Clyde's arms were raised; he was pale as he looked into the muzzle of Diane's gun.

The girl's features were also pallid; her hand was trembling. Yakbar took it for excitement at bagging a prisoner; he did not guess that the girl was actually concerned for Clyde.

Nor did Doctor Nicholas Borth guess the truth.

The eagle-eyed old man appeared less than a minute later; he came from within the vault itself.

At sound of Borth's booming voice, Clyde looked around, avoiding the pit as he did so. Lights were out within the vault; but it looked deep, fitting Diane's description of a counterfeiting den. Clyde realized that the place must be air-conditioned, like the rest of this underground lair. Borth must have caught an automatic signal from the moving floor.

"So, Mr. Burke" – Borth's tone was cold, showing a harsh irony – "you have violated the hospitality that I provided! Perhaps you have forgotten our terms?"

Clyde did not reply.

"We have not forgotten them," resumed Borth. "I call upon Yakbar and Miss Delban to bear witness. You were to remain upon the upper floor. You failed to do so; therefore, you become a prisoner instead of a guest!"

"You came to see what lay below" – Borth supplied a deep chuckle – "and you have seen. Not only this floor, but one that lies still lower down." Borth pointed to the pit, as he added: "Very well, you shall learn more of that lowermost floor!"

WITH a nod of approval, Borth motioned for Diane to put away the revolver. He beckoned to Yakbar; the Turk came toward Clyde, with big hands extended. Diane tried to flash the signal that all would be well; but she was handicapped because Borth was watching her.

From the girl's grim look, Clyde misunderstood. He thought that matters had taken a bad turn that Diane didn't expect. Clyde thought that Yakbar was going to hurl him into the pit.

With a sudden drive, Clyde flung himself upon the Turk. They began a battle like the one of the night before; but, this time, Clyde knew something of Yakbar's methods. Driven to sheer desperation, Clyde fought Yakbar to the wall, gained a neck-hold that the husky could not shake.

Doctor Borth boomed a loud command as he witnessed Yakbar's failure. Proof of Diane's statement regarding many servants, was the event that followed. Footsteps clattered from remote passages. Arriving henchmen threw themselves into the fray. Clyde was lost amid the tangle of glaring faces that looked like demon countenances.

They were nondescript butlers of many nationalities, nearly a dozen of them, all anxious to put across the stroke that would quiet Clyde.

As they hurled him toward the pit, Clyde wrenched away. A diving opponent tripped him; Clyde took a backward spill for the trap. As he fell, he expected to plunge down into darkness. Instead, he flattened with a terrific jolt open the solid floor.

## HILLS OF DEATH

Looking up, Clyde saw the sardonic face of Doctor Borth. The old man had pressed a switch just inside the vault door. During the fray, the floor had closed to make a solid landing place.

As powerful arms plucked him, Clyde saw beyond hostile faces. He glimpsed Diane and saw the relief that the girl registered.

This was the finish that Diane had expected from the start: Clyde a prisoner in the hands of Borth's henchmen, but unhurt.

THOUGH Borth had closed the deadly pit, his threat of a lower prison cell was fulfilled. Jarred by his fall to the floor, Clyde could offer no more fight as Yakbar and four others carried him bodily toward an outer passage. They reached a corridor that ended in a wall; Yakbar pressed a switch that opened the barrier.

The captors descended a long steep stairway, to another floor of passages where they used flashlights to find their way. The length of the descent made Clyde glad that he had not fallen through the opened floor.

They reached a door that suited Yakbar. The Turk opened it; flickered a flashlight into a cell that was furnished with a battered cot, a chair and a table. Yakbar grunted words in a foreign tongue. Clyde's bearers shoved him through the doorway; laughed raucously as their prisoner went floundering to the stone floor.

Before Clyde could gain his feet, the door slammed shut. A huge key grated in a rusty lock. In pitch-darkness, Clyde could only grope to find the cot.

As he sat down, his head was in a whirl; but, gradually, his thoughts cleared. This lower dungeon wasn't to be the end of his journey.

Imprisonment was the route to freedom. In that blackness, Clyde could fancy he heard the earnest tones of Diane Delban. He knew that the girl would find an opportunity to release him, and send him on the way for aid. It would then be Clyde's turn to bring rescue to Diane.

Looking into the future, Clyde could almost hear the whisper of strange, sinister mirth, that would eventually ring its mocking challenge through passages that lay above.

Clyde hoped that he would be present when The Shadow finally confronted Doctor Nicholas Borth.

## CHAPTER VIII. THREADS FROM THE PAST

ANOTHER day had passed; with it, public interest in the New Jersey murder had faded. With three crooks dead, it seemed that the law had dealt stern justice to the murderers.

There was one man, however, who had taken the whole case very grimly. That man was Joe Cardona, the New York police inspector.

Cardona felt that he was to blame because Manhattan hoodlums had invaded New Jersey without his knowledge. He didn't tell that to the reporters who thronged his office; instead, Joe kept a bluff expression on his swarthy, poker-faced countenance. But all the while, the ace inspector was counting on some break that would reveal the New York angle behind the New Jersey crime.

There was one reporter who didn't show up in Joe's office. That was Clyde Burke, the one news hawk who was smart enough to ask bothersome questions. For a whole day, Cardona had been expecting Clyde to breeze in with the gang. At last, Cardona inquired where Clyde was.

## HILLS OF DEATH

One of the reporters said that Burke had wired from Trenton, saying that he had taken on a free-lance assignment, which was Clyde's privilege with the Classic.

That news troubled Cardona. It gave him a hunch that Clyde might have traced the two hoodlums that escaped after the filling station murder. It would be swell, thought Cardona, if Burke suddenly showed up with facts that the police hadn't been able to get. Swell, nix! That idea simply spurred Cardona to seeking facts in New York before Clyde could bring in hot news from New Jersey.

It never occurred to Cardona that Clyde might be in a plight of his own. That was something that only The Shadow knew.

The situation, however, was due to produce results, because of the way Cardona had taken it. All this day, Cardona was tapping the "grapevine," through the aid of stool pigeons. Every now and then, underworld rumors reached him from squeamish crooks who served as the law's spies in the bad lands. It was almost dusk when a ripe one arrived.

A rat-faced stoolie was introduced to Cardona's office. He had a story that clicked.

"I knowed th' mugs that croaked th' fillin' station guy," informed the stoolie, "but I ain't got no idea why they pulled th' rub-out. Only, they wasn't th' only boids that was out in Joisey."

"Who else was out there?" demanded Cardona.

"Some guy that had a slick sedan," explained the stoolie. "He went out and they tailed along."

"To cover up," muttered Cardona, on a sudden hunch. "Say, why didn't you spill this sooner, so I could find out who the guy was?"

"That's what I was tryin' to find out," whined the stoolie. "I knowed what kind of buggy th' sedan was, an' th' garage where it started from. Only, th' bus didn't come back there until to-day. So I just got my chanct to find out th' moniker of th' guy it belonged to."

The stoolie produced a crumpled piece of paper on which he had scrawled the facts. He gave it to Cardona, who read the name of Kirk Barsley, with the address of a public garage.

Joe dismissed the stoolie and immediately set to work. It didn't take him long to find out who Kirk Barsley was. A phone call to the garage was the first lead; and others followed.

Cardona summed his findings to a listening detective-sergeant.

"Kirk Barsley," declared Joe. "For ten years a traveling representative for wholesale jewelry firms. Chucked up a good job, a few months ago, saying he was going into business on his own, but he hasn't been calling on his regular trade.

"Sounds like a front for some racket, if you ask me! A guy can't manage a business in New York and be on the road, too. Barsley can't have much capital; and he hasn't been buying jewelry to sell out of town. I'm going around and take a look at the guy!"

Often, when Joe Cardona set forth on odd expeditions, his moves were promptly known to The Shadow. Sometimes, a janitor named Fritz was on the job at police headquarters; and Fritz – unknown to Cardona – was frequently impersonated by The Shadow. On other occasions, Clyde Burke spotted Cardona's moves.

## HILLS OF DEATH

To-day, The Shadow was searching for Clyde, who, in turn, was a prisoner at Doctor Borth's underground castle. Nevertheless, Joe Cardona was spotted outside of headquarters.

The man who noted him was a hunchy, wise-faced fellow who had a way of dodging out of sight. His name was "Hawkeye"; he prowled the underworld, seeking news for The Shadow.

Hawkeye had not been delegated to the search in New Jersey. He wasn't suited to such territory. Instead, he had remained in New York; and there, Hawkeye had spotted the visiting stoolie who went to Cardona's office.

Wisely, Hawkeye had remained outside, to be rewarded with Cardona's own trail.

It was nearly dark when Cardona reached an obscure office building in a dingy district. There was no elevator; Joe walked up rickety stairs to the third floor. There, he found a darkened office that bore the name of Kirk Barsley.

While Cardona was rattling the knob, a tired-looking man came from another office. Joe inquired about Barsley.

"Hardly ever see him," informed the tired man. "He's never around in the daytime. Once or twice, when I've been working late, he's come in around nine o'clock. Maybe he'll be in this evening."

Cardona decided that he would come back later. He followed the tired-faced man down the stairs. From a stairway to the fourth floor, Hawkeye listened until their footsteps had faded; then started to emerge from his hiding place.

Hawkeye had just time to duck from sight when he heard a door open. A squatty man, as stocky as Cardona, came from a darkened office and cautiously went downstairs. Hawkeye promptly took up the new trail. It led to a small but well-kept apartment hotel, west of Times Square.

There, the squatty man stopped at the desk and said that he wanted to talk to James Cleeve. From the darkened outer doorway, Hawkeye couldn't hear what the man said over the telephone; but he went upstairs afterward. Hawkeye was able to watch the elevator dial. The car stopped at the fifth floor.

It wasn't long before Hawkeye was on that floor himself. He found an apartment door, where he could hear the mumble of voices. It was the one he wanted; but there was no chance to listen in from the hall.

The turn of the corridor indicated that Cleeve's apartment opened into a courtyard. On that chance, Hawkeye decided to invade an apartment that looked empty.

The door of the vacant apartment was locked; and Hawkeye was no locksmith. He chose another mode of entry: through the transom. Inside, he sneaked to a window and opened it quietly. Thanks to the warm weather, Cleeve's window was open, catercornered across the courtyard.

Hawkeye saw a group of men; four of them. He could hear their conversation. Moreover, he identified the man who must be Cleeve. He was tall, straight-shouldered, with a blocky face that bespoke action. Above Cleeve's square chin were tight lips, a keenly pointed nose and heavy eyebrows that matched his blackish hair.

Cleeve was a leader; that was instantly evident. The others listened respectfully to all he said; gave nods when his sharp eyes stabbed in their direction.

## HILLS OF DEATH

"So you're sure that it was Cardona." Cleeve was talking to the squatty man. "That means he'll be back! Somehow, he's figured that Barsley went over to Jersey, two nights ago. I'm wondering" – Cleeve paused, to chew at the end of a cigar – "if it matters whether Cardona pinches Barsley."

Some of the listeners started a protest. Cleeve silenced them with an impatient gesture.

"We know that Barsley ships the cash to Doc Borth," he affirmed, "but we've learned, too, that Barsley never sees the old doc. The girl told us that much. The best thing we can do is let Barsley go his own way. If that means he runs into Cardona – all right. He won't talk about Doc Borth."

That satisfied the hearers; perhaps that was why Cleeve began to change his own opinion.

"I wish it could wait, though," he snapped, "until we've heard from the girl. She ought to be getting word through any time. Maybe it would be better if we dropped in on Barsley first, if he sees this" – Cleeve pulled back his coat – "he won't stick around after we've gone!"

Cleeve turned toward the window to flick cigar ashes over the sill. His coat was still drawn back; Hawkeye saw a badge beneath the knuckles that held the lapel. The little spotter recognized the emblem. It was the badge of a government agent.

A light dawned on Hawkeye. He began to piece a story; his conclusions were very close to the statements that Diane Delban had made to Clyde Burke. Somewhere in New Jersey was a man named Doctor Borth; he had received funds that Kirk Barsley had shoved through. The trouble was that Cleeve and these other Feds were after Borth, not Barsley.

Hawkeye saw the complications that Cardona's entry might produce, with Cleeve waiting to crack down on Borth. Hawkeye's own idea was that Cleeve's second opinion was the better one – to scare Barsley out of town before Cardona got hold of the fellow.

There were snatches of conversation that Hawkeye could still hear. Cleeve had walked away from the window and was out of sight; other voices weren't as plain as his. From the rest that he heard, Hawkeye added a few more impressions.

There was mention of a mob being around when Barsley showed up at his office. Cleeve came through with the remark that Cardona might expect a crew on hand, since there had been hoodlums over in New Jersey, after Barsley had gone there. There was talk about the possibility of Cardona finding counterfeit money in Barsley's office, and what Joe's reaction would be.

Cleeve summed up some of that discussion when he happened to come back toward the window.

"We don't care how much Cardona gets on Barsley," declared the tall man. "The more it fits, the better! It sizes this way: There was a murder over in New Jersey and Cardona knows Barsley was over there, besides the killers.

"If he finds Barsley trying to lam, with a mob on hand to cover him, that starts the police after Barsley. If Cardona uncovers queer money, he'll have that count on Barsley. When they catch up with Barsley, any talk he gives about selling jewels won't go over.

"Barsley can't lead the police to Borth, so that leaves us clear to handle the proposition our own way. I'm still betting that the Delban girl will get word to us –"

## HILLS OF DEATH

THAT was all Hawkeye heard. Cleeve had gone deeper into the room, with the others following. There were mumbles; finally, the lights went out. Cleeve and his squad were on their way.

It didn't take Hawkeye long to follow. Once out of the apartment hotel, he hurried to a telephone. He put a call through to Burbank; but it wasn't to a New York number. Burbank was over in New Jersey, along with the rest of The Shadow's agents and The Shadow himself.

Hawkeye gave his story. Methodically, Burbank told him to stand by. In less than ten minutes, Hawkeye received a return call, giving instructions. In accordance with those orders, Hawkeye headed for the neighborhood of Barsley's office.

He made a discovery as soon as he arrived. The squatty man was back at his post; others of Cleeve's squad were also on the lookout.

There were times, Hawkeye knew, when Feds had one job to do; the police another. This fitted with such circumstances. James Cleeve had good reason to move in ahead of Joe Cardona, for Cleeve was after bigger game than Kirk Barsley. Cleeve was after the man most prominent in all this chain of circumstance – a mysterious individual known as Doctor Borth.

Whatever the immediate future might produce, Hawkeye was confident that another being of mystery would enter into these affairs where Borth was absent.

Hawkeye was counting on The Shadow.

## CHAPTER IX. FORCED FLIGHT

THERE was a singular lull along the street outside the old office building; it persisted for the better part of an hour. Watchers had stepped from sight, and were remaining under cover. Hawkeye saw no more of Cleeve's men, although he could guess their positions. They, however, had not glimpsed the little spotter at all.

Hawkeye was wise enough not to venture too close to the building. A convenient alleyway, half a block distant, was just the hiding place that suited him.

The break came when a taxi rolled along the stilled street. A passenger poked his head from the window, took a cautious look and said something to the driver. Alighting, the man paid his fare and the cab pulled away.

The arrival took quick strides into the office building, carrying a small satchel with him. Hawkeye knew that the man must be Kirk Barsley. As Cleeve had anticipated, Barsley had returned before nine o'clock, the hour when Cardona was due. It wouldn't be much longer, though, before Joe arrived.

Sight of Barsley had attracted the attention of all watchers. That was why no one, not even Hawkeye, observed another approach that came when the cab halted. In from the corner moved a shape of blackness, that became definitely visible when it passed a lighted stretch of pavement halfway to the old office building.

There, gliding silently, was a cloaked figure, outlined against a whitish wall. The Shadow had arrived from New Jersey; he had lurked out of view until the right moment for his advance. He had timed the move to perfection, for he was past the lighted stretch at the moment when Barsley walked into the office building.

There was no more signs of The Shadow when Hawkeye and the other watchers gazed along the street.

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The ground floor of the building was lighted; but the glow came from the depths of the hallway. Moreover, there were steps leading up inside the door.

Barsley had stepped from sight when he went up that short flight. So did The Shadow. His entry, though, was somewhat slower, for he eased the door by degrees, so that its opening and closing were unnoticeable.

THOUGH The Shadow had lost ground on Barsley, he regained it on the way up to the third floor. The stairs were badly lighted; the sound of the man's footsteps were The Shadow's guide.

He heard Barsley stop at intervals, to listen for sounds from below. On such occasions, The Shadow cut down the intervening space, thanks to his soundless tread.

When Barsley reached his own office, The Shadow was at the top of the stairs. Peering from semidarkness beyond a corner of the hall, he saw Barsley unlocking the office door. The man entered, carrying his satchel. He closed the door carefully behind him.

That was when The Shadow performed a move that was as swift as it was silent. Quick, sweeping strides brought him to the door before it had fully closed. His left hand had peeled the thin black glove from his right. Deftly, he poked the crumpled glove against the closing door.

The glove served as a timely buffer. The door did not latch.

The Shadow eased the door slightly inward, gathering his glove with his right hand as he controlled the knob with his left. He was peering through a tiny crack when he heard Barsley stumble against a desk. There, the man found the lamp he wanted and pulled its cord.

As the light came on, Barsley emitted a startled hiss; with good reason. He wasn't alone in his own office. Seated at the desk was a blocky-faced man whose eyes were cold beneath their heavy brows.

The Shadow recognized that visitor from Hawkeye's description. The man at the desk was James Cleeve.

The glow that showed Cleeve's face revealed Barsley's, also. Kirk Barsley was tall, stoop-shouldered, somewhat crablike in his crouch. His face was long, its cheeks hollow. The man had a sickly whiteness; but his restless eyes were shrewd. His lips, too, declared that Barsley could be crafty. They pursed into an odd smile.

"Rather curious," spoke Barsley, in a croakish tone, "finding a stranger in this office. I didn't know that I had left the door unlocked."

"You didn't," returned Cleeve, bluntly. "The janitor unlocked the door for me, when I showed him this."

Cleeve pulled back his coat lapel. Barsley saw the visitor's government badge. For a moment, Barsley fidgeted; then looked relieved. He planked the satchel on the desk; poked his hands into his trousers pockets and waited to hear what Cleeve had to say.

"MY name is Cleeve," informed the visitor. He produced a wallet and pointed to an identification card that bore his photograph. "I just dropped in to ask you a few questions, Mr. Barsley. They pertain to the jewelry business."

Barsley thrust out his lower lip, as if to stifle a smile. He spoke dryly when he replied:

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"Let's have the questions, Mr. Cleeve."

"Just where do you buy goods wholesale?" queried Cleeve. "We haven't been able to learn that, Barsley. You're something of a mystery along Maiden Lane. Some of the wholesalers down there seem to doubt that you are in the jewelry business at all."

Barsley smilingly produced a black book from his pocket. He spread the pages in front of Cleeve's eyes.

"All out-of-town purchases," he explained. "I do all my business in the midwest. Suppose you check with some of these concerns, Mr. Cleeve."

Barsley gave a sly look when he spoke. The Shadow noted it, although Cleeve did not. It was obvious to The Shadow that the black book was faked. Barsley was using it to stall Cleeve.

"I shall be in town a few days," added Barsley. "I always use this office when I am in from the road. After you have communicated with these concerns" – he pointed to the book – "drop back and see me again, Mr. Cleeve."

Cleeve nodded, as he copied some of the data on a sheet of paper. He arose and put the paper in his pocket. Barsley saw Cleeve glance at the satchel. Obliging, Barsley opened it.

The satchel contained some blank check books; a few bundles of receipts, with a small number of similar items. There was a bank deposit book that had some checks and currency tucked between its pages; but the amount was not large. Barsley demonstrated that, when he fingered the money under Cleeve's eyes. All the while, Barsley's spreading grin was a pleased one.

He didn't have enough cash with him to make his enterprise seem large. His limited funds fitted with the fake list of jewelry sales that he had entered in his little black book. Barsley was posing as a very small dealer, eking out a living through much travel and effort.

Cleeve seemed satisfied with Barsley's story. He reached for the bills that the stoopish man had counted, gave them an examination in the light. Returning them, Cleeve spoke both frankly and apologetically.

"We're looking for 'queer' money," said Cleeve, thumbing his badge. "Counterfeit stuff has been showing up a lot of places. That's why we've had to check on a lot of chaps in different lines of business. We picked you, Mr. Barsley; but you've turned out O.K.!"

THE SHADOW could see Cleeve's eyes while Barsley was putting back the contents of the satchel. It was plain that Cleeve knew exactly what the situation was, although he had hidden his thoughts from Barsley. The Shadow, too, had come to a definite conclusion regarding Barsley.

Whatever his game, whether legitimate or crooked, Barsley handled the collection end. Sooner or later, that satchel would be stuffed with funds that came from many sources. The Shadow was confident that Barsley had delivered one bagload of checks and currency somewhere in New Jersey, on Wednesday night.

Since then, the fellow had begun a new series of collections, but had only made small ones to date. That was why Barsley was pleased because Cleeve had chosen this particular evening to visit him. Barsley didn't care how many Feds looked into his satchel, while its contents were as slim as they were tonight.

One thing was evident, however, from Barsley's manner. The fellow tried to hide it, but didn't succeed. That was the fact that Barsley did not intend to return to this office again. He was very anxious to leave, and his

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curbed impatience betrayed it.

Cleeve stalked about the office a few minutes, remarking that he would like to look around a bit, just as a matter of routine. He opened a door, stared into an empty closet. There was a shelf above the level of Cleeve's eyes.

Rising on his toes, Cleeve took enough of a look to satisfy himself. He turned about; gestured a good-by to Barsley. Cleeve came toward the hall door.

That was The Shadow's cue to ease away. His hand let the latch catch silently. The Shadow was merged with the gloom of a doorway farther along the hall when Cleeve came out. Watching Cleeve head toward the stairs, The Shadow saw him turn about for a last look toward Barsley's door.

It was good strategy on Cleeve's part – starting Barsley off for parts unknown, keeping things so that Borth would think himself secure. But there was just one hitch to the proceeding; it became apparent after Cleeve had gone.

Barsley didn't come out of the office; instead, he remained behind the closed door.

After a few minutes, The Shadow approached to listen. This time, the door was latched; but with his ear close to the woodwork, The Shadow could catch the tones of Barsley's voice.

The fellow was making a telephone call. All that The Shadow heard was his final statement:

"All right... Yes, fifteen minutes, since you can't get here sooner. Wait for me out front.

The receiver clicked on its hook. The Shadow heard Barsley sneaking toward the door. The cloaked listener was out of sight again when Barsley peered toward the stairs, to make sure Cleeve wasn't around. Ducking back into his office, Barsley waited there.

MINUTE by minute, the time ticked off; closer and closer came the scheduled moment when Cardona would appear. The approach of nine o'clock was injuring the calculations of both Cleeve and Barsley.

Cleeve hadn't figured that Barsley would linger; Barsley, in his turn, didn't suspect that Cardona was due. It was a slow-motion race against time, with a chance that Barsley might beat the dead line; for his quarter hour of delay would end a few minutes before nine.

The Shadow timed Barsley's actions almost to the dot. It was just four minutes of nine when the door of the office opened and Barsley stepped out into the hall. He was carrying the satchel; he tried to appear unconcerned as he walked toward the stairs.

That was proof that Barsley thought he was being covered by Cleeve alone. He was putting on an indifferent pose that he thought would satisfy any watchful Feds that Cleeve might have stationed downstairs.

Again, The Shadow followed Barsley. This time, the man showed none of his hesitating tactics on the stairs. His confidence seemed to increase, judging by his footsteps. The Shadow closed the gap; he was almost on Barsley's heels when they reached the final flight.

Because of the light in the lower hall, The Shadow waited on the last steps, watching from gloom until Barsley reached the outer door.

It was then that the climax struck.

Just as Barsley pulled the door inward, a man stepped through to block him. Barsley went back against the wall, the satchel dangling from his fist as he faced a stocky challenger. Again, Barsley was treated to the sight of an official badge; this one was the emblem of a New York police inspector.

Joe Cardona had arrived in time to halt Barsley's flight. New questions were due for Kirk Barsley – ones that he couldn't answer as easily as Cleeve's. Cardona was here to get present results, not future ones.

The showdown between Joe Cardona and Kirk Barsley was to have a silent witness in the person of The Shadow.

### **CHAPTER X. DOUBLED PURSUIT**

"YOU'RE Kirk Barsley?"

Cardona gruffed the sharp question promptly enough to hold Barsley speechless. The stoopish man finally nodded, twitching his lips as he compressed them.

"I've got a few questions to ask you," Cardona growled. "I'm taking you down to headquarters."

Barsley started a feeble protest. He muttered something about false arrest; the indignity of a ride in a patrol wagon. The final mention brought a sarcastic comment from Cardona.

"We'll ride in your own car, Barsley," said the inspector. "It's on the way over from the garage. With a detective in the front seat with the driver."

"You were there at the garage?" gulped Barsley. "Waiting until I showed up?"

"Not exactly," returned Cardona. "We stopped there on the way over. Just when you happened to call up and ask for the car to be sent here. I came ahead, while the boys stayed to look through the car."

"To look for what?"

"Any evidence they might find, to prove that you drove over to New Jersey on Wednesday night!"

That worded jab hit Barsley hard. The fellow actually wilted. Cardona clamped a fist on Barsley's right arm; took a look through the front door.

As if timed to Cardona's gaze, a car pulled up at the curb. Cardona recognized Barsley's sedan; he saw the detective alight and walk toward the building.

"Come along, Barsley!"

With that growl, Cardona twisted Barsley toward the door. It was a bad move, for it placed Joe between Barsley and the watchful figure of The Shadow. Moreover, The Shadow had no time to shift his own position; for the move that Barsley made was a sudden one that didn't start until he was beyond Cardona.

As Cardona's free hand yanked the door inward, Barsley tugged away, took a long swing with his left arm. In his fist he held an improvised weapon: the small satchel.

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Cardona made a quick parry. The satchel had a momentum, however, that Cardona didn't calculate. The bag thudded the whole side of Cardona's face with a terrific smack.

Cardona staggered, losing his grip on Barsley. The prisoner did an immediate dive down the short steps to the street.

There was a scuffle when Barsley met the incoming detective; but it didn't last long. Barsley's sudden bolt caught the dick off guard, for he thought that Cardona had Barsley in hand.

Barsley made another swing with the satchel; when the dick ducked to draw a revolver, Barsley beat him to that move. Cardona from the doorway, the dick in the entry were both menaced by the brandish of Barsley's quick-pulled gun.

It was lucky for Barsley that he didn't stop to fire. He never could have dropped either of his two opponents. Cardona was pitched suddenly aside, as a black-cloaked form swished past him. The gawking detective was bowled to a corner of the entry, only a split-second later.

The Shadow had arrived, swiftly enough to beat Barsley to the shot.

BARSLEY didn't wait for combat. He fled at the instant of The Shadow's surge. Long bounds took him to his own sedan, which had been parked just past the building. Barsley's angled flight took him temporarily from The Shadow's range.

The driver from the garage saw Barsley coming; knew that the waving revolver could mean business. The fellow dived through the door on the street side, letting Barsley gain the driver's seat.

The Shadow stopped before he reached the sidewalk. From a corner of the building entrance, he trained his .45 deliberately upon Barsley's car, which the fugitive was frantically trying to start. With a single bullet, The Shadow could have permanently halted Barsley's flight; but he lost the chance before he used it.

Cardona and the detective supplied the untimely intervention; their blunder helped Barsley instead of handicapping him. Together, they piled past The Shadow, trying to overtake Barsley. They reached the running board of the sedan, putting themselves squarely in The Shadow's path of fire.

Since they wanted to capture Barsley, The Shadow lowered his gun. But neither Cardona nor his side-kick were equal to their self-chosen task.

Barsley threw in the clutch just as they tried to board the car. The sedan whipped away; Cardona and the detective sprawled along the curb. First on his feet, Cardona shouted to the driver of a parked taxi. The cab wheeled up; Cardona and the detective jumped in, to begin a chase.

There were other cars coming along the street. Just as The Shadow saw the first of them, a revolver spurted from an alleyway. The Shadow recognized the signal instantly. It came from Hawkeye. The spotter had seen Cleeve and his squad go away; they had departed too early to witness the arrival of another group.

There were mobbies in the rakish touring car that was now coming into view. They had seen the start of Barsley's flight; also the pursuit that Cardona was about to stage. Their purpose was to cover Barsley's get-away. The muzzle of a machine gun was swinging toward Cardona's cab.

Hawkeye's hurried shot did no damage; it came when the touring car had passed him. It served well, however, for it speeded The Shadow's action.

## HILLS OF DEATH

The Shadow did not wait for the thugs to declare themselves; he had them labeled when he heard Hawkeye's signal. Sweeping both hands into action, The Shadow stepped from his doorway and blazed shots into the murder car.

The machine gun didn't begin its crackle. A crippled driver let the touring car slither to the curb. Hoodlums heard the sudden mockery of The Shadow's laugh, challenging from the spot where his big guns had mouthed their deadly hail. Abandoning their car, they dived for the street and went staggering for doorways.

The Shadow reached the wheel of the touring car, beckoning as he went. Hawkeye came sidling from cover and jumped into the back seat. Barsley had rounded the corner and was off to a good head start; but Cardona's cab could still be trailed.

The Shadow was entering the pursuit. He expected more trouble ahead; and it came within the second block.

Cardona's cabby had spotted Barsley's car taking another corner. The cab swung to follow; there was a sudden shriek of brakes. Another crook-manned car was bowling in to block the chase. The cab skidded, twisted toward the curb. Revolvers spouted toward the cab's occupants.

AGAIN, The Shadow drove in with needed rescue. There was one element of luck; these thugs were using revolvers instead of a machine gun. That break was all The Shadow needed to stem their attack.

His left hand used an automatic to tongue a withering volley, while his right managed the steering wheel. The Shadow's shots spread devastation.

Crooks were sagging before they could pick off Cardona and the detective. The driver of the thug-manned car wheeled from the scene of battle. The chase had changed. The Shadow was speeding after this new crew that had cut in to cover Barsley's flight, and the band that he pursued was crippled.

Cardona's cab was out of the chase; but another car had taken its place. Hawkeye recognized it, when he looked back. The car was a coupe that Cleeve had taken when he left Barsley's.

Though he had left the neighborhood when the first mob car appeared, Cleeve must have heard the distant shooting and recognized its cause. He had hurried for the scene, hoping to be of use.

Hawkeye gave that information to The Shadow, as they rounded a corner. The news meant very little, for Cleeve was too far behind to take a hand in matters.

In fact, the chase itself was proving fruitless; for within a few blocks, The Shadow recognized that Barsley had cut off in one direction, while the thugs were taking another. Failing in their cover-up job, they were at least capable enough to give a false trail.

The Shadow's chance to overtake Barsley was lost. He concentrated upon running down the carload of hoodlums, hoping that some of them might talk if trapped.

That also proved difficult. Choosing their own route, the crooks led The Shadow into a maze of streets near the river. Their driver knew those thoroughfares well. He made a series of twisty turns, gaining sufficient ground to be out of sight when The Shadow arrived.

Passing one turn, The Shadow ran into a dead-end street, where he was forced to back his car and turn outward.

## HILLS OF DEATH

Cleeve's car missed the turn entirely, it sped past the outlet of the blind alley, chasing after nothing. The Shadow, however, still saw a chance to track down the crooks.

As he stopped his car to look along side alleys, he ordered Hawkeye to go out to the street and watch for any sign of the missing car. If the mobsters were still twisting in and out the mazy streets, there was a likelihood that they might suddenly bob into sight.

In the interval that followed, Hawkeye decided that the chase was finished. He saw no traffic on the street; he turned about to rejoin The Shadow. Just then, there came a warning roar; a new car rocketed into sight, heading straight for the alley where The Shadow was located.

Instinctively, Hawkeye guessed the answer. Somehow, crooks had learned where The Shadow had stopped. This crew of hoodlums, new entrants in the turmoil, had headed in to trap The Shadow.

HAWKEYE got off a warning shot; then ducked beyond a stack of ash cans. The murder car occupants never noticed him. The lights of The Shadow's automobile were their guide.

They roared in upon it, opened fire with a machine gun that completely riddled the old touring car. Backing out from the alley, they sped away.

There wasn't any use for Hawkeye to fire after them. His only hope was that The Shadow might still be alive. Hawkeye dashed in to look for his chief before police arrived. He reached the inner end of the alley, stared into the touring car. His flashlight showed complete vacancy.

Staring blankly, Hawkeye suddenly noticed the wall behind the touring car. The facts dawned upon him. The Shadow had heard the warning shot; had recognized its import. With his own position spotted, The Shadow had chosen a new one, with remarkable speed. He had left the touring car and scaled the wall before the riddling fire began.

Scurrying away through a side alley, Hawkeye chuckled at the thought that the doubled trail had failed. Where The Shadow had gone and what his purpose would be, were questions that Hawkeye could not answer. He would have been amazed, had he guessed.

To-night's episode had brought new facts to The Shadow. Enough for him to let others handle events elsewhere, while he remained in New York. Though many details of crime would require later investigation, The Shadow understood the major game at stake.

Crooks, themselves, had flashed their message without realizing it. The Shadow would be prepared for moves to come.

## CHAPTER XI. CHANCE MEETING

CONTRASTED to the swift events in Manhattan, time was passing very slowly in the buried cell where Clyde Burke lay prisoner. Night and day had passed; sleep had been Clyde's only solace in the pitch-darkness of the underground prison, except when Yakbar had entered to bring him meals.

Yakbar's appearance told Clyde why Diane had not come to aid him. The Turk had taken over the duty of watching the prison cell. Until Yakbar was relieved, nothing could be done. Clyde remembered that Diane had described, the Turk as the one man who was utterly controlled by Doctor Nicholas Borth.

## HILLS OF DEATH

Clyde's luminous—dial wrist watch showed ten o'clock. That hour meant no more than all the others that had passed until Clyde heard a scraping sound outside his door.

It meant that a key was in the lock; for Clyde had heard the sound before: when Yakbar brought the meals. This time, however, the scrape was cautious. Moreover, there was no reason why Yakbar should arrive at this hour.

A surge of hope swept Clyde. The interval before the door opened seemed longer than some of the wasted hours that he had recently experienced. When the barrier swung, Clyde saw the glow of a flashlight; it revealed the face of the person that he expected.

Diane Delban had come with her promised rescue.

The girl was not alone. With her was one of Borth's servants, who had been in the group that Clyde had battled the night before. He had a yellowish face, with flattish nose and puffy brows and lips. Clyde remembered him chiefly by a scar that ran across his chin.

Diane had done well in choosing this fellow as an aid. He was the sort that Doctor Borth would least suspect as one who had turned against him.

Diane beckoned. Clyde came from the darkened cell. The girl told the servant to lock the door and remain on watch. She started along the passage, whispering for Clyde to follow. They threaded twisty corridors; came to a solid wall like the one on the floor above.

There, Diane found the hidden switch. The wall slid back; the girl's flashlight showed a stone stairway that led farther downward.

Once past the barrier, they were free to talk. Clyde questioned Diane about the scar—chinned servant. She assured him that the man would prove dependable. He was one of a few who had become discontented in Borth's service; he had listened to Diane's offer of reward if he joined her cause.

ALL the while, Clyde and Diane were following a narrow tunnel that was hewn through rocky soil. Unlike Borth's underground headquarters, this passage had no concrete reinforcement. Workers had chiseled it roughly, picking their way through fissures in living rock.

At times, the passage almost doubled on itself. In his talk with Diane, Clyde lost his sense of direction.

That did not seem important, as the passage had no side passages wherein a person might lose his way. Clyde's oversight, however, was to produce unfortunate consequences later.

They came to the end of the passage. Rough steps, nothing more than chunks of stone, led upward to a squarish slab of rock. Diane held the flashlight toward the barrier.

"That is the outlet," she told Clyde – "the emergency exit that Doctor Borth provided in case of invasion. After you are outside, you must remember its location and find your way from there. When you return with the government men, you can bring them through this passage. Doctor Borth will never expect a raid from below."

Diane lowered the flashlight. Paper crinkled as she gave Clyde an envelope. It was blank and unsealed, but Clyde could feel a message folded inside it.

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"Take this to James Cleeve," ordered the girl. "You will find him at the Brayland Apartments, in New York City. This message will be the only introduction that you need. I have written it in the special code that he had me memorize."

Diane's hand held Clyde's arm. The flashlight's glow showed her eyes, large in their earnest expression. Her lips spoke the question:

"You will not fail me?"

"You can depend on me, Diane!" returned Clyde. "I haven't forgotten our bargain. I'll see Cleeve before I go to the office, or visit the police. This is a job for the Feds. I'll stay with them."

Diane smiled her confidence. She gave Clyde the flashlight; he held it toward the steps, while Diane found a lever. The stone slab moved; Clyde crept through, keeping his light close to the ground.

He crouched in a tangle of bushes, while Diane slid the slab shut from within the passage. Turning with the flashlight, Clyde caught a last glimpse of the girl's face; just before the slab went tightly shut.

THE thought that gripped Clyde was one of prompt action. Here, in the clear outside air, it was his task to make for New York with as much speed as possible. For the first time, he also realized the necessity of taking proper bearings. As a beginning, he examined his present location.

Like the stone slab in the ground, Clyde was shielded by a cluster of bushes on a steep hillside. Branches formed a slanting screen that ran to an overhanging ledge. This spot, nestled in the midst of a thicket, was a place where prowlers would not penetrate.

In fact, Clyde found difficulty in getting out of it. Brambles gripped him as he wrenched through, to reach the outer slope.

Dull moonlight showed the bushes. They formed a perfect coverage, like a scraggly layer following the slope to the jutting ledge. Nothing betrayed the hollow that lay within the brambles. The camouflage was another proof of the cunning methods used by Doctor Nicholas Borth.

The hillside was rocky and blackened with patches of trees, through which the moonlight trickled. Clyde chose a downward course into the valley, keeping his route as straight as possible. He noted conspicuous rocks; kept count of the paces that he took.

Two hundred yards brought him to an old road; there, his flashlight fell upon two battered posts that had once been a gateway. They made an excellent marker for future reference. Clyde followed the old road, still measuring the distance. After half a mile, he reached a narrow paved highway.

In the dark, Clyde tabbed his calculations on a sheet of paper, using his fountain pen that held the fading ink used by all The Shadow's agents. He folded the paper and tucked it in the envelope that Diane had given him. Striding along the paved road, he saw a highway marker. Its number told him the most important fact of all.

Clyde was in New Jersey, within fifty miles of New York City. This valley lay between the two ranges of rugged hills known as the Watchung Mountains. Again, Clyde was forced to admire the craft of Doctor Borth. No one who wanted isolation could have chosen a better district than the Watchungs.

Only one good road tapped the valley, and it was not much traveled. Often, Clyde recalled, fugitive criminals had fled to the Watchungs, where it had been difficult to track them down. Borth had gone such crooks one

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better. He had actually buried himself beneath this rocky terrain!

Borth's stronghold was an impregnable underground castle, tucked in a veritable wilderness, yet within an hour's ride of New York City.

There wouldn't be much trouble retracing the path to the secret exit. Clyde had valuable information; his job was to cover the few miles that would bring him to civilization, then hurry into New York.

CLYDE was speculating on that prospect when he heard a thrumm behind him. He didn't have time to duck before a car swung a bend. He was outlined in the glow of the headlights.

Clyde faced the car boldly, as it stopped. He expected Yakbar to pop out and challenge him; for Clyde feared suddenly that his escape had been discovered. Instead, Clyde heard a voice he recognized.

Two seconds later, he was aboard the halted car, shaking hands with the clean-cut driver who sat behind the wheel.

The man in the car was Harry Vincent, another of The Shadow's agents. The chance meeting marked the end of a long quest. Clyde Burke had at last been found.

It didn't take Clyde long to tell his story. For a finish, he produced Diane's envelope. Clyde brought out the paper that bore his own notations; he remarked to Harry:

"I'll read off the distances. Better copy them, for I used the fading ink."

Harry turned on the dome-light. Clyde opened the paper. To his puzzlement, it was already blank. Clyde looked at his fountain pen and found the reason.

The barrel was broken; the ink had trickled out. That must have happened twenty-four hours ago, during his struggle with Yakbar and the others. Clyde hadn't learned it because the ink had dried on his clothes and then faded.

Harry's voice came quietly: "Give me the details from memory. I'll put them down."

Clyde complied. He wasn't quite sure, but he thought he had them right. Harry made two copies in pencil; gave one to Clyde. He asked to see Diane's note. Clyde produced it; the message was in code, as Diane had said.

Harry turned the car around and headed back for the dirt road that Clyde had mentioned. As they rode along, Harry suggested a suitable procedure.

"You take the car, Clyde," he said, "and drive into New York. You won't run into any trouble. I've been over these roads this evening and they're all clear. Carry the note with you. Stop at No. 27 after you're through the Holland Tunnel."

By No. 27, Harry referred to a small eating place that specialized in fish and chips. It was just the spot where The Shadow could send Hawkeye, or a taxi driver named Moe Shrevnitz, to contact Clyde. Both of those workers were in Manhattan.

"All right," agreed Clyde. "It will take me nearly an hour to get in there; and I'll be a half hour longer, getting coffee and chips. Only, you'll have to contact Burbank; and with my taking the car, you'll be handicapped."

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"I'll use short-wave radio," explained Harry. "The set's in the rumble seat. I'll keep it with me. Burbank can send somebody to pick me up later."

They had reached the old road. Harry drove as far as the ancient gate-posts, to clock the distance. He headed the car around; then alighted and removed his radio equipment. Just as Clyde was ready to drive away, Harry asked him one question:

"What about that lower tunnel, Clyde? What direction would you say it went?"

Clyde studied the paper that listed his later bearings. After a short calculation, he replied:

"Northeast into the mountain side. But it isn't important. There's no turnoff in the tunnel."

Though Clyde didn't realize it, he had made a very bad guess as to the direction. He didn't think that it would cause any complication; but that, in turn, was another bad surmise. Clyde's mistaken statement was to cause grief for both himself and Harry.

As soon as Clyde had driven away, Harry lugged his short-wave set a short distance up the hillside. Choosing a rocky spot, he set up the equipment. The job was so brief that an idea struck Harry. There was plenty of time to contact Burbank before Clyde reached Manhattan.

Time enough to check on some of those distances that Clyde had recited from memory. With that plan in mind, Harry shoved his radio set beneath a scrubby bush and went back to the gate-posts. From there, he routed himself up the hill.

Everything checked as Clyde had given it. Harry reached the thick brambles beneath the ledge. He didn't look for the slab beneath the bushes; that would have been unwise. Harry decided to go down to the slope and send his message to Burbank.

He thought, though, that he could find a better path if he moved along the slope. Wisely, Harry took a westerly direction, because Clyde had said the tunnel went northeast. Because of that course, Harry thought that he was going away from Borth's underground headquarters. That was why Harry felt both secure and interested when he came upon a path among the trees.

A little higher on the hill loomed the squatty bulk of a deserted building. Harry approached; used his flashlight to see that the place was an abandoned hunting lodge. Harry noted a wide veranda skirting the building; a broad, flat roof above the one-story structure.

High steps led up to the front door, which was crudely locked and badly battered. Windows were boarded, but there were gaps between the slats.

Climbing the steps, Harry tested the padlock. When he tugged it, the hasp came from rotted wood. The door groaned on its hinges as Harry opened it.

This abandoned lodge could prove highly useful, Harry decided; that was why he chose to investigate it. He pictured The Shadow's coming campaign against Doctor Borth; realized that a squad of agents, or Feds, could be quartered in this forgotten structure.

Moving from room to room, Harry copied notes on his sheet of paper.

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The main room of the lodge had a fireplace with a broad stone hearth. Harry studied it, then turned the flashlight around the big room. The glow of his torch still gave a view of the flat hearth; but Harry wasn't looking in that direction when the unexpected came.

Slowly, noiselessly, the hearth came upward on a hinge. Out from the depths peered a tawny face: the cold-eyed countenance of Yakbar!

Harry Vincent had found more than he supposed. Clyde had claimed that the exit tunnel burrowed northeast. Instead, it ran northwest. This hunting lodge was directly over Doctor Borth's underground castle. It served as the blind for that remarkable fortress.

Some signal had flashed below when Harry tampered with the broken door. Yakbar was on the job; and the Turk's moves were as calculating as ever. He showed no haste that would betray him; instead; he emerged steadily from the steep steps that lay beneath the hearth.

IT was chance alone that told Harry of Yakbar's arrival. Turning toward the fireplace, Harry saw the rising Turk. The powerful wrestler sprang from the top step; made a grab for Harry's arm before The Shadow's agent could produce a gun.

For a quarter minute, the struggle was a fierce, evenly matched one. Then, from the depths, came another pair of huskies. They soon pinioned Harry; wrenched him away from Yakbar.

Despite the odds, Harry was on the point of breaking loose, until Yakbar, freed from the grapple, produced the needle that he had used on a previous night.

The Turk jabbed the hypodermic into Harry's arm; then added his own weight to the struggle. Three against one, plus the dosage prepared by Doctor Borth, were odds that could not be offset. Harry's fight slowed gradually, to end with a complete slump.

Yakbar and the others carried Harry below. The stone slab lowered into place to show the barren hearth.

Doctor Borth had lost one prisoner, an agent of The Shadow, only to gain another!

## CHAPTER XII. CLYDE'S CONTACT

THE sequel to Harry's capture came when Clyde reached No. 27, after an uneventful drive into New York. Seated at a corner table in the fish and chip establishment, Clyde kept watch upon the doorway while he drank his coffee.

There wasn't any sign of Hawkeye; nor did a cab pull up that might be Moe's.

It did not occur to Clyde that Harry had encountered trouble, for Harry had said nothing about making a closer approach to Doctor Borth's preserve. Reasoning things over, it struck Clyde that the lack of contact was simply a token that he should go through with the mission that he had promised Diane.

The girl had stated that James Cleeve was the head of a squad of government agents, secretly operating in New York. Clyde had passed that information to Harry. Under such circumstances, Diane's message could be classed as a report from one government operative to a superior; and its main purpose was to properly introduce Clyde to Cleeve. There would be no reason for The Shadow to intercept a bona fide message of that sort.

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From that, Clyde drew the obvious conclusion that The Shadow expected him to visit Cleeve and make a later report. Finishing a second cup of coffee, Clyde left No. 27 and took the wheel of Harry's coupe.

Driving uptown, Clyde decided to leave the car in its usual garage and take a cab from there. He did so, and arrived on the secluded street that Hawkeye had visited earlier.

Alighting at the Brayland Apartments, Clyde entered and inquired for James Cleeve. The clerk called the apartment; after a short conversation, he received word that Mr. Burke was to go up to the fifth floor.

As he entered the elevator, Clyde happened to glance through the door to the street. He thought he saw a man slide out of sight; but he decided that his guess was wrong. Clyde had looked over the front of the building when he arrived, and had seen no prowlers at that time. He figured that he had simply caught a glimpse of some one who was shuffling past the doorway.

When he reached Cleeve's apartment, Clyde saw a peering eye through, the crack of the partly opened door. He must have passed inspection, for the door swung inward promptly. Clyde stepped into the living room, to find three men waiting him.

There was no difficulty in recognizing James Cleeve. The tall man's square face and steady eyes marked him as the leader of the group.

"So you are a reporter from the Classic." Cleeve's tone carried as sharp a stab as his eyes. "Perhaps you might tell me, Mr. Burke, just why you wish to interview me. It is rather unusual" – Cleeve's smile showed an indulgence – "for a newspaper to be interested in the activities of a group of salesmen. Particularly one like this. Our line is furniture."

"I'm not after a story," explained Clyde, "I have a message for you, Mr. Cleeve."

He produced Diane's note. Cleeve read it; Clyde saw keen eyes light beneath their heavy brows, Cleeve's smile became a tight one. He turned to his companions.

"It's all right, men," he told them. "Burke knows we're Feds. He's seen the Delban girl."

Cleeve drew back his coat, to flash his badge. He waved Clyde to a chair. There was something more important that he wanted to know.

"Where did you come from?" he queried. "How far away is the hide-out? Can you lead us back there?"

"Easily," assured Clyde. "Unless I made some slip-up when I took the distances."

He picked up pencil and paper, traced the complete route to Borth's. Cleeve's eyes gleamed, particularly when he learned that the goal was less than forty miles distant. He glanced eagerly at his watch; noted that it was almost midnight. After a short calculation, Cleeve shook his head.

"I'd like to have started to-night," he said, "but it won't do. It's pretty isolated territory out there; Borth might have lookouts posted. We could sneak in there early in the evening; but after midnight would be a bad time. We'll hold the raid until to-morrow."

That decision pleased Clyde. It offered a chance for contact with The Shadow. Rising from his chair, Clyde remarked casually:

## HILLS OF DEATH

"I'd like to go with you, Mr. Cleeve. What time shall I come around to-morrow?"

"Wait a minute, Burke," laughed Cleeve, clapping a friendly hand upon Clyde's shoulder. "Where do you want to go now?"

"To the Classic office. I want to find out if Doctor Borth sent that telegram he made me write."

"All right, Burke."

Cleeve stood reflectively, as Clyde started for the door. A complication occurred to him; again he motioned for Clyde to wait.

"You can't let this story out, Burke," warned Cleeve. "That's for your own benefit, as well as mine, since you're going with us to-morrow night."

"That's agreed," returned Clyde. "I won't spill a word of it at the office."

"Good enough! There's another angle, though. To-night, we traced a fellow named Barsley, who works for Borth. We figure he's the collector who chucked that bag of cash over in Jersey, for Yakbar to pick up."

"Then he's the fellow who had the mob kill Fred, the service station man?"

"Right!" Cleeve's tone was grim. "There was a crew covering up for him to-night, too; only we didn't know it until too late."

CLYDE was hearing interesting details. He wanted more; Cleeve decided to give them. He explained his purpose of letting Barsley get away to avoid capture and questioning by Joe Cardona.

Clyde saw the wisdom of Cleeve's policy, since it kept Borth uninformed that the trail was coming closer.

"Barsley gave the jewel-selling stall," stated Cleeve, "and I pretended to fall for it. The trouble was, Cardona must have shown up when Barsley was on the way out. I heard the shooting, but I took up the trail too late. The way things turned out" – Cleeve's tone was rueful – "I wish I'd grabbed Barsley when I had him."

"Here's the bad point, Burke." Cleeve's headshake was serious. "If that crew spotted me following them, they may have tracked me back here. Normally, they'd lay off Feds quicker than they would cops; but maybe Barsley didn't have a chance to tell them I was a Fed. So we're playing our cards close."

"We can't afford a run-in with a bunch of hoodlums while we're after bigger game. The information you've brought us makes it all the more important to lie low."

Stepping past Clyde, Cleeve placed his hand on the doorknob. When he beckoned, he indicated his own men along with Clyde.

"I'm sending these boys downstairs with you," said Cleeve. "You wait in the lobby while they take a stroll around the block. Don't start until they come back with the word that everything's clear, And remember – mum at the Classic."

WHEN Clyde reached the lobby, he had time for speculation while his two companions went out on patrol. He approved of Cleeve's tactics. Feds didn't leave matters to chance.

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It was nearly ten minutes before the pair returned; each had circled the block in an opposite direction. One of them gave Clyde the route to the nearest subway station, four blocks distant. Methodically, the other reported to Cleeve on the house phone. The result was a nod for Clyde to start his journey.

A chance recollection struck Clyde after he was outside; something that he had forgotten to mention to Cleeve. He remembered the shuffler who had gone past the front door at the time of his arrival. He wondered if that prowler still happened to be about.

Scanning the street, Clyde saw no sign of suspicious persons. Even the cars that were parked along the street appeared innocent.

Nevertheless, Clyde could not shake off the peculiar strain that gripped him. Easing his footsteps as he neared a corner, he sensed a sound behind him. He had the distinct impression that some one was following, ready to come up and accost him in the darkness.

Without looking back, Clyde increased his pace. He made quick strides across the next street. On the far side, he paused to look back.

That was when he glimpsed a figure that shrank back from sight – a hunched, furtive man whose face Clyde could not see. The glimpse, though, provided another link. The hunchy man reminded Clyde of Hawkeye.

Whether or not it was Hawkeye who had shuffled past the Brayland Apartments, Clyde could not decide. He felt sure, though, that it was Hawkeye who had picked up his present trail. On that basis, the rest was plain.

Hawkeye wanted to contact Clyde; therefore, he had slid up closer in the darkness. Clyde's sudden quickening of pace had defeated Hawkeye's effort to reach him. The result put Clyde on one side of the street, Hawkeye on the other.

Clyde expected Hawkeye to cross and join him. Instead, the hunchy little man shifted away, going back along the street that he and Clyde had followed. That puzzled Clyde. It made him miss the idea entirely.

Assuming that the hunched man was actually Hawkeye, his departure was obviously intended to make Clyde continue along his route, probably to a meeting with The Shadow, farther on. But Clyde jumped to another conclusion. He decided that the shifty follower wasn't Hawkeye. So Clyde stood on the corner, straining his eyes back toward the other block.

The policy was a bad one, as Clyde was soon to learn. He was losing valuable minutes that he should have spent in continuing along his walk to the subway. When Clyde did turn to resume his way, he was one block short of the position that he should have reached. Others were to take advantage of that fact.

Just as Clyde started away, a touring car wheeled up to the corner and made the turn. The car was moving rapidly; but its speed changed when its driver saw Clyde. Brakes gave a sudden shriek; the automobile staged a dead stop at the curb.

Men in black were acting with the same promptness as the driver. The door was open; they were piling to the sidewalk as Clyde turned about.

There wasn't a chance for Clyde to dodge them. No doorways were handy along the street. Before Clyde could budge, a pair of thugs had him between them. Revolvers were prodding his ribs. An ugly growl buzzed in the reporter's ear:

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"Come along, lug! You're taking a ride with us!"

CLYDE hesitated. He knew what the ride would mean: a one-way ticket with no return. He chewed his lips as he realized how he had dodged Hawkeye, back in the other block; Hawkeye, who wanted him either to wait or go ahead, not to stand and gawk from a street corner.

That was something Hawkeye had figured Clyde wouldn't do. That was why Hawkeye hadn't waited to watch.

The jab of a gun reminded Clyde that he could stall no longer. It told him also that his present spot was a bad one. This street was lonely; a muffled shot wouldn't be heard far. It would be easy for these thugs to shoot him, then haul him into the touring car, if Clyde refused to go of his own will.

In a pinch like this, it was better to take a chance on future luck rather than accept sure trouble for the present. Mechanically, Clyde nodded. He started toward the touring car, pressed by the guns of his captors.

At the curb, they shoved him roughly aboard. Clyde found himself between the deadly pair; he saw a leering hoodlum who sat beside the driver; that fellow was looking gleefully into the back seat, also ready with a rod.

Clyde Burke had met up with one of those roving bands of thugs that had earlier been on hand to cover the flight of Kirk Barsley.

Crooks of the sort who had murdered Fred. Killers who would dispose of any person who seemed to know too much. They figured that Clyde was such a person; and they were right.

As the thug-manned car pulled from the curb, Clyde Burke was gripped by the gloomy thought that this ride would mark the finish of his long service with The Shadow.

### **CHAPTER XIII. THE RETRACED ROUTE**

THE touring car was headed in the direction that Clyde had been going; but that was small comfort to the prisoner. Whatever these captors intended, they certainly weren't offering a friendly lift to the subway station. They were headed for parts unknown, and Clyde was going with them. How long he would remain alive, depended upon how long it would suit the convenience of his captors.

By the end of the block, Clyde had a good inkling of what was to come. He knew it from the way the driver brought the car to a cautious stop, to take a good peer along the avenue before he turned the corner.

That was the usual technique of the one-way ride. Pick up a victim; take him along at an easy pace, so as not to excite suspicion. Find the spot for murder; give him the works, then dump him. The speed always came when the killers made their get-away.

This ride wouldn't be a long one, Clyde guessed. There were plenty of miserable neighborhoods within a mile or two of this section. The crooks had probably picked the very alleyway that would be a suitable resting place for the victim's body.

The car turned another corner. Thugs were looking back; their pleased growls assured the driver that there was no one on the trail. The car threaded along a few more streets; as it passed one corner, Clyde looked to the left.

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He gained an instant's elation when he saw a parked car, with its cowl lights glowing; but his enthusiasm was short lived. Low conversation among the captors proved that they had expected to see that car.

These mobbies were working with a reserve crew. The driver had come past this corner so that the other band could follow along. To Clyde, that news marked the end of a frail hope that he had nourished. He had counted on making a bold break: a leap from the touring car, then a run for it.

Sometimes a surprise stunt like that could work. Not this time. Any such attempt would leave Clyde helpless, at the mercy of the second crew. As he shifted around, Clyde could see the lights of the trailing car, a block back.

"Gettin' scary, huh?" The snorted words came from the hoodlum on Clyde's right. "We gotta dose that'll end that! You'll be takin' it soon!"

The nudge of the crook's revolver muzzle told what the dose would be. Like the others, that killer was simply awaiting word for murder. He was right, when he said it would be coming soon. The car had reached an ill-kept street; from its slow progress, the driver was obviously looking for the proper alley entrance.

The thug on Clyde's left said nothing. He gave a contemptuous glance toward the reporter; then stared to the left. Like the driver, he was looking for the alley; but all the while, he was keeping his gun hard against Clyde's ribs.

The car took a jounce. There was a thump beside Clyde's right shoulder; a slight thud that Clyde thought came from the body of the touring car. The man on Clyde's right leaned forward; Clyde thought that he was trying to crane toward the left, so that he could look with the others.

There was something odd, though, in the way the fellow's chin settled against Clyde's elbow.

Staring downward, Clyde realized suddenly that the thug was unconscious. Somewhere, out of darkness, a slugging blow had reached the side of the killer's skull. Before Clyde could fully appreciate what had happened, a low whisper sounded in his ear.

Clyde knew that voice. It was The Shadow's!

INSTANTLY, the situation was plain. Hawkeye had expected Clyde to meet The Shadow at the end of the block where the touring car had appeared. Clyde's own delay had led to his sudden capture. But when the car had reached the next corner, it had picked up another passenger.

All through this ride, The Shadow had been on the running board on the right side of the car. Crouched there, he had listened to all that was said. Out of sight of the car that held the other crew of gunmen, The Shadow had bided his time until the right moment. The opportunity had come. The Shadow had coolly taken one thug from combat.

He had a way to deal with the others. The Shadow's whisper told Clyde what to do. Tensely, Clyde restrained himself. They were at the alley; the car was swinging into it. The mobster beside the driver was looking through the windshield; but he was just ready to turn about.

The car came to a stop. That was the moment for action. The preliminary move came when The Shadow released the bobbing thug who was on Clyde's right. The unconscious hoodlum flopped to the floor of the car. His sag gave Clyde space.

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In accord with The Shadow's order, Clyde jerked away from the gun that poked him on the left. As he did, he grabbed for the muzzle, shoved the crook's hand upward before the fellow could fire.

The move was a complete surprise; for the man on the left didn't know that he alone was covering Clyde. All he could do was try and stem the reporter's attack; grapple to keep his own gun.

The thug beside the driver heard the scuffle; he swung about to aim, snarling as he came. He never had a chance to jab his gun muzzle toward Clyde's face. The Shadow was again in action, this time with a long, inward surge across the rear door.

Clyde missed that amazing move. The Shadow used his left hand to vault inward. His right fist sweeping ahead, seemed to haul him with its driving reach. Carrying a huge automatic, the gloved fist sped over the front crook's head; then came downward. It found the thug's skull in the manner of a grappling hook.

The stroke sank the aiming killer. More than that, it enabled The Shadow to haul himself completely into the car; for he kept that gun hold once he had gained it. Without a single revealing shot, The Shadow had gained control. The rest of the battle appeared simple.

With a side swing, The Shadow slugged the driver as that thug swung—about. While the fellow was still settling over the wheel, The Shadow moved in to aid Clyde. The help was necessary; for though Clyde was still holding his own, he hadn't managed to wrench away the last thug's gun. With The Shadow smashing in, complete success seemed sure.

A bad break spoiled the victory.

THE SHADOW'S fist, sledging for the crook's skull, delayed as Clyde twisted partially into its path. Expertly, The Shadow completed the blow; but it was slowed, and the stroke was a glancing one.

The crook slumped; his revolver hit the floor. That partly deceived The Shadow in the dimness.

Settling in the rear seat, The Shadow fired shots into the upholstery. That was supposed to tell the crooks in the other car that Clyde had been given a dose of bullets. To complete the illusion, The Shadow opened the door on the right; he shoved out the unconscious gunman who lay on the floor.

From the mouth of the alley, watchers took the sprawling form for Clyde's body. As the stunned thug fell, The Shadow heard a motor throb. So far, the trick had worked.

It was then that the break occurred.

The last crook had recovered, still gripped by Clyde. Like The Shadow, Clyde thought that the fellow was completely out. He realized his error when the thug managed to clutch the door handle on the left.

The door gave; the crook's weight went outward. Clyde didn't have time to get loose. He went sprawling with the unarmed thug.

There were excited shouts from the other car. Sight of two more men spilling from the touring car told them that something had gone sour. There was a clatter of feet as rowdies jumped for the alley. A big spotlight gleamed.

Crooks saw Clyde, rising from beside the touring car. They knew him for the victim that they wanted. They aimed, so promptly that Clyde had no chance to get away. All that saved him was the promptness with which

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The Shadow diverted the aim of the killers.

With a strident laugh, The Shadow sprang from the door on the right. His mockery was a compelling challenge. His cloaked shape, outlined in the spotlight, was a target far more important than Clyde Burke. To a man, the cover-up crew aimed for that weaving figure in black, intending to finish their cloaked enemy forever.

They were to realize promptly how The Shadow had outwitted them.

The Shadow had not sprawled into the alley; he had sprung there. He was wheeling as he landed, ready for double action. He started a side-step, away from the car; then faded back toward the vehicle itself.

Those shifts were possible, because crooks were changing their aim. The other phase of The Shadow's action was a prompt attack of his own.

His right hand was already opening fire with its gun. His left was whipping a second automatic from his cloak. His shots sounded along with the revolver fire of the thugs. Echoing in the alley, the blasts of his big .45 made the revolver shots sound puny in comparison.

Thugs dodged to escape those crippling shots. It was lucky for them that The Shadow held Clyde in mind. He was firing more rapidly than usual, in order to fully divert the enemy. That was why his fusillade clipped only one of the scattering thugs. They were making for the shelter of their car and the corners of the alleyway.

THE SHADOW was boxed, as he had been before. This alleyway was a clear one, going through to the next street; but a dash in that direction would be futile. It would do for Clyde; but not for The Shadow. Battle was his only chance.

Clyde had reached the front of the touring car; The Shadow saw him there. He pointed the reporter through; hissed a quick command for flight. As Clyde started, The Shadow turned about to meet a new fusillade that was starting from the alley entrance.

Clyde's reluctance ended when he saw The Shadow's tactics. With his first shot, the cloaked marksman drilled the spotlight that glared along the alley. With a shout of triumphant mirth, he zigzagged toward the crooks, using his automatics as he went.

Thugs were firing at the spurts of The Shadow's guns. He, in turn, was picking the flashes of their revolvers. But The Shadow was changing position, while they were stationary. That gave The Shadow all the odds.

Dashing through the alley, Clyde could hear the taunt of an evasive, quivering laugh amid the lessening fire. When he reached the next street, he heard the roar of a motor; as it faded, there was a final gibe of mirth.

Mobsters in the cover-up car had fled, leaving the rest of their band to The Shadow. The cloaked fighter's victory was sure.

Clear of the alley, Clyde decided suddenly that he now had an opportunity to return there. Contact with The Shadow was possible, with the thugs banished. But before Clyde could turn about, he heard the whine of a police car's siren.

Sounds of battle had been heard. The law was approaching, headed for the very street where Clyde stood.

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Explanations would be difficult, if Clyde had to give them. He didn't want to spoil The Shadow's victory by undergoing a police quiz. A lot depended on keeping facts unknown; particularly those that concerned James Cleeve. Clyde had already guessed that The Shadow must know a lot about those Feds who were quartered at the Brayland Apartments.

Taking it on the run, Clyde reached a corner before the police car arrived. He ducked through other streets, not caring where they led. At last, he reached a spot some distance from his starting point; he saw an avenue, with a cab parked near an elevated station.

A trip to the Classic office was out of the question. Clyde decided that as he entered the cab. He didn't know how to reach The Shadow, for the present; but he realized that there might be a chance to meet up with Hawkeye.

That was why Clyde gave an address where he thought Hawkeye might be; and where he felt sure that crooks had not returned. He told the cabby to take him to the Brayland Apartments.

ALIGHTING outside of Cleeve's, Clyde paid the driver and looked around for Hawkeye. He thought he could discern a shifting figure at a distant doorway; but before he could make sure, a man stepped from the entrance of the Brayland.

The arrival was one of Cleeve's operatives, the squatty chap who had watched Barsley's office.

"What's up, Burke?" The squatty man spoke in puzzled tone. "How did you get back from the Classic so soon?"

"I didn't get there," returned Clyde. "A mob tried to take me for a ride! I got away from them."

The squatty operative whistled. He looked anxiously along the street; then drew Clyde inside. He went to a telephone; as he picked it up, he motioned toward the elevator.

"Better get upstairs and talk to the chief. I'll tell him you're on the way."

Cleeve was waiting when Clyde reached the apartment. His eyes glittered beneath their heavy brows when he heard Clyde's story. Clyde was hazy when he described the part that The Shadow had played; he spoke as though his rescue had been a chance one. Cleeve accepted it as such.

"One of Barsley's crews got into trouble, earlier," recalled Cleeve. "I guess this mysterious rescuer of yours was in that, too. I've heard of him – The Shadow. He's done good work to–night! I don't think those mobbies will be back here."

"Still, we're taking no chances. You stay with us, Burke. To–morrow evening, we'll head for Jersey. If luck's with us – and I think it is – those thugs will be thinking about The Shadow, instead of us. That will leave us clear to move in on Borth."

Cleeve showed Clyde to an interior room of the large apartment. He smiled when he saw the reporter sag wearily to a chair. Cleeve dropped his hand on Clyde's shoulder, with the comment:

"You're fagged out, Burke. Turn in and get a good sleep. You'll need it for to–morrow."

Alone, Clyde followed Cleeve's advice. When he had turned the lights out, he opened the window. Standing there, he stared into the darkened, silent courtyard. Off in a corner, Clyde saw the dim light of another

window; he stared suddenly, as something streaked the dull wall within it.

Moving into the light, Clyde saw a singular silhouette: a hawkish profile, topped by the outline of a slouch hat. That token remained motionless, then vanished as a hand turned off the light from somewhere within the room.

Clyde grinned to himself as he stretched on the bed. He didn't have to worry about later contact with The Shadow. His chief had chosen another apartment, here at the Brayland. Evidently, The Shadow had spotted Clyde's room, and had waited to deliver his identifying signal.

Sooner or later, Clyde would have his chance to communicate the facts that he had learned. The Shadow, like James Cleeve, would be given the trail to the hidden citadel of Doctor Nicholas Borth.

### CHAPTER XIV. CLYDE REPORTS

IT was early afternoon when Clyde Burke awakened after a long and much-needed sleep. The sound that roused him was an abrupt rap at the door; so sudden that it took Clyde a few moments to grope for a recollection of his present location.

When he opened the door, Clyde saw the squatty operative who was so frequently with Cleeve. The fellow had a grin; he held a watch before Clyde's eyes. Clyde blinked when he saw that it was almost two o'clock.

"The chief wants to see you," informed the summoner. "Climb into some duds. He's in the living room."

Clyde watched the squatty man walk along the hallway to the front of the apartment. There, he turned right into the living room.

Stepping back into his own room, Clyde started to dress; as he did, he remembered the courtyard. He looked across to the window where he had seen The Shadow's silhouette.

That window looked ordinary by day; so commonplace that Clyde began to think that his imagination had gripped him last night. His series of bizarre adventures had left him in one of those in-between states, where it was difficult to decide whether he had undergone certain experiences or had simply dreamed them.

Of one thing, Clyde was sure. The Shadow had rescued him from death last night. Whether or not The Shadow was still about was a question. Clyde didn't find any answer when he looked from his window.

That was because the answer lay elsewhere – at a spot where Clyde had failed to see it. The hall outside his room was darkened, for it had only one small window, near the rear. Hence, neither Clyde nor Cleeve's man had observed the figure that watched their brief interview.

Silently, unseen, The Shadow had entered Cleeve's apartment. Stationed at a spot where the hallway widened, in front of the living room, The Shadow was awaiting his chance to contact Clyde.

The squatty man had left the living room door open. The Shadow approached; peered through the crack to see Cleeve seated near the window. There was a road map on the table; Cleeve was marking it with a blue pencil while the squatty man watched him.

"HERE'S the last crossroad, Felkin" – Cleeve turned the pencil over, to use its red end, as he drew a circle – "after that, it's a five-mile ride without another turn-off."

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"Except the dirt road," objected Felkin, pointing to the map. "You'd call that a turn-off, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, but it's not on the map. It probably lies about here" – Cleeve continued the blue line – "and it doesn't lead anywhere."

"Except to Borth's."

Cleeve chuckled when he heard Felkin's comment. The Shadow watched the keen-eyed man lean back into his chair.

"It starts us on the way to Borth's," agreed Cleeve. He dotted the end of the blue line. "Figuring this as the old gatepost, half a mile in from the good road, we won't have far to go up the mountainside. About a quarter mile, Burke said."

"That's what he said," nodded Felkin. "However, he came from the place; we've got to get to it. Maybe that won't be easy in the dark."

"We'll spread out for a starter; then close in. Anyway, we'll have Burke with us."

"You're taking Burke along?"

There was surprise in Felkin's question. Cleeve noted it; gave a simple nod as his reply. He was looking at the map again when the squatty man began a protest.

"Listen, chief. You told us this morning –"

"I know what I told you," interrupted Cleeve. "I figured we'd go without Burke. He'd be willing enough to stay here, on the promise that we'd let him have an exclusive story after we raided Borth's hide-out. That is, Burke would listen to persuasion."

"But after what happened last night, we'd be taking a bad chance, leaving Burke behind. We don't know who might spot us going out. Anybody might barge in after we've gone. If Burke's with us, we don't have to worry about him."

Pausing, Cleeve tapped the red circle that marked the crossroad on the map.

"After we've passed there," he declared, "we'll have things clinched. We'll move in on Borth, with our full force! That will give us big odds, according to the message Burke brought from Diane."

"Doc Borth will be due for a real surprise, especially when he sees Burke with us. That's going to be a swell show-down, Felkin; one that I wouldn't want to miss!"

THE SHADOW was moving away as he heard the finish of Cleeve's statement. There were footsteps in the hall; Clyde was coming from his room. The Shadow shifted to block his agent's path. Whatever surprises were due for the night, Clyde gained one in advance.

In the gloomy hall, Clyde felt a gloved hand grip his arm. He heard the whispered voice, seemingly from nowhere, that sounded in his ear:

"Report!"

## HILLS OF DEATH

The Shadow had moved deep enough into the hallway to intercept Clyde before he reached the living room. Neither Cleeve nor Felkin guessed that the reporter was already on his way. But before Clyde could speak, there was the sound of a closing door from a side hallway.

It meant that another of Cleeve's men was coming through the apartment. Coolly, The Shadow added the order:

"Later!"

An instant afterward, the gripping clutch was gone. Clyde blinked. He couldn't guess which direction The Shadow had taken. All that he heard was the approach of heavy footsteps from that side hall. Clyde knew that The Shadow didn't want him to linger while one of Cleeve's men came through. Promptly, Clyde approached the living room and entered.

"Hello, Burke!" greeted Cleeve. Then, to the man beside him: "Close the door, Felkin, while we go over the details."

Cleeve showed Clyde the map, with the route that they intended to follow.

"We'll leave here at seven-thirty," he added. "That will bring us to the crossroad – this red circle – by half past eight. We can close in on Borth about nine o'clock."

There was a pencil by Cleeve's elbow. Unnoticed, Clyde pocketed it. He broke the pencil; its muffled crackle was unheard. Gripping the stubby point, Clyde wrote on a slip of paper that was in his pocket.

All that he gave were the times that Cleeve had mentioned. They, alone, seemed necessary, for Clyde supposed that The Shadow had heard all other details from Harry Vincent.

The chat ended, Cleeve suggested that they have lunch. They walked from the living room; once in the hall, Clyde wadded the paper and flipped it from his pocket. Their route led toward the interior of the apartment; when they were gone, an event occurred that Clyde had expected.

A gloved hand plucked the wadded message from the floor. That was not all, The Shadow had his opportunity to learn more while he remained here. He entered the living room; studied the map that lay near the window. That done, he returned to the hall.

The way was open to Clyde's room; The Shadow went there and made a brief search. Finding no other message, he departed, silently opening the front door of the apartment.

HALF an hour later, The Shadow was in his sanctum. Clyde's terse message lay on a table beneath a blue light, along with a road map that duplicated Cleeve's. Beneath the time schedule that Clyde had written was a penciled line. That meant the message was complete.

A low laugh pervaded the sanctum.

The brevity of Clyde's report explained much that The Shadow sought. Since last night, Clyde had known that The Shadow was at hand. Therefore, the reporter should have been prepared to deliver many facts when he gained a chance for contact. Instead, these meager items were all that Clyde had given.

There was only one answer to Clyde's seeming negligence.

## HILLS OF DEATH

Clyde obviously believed that The Shadow was acquainted with all required details, except the actual time schedule that James Cleeve and his followers intended to use when they invaded Borth's citadel.

There could be only one reason for such supposition on Clyde's part. The reporter must have contacted some one else in The Shadow's service, between the time that he left Borth's and arrived at Cleeve's. That gave The Shadow a much-needed link.

Long fingers drew a typewritten sheet into the light. It was a morning report, relayed in from Burbank, in New Jersey. It told of Harry Vincent's failure to make contact after midnight. During early morning hours, other agents had been scouring the Jersey hinterlands in search of Harry; but to no avail. Wherever Harry might be at present, he was in no position to report through Burbank.

The only conclusion was the right one. Clyde had met Harry; had given him extensive facts regarding Doctor Nicholas Borth. Some ill luck had prevented Harry from sending the word through. Clyde, however, had carried the facts to James Cleeve.

Cleeve's marked road map was the result. On his own map, The Shadow penciled a blue line, identical with the one that Cleeve had drawn. He even marked a red circle at the crossroad that Cleeve had designated as the last danger spot that the expedition would pass.

That done, The Shadow rested his forefinger at the end of the blue line; moved it slowly in a semicircle, to indicate the open space to the north.

Somewhere in that limited area lay the secret abode of Doctor Nicholas Borth. A place that Clyde Burke had left; a sector where Harry Vincent could have ventured. The fact that Clyde had returned safely from his imprisonment indicated that Harry likewise remained alive.

The Shadow's hand inscribed inked notations, that faded like passing thoughts. Piece by piece, he was fitting probable facts. When he had completed that survey, he snapped off the bluish light. Absolute darkness filled the sanctum. The only sound that stirred that blackness was the chilling tone of a laugh that trailed to nothingness.

The Shadow had departed. He had business in New Jersey before Cleeve and his operatives reached there. Secretly, alone, The Shadow would penetrate to the hidden citadel where Doctor Borth was master.

## CHAPTER XV. DANGER BELOW

WANING afternoon brought gloom to that lonely dirt road along the Watchung mountainside. Storm clouds on the western horizon had completely blanketed the setting sun. Beneath the thick trees, The Shadow could scarcely discern the battered gateposts when he reached them.

This was the end of the blue-marked route. The Shadow had hours in which to investigate. The gloom was to his liking; it meant that he could search for Borth's hide-out without being spotted by any lucky observer.

Driving his car between the ancient posts, The Shadow parked it out of sight. Alighting, he started through the underbrush, searching as he went. He paused at the spots where trickling daylight aided him. In gloomier places, he used a brilliant flashlight along the ground.

No chance prowler would have found Harry's radio equipment, for it was well buried in a thicket. The Shadow, however, was looking for such traces of his missing agent, and a broken branch gave him an early clue.

## HILLS OF DEATH

Pressing past the crushed bush, The Shadow uncovered the short-wave apparatus, set up for communication.

That discovery told its own story.

Harry Vincent had not been captured at this spot. Borth's men would certainly have dismantled the radio apparatus and taken it along with them. It was plain that Harry must have decided to investigate the mountain slope; that he had run into trouble farther up. That meant that he had gone to check on certain details that Clyde Burke had given him.

Moving upward among the trees, The Shadow took a semicircling route. As before, he was looking for traces of Harry and he found them: deep prints in the turf, where Harry had gone from one rocky spot to another. Those footprints pointed to the left.

Observing from that spot, The Shadow saw the stony ledge to the right, where the prickly bushes so cleverly hid the hillside exit. Whether or not that secret opening could have deceived The Shadow was a question that would remain undecided. Having found Harry's trail, The Shadow followed it instead of tracking back.

By night, The Shadow moved invisibly. Here, in this fading daylight, his figure could be seen. Yet only the sharpest eyes could have spied The Shadow's course.

Wearing his black cloak and hat, he moved with spectral glide. Every tree, every bush clump served as a shrouding cover. Only in the intervening spaces did The Shadow's cloaked shape show its full outline.

Streaked daylight indicated a clearing ahead. On the fringe, The Shadow saw the sprawling hunting lodge with its boarded windows. He chose a circuit; from the shaded side, he reached the veranda. Once over the rail, he was lost in the dullness beneath the porch roof.

THE cabin door was padlocked. The lock was new; not rusted, like the one that Harry had broken. Judging by the rusty nails in the boarded windows, The Shadow decided that some one had entered recently; that the door had been repaired afterward.

That was another clue to Harry; moreover, it indicated the mistake that the missing agent had made. The Shadow guessed that the door was wired, to flash a signal below.

The windows, too, could be fixed. That was why The Shadow chose the roof. Scaling the side posts of the veranda, he came to the flat top of the lodge. There, he found a broad expanse of weather-beaten tar paper. On hands and knees, he crept along the black surface, toward a raised space that proved to be a boarded skylight.

Flat on the roof, The Shadow noted other skylights. Like the windows, they might be wired; but The Shadow doubted it. Any one trying to enter the old lodge would naturally try the windows before going to the roof. These skylights could be the one weakness in Doctor Borth's defense.

Carefully, The Shadow worked on the skylight beside him. It gave, under noiseless pressure. Raising the flat barrier on its stout hinges, The Shadow slid his body through. Hanging, he let the skylight settle on his fingers; then he dropped to the floor beneath. His landing was catlike in its silence.

Using a tiny flashlight, The Shadow searched the ground floor of the lodge. He came to the big living room. There, the search provided a new clue: a freshly splintered floorboard near the fireplace. That told of a struggle; a sliding heel that had dug hard into the board.

## HILLS OF DEATH

Turning his flashlight, The Shadow noted the broad stone hearth.

Boards had warped against the edge of the slab, enough for The Shadow's keen eyes to detect the crack of the traplike opening. Probing with a thin piece of flat steel, he was rewarded by the slight click of a hidden catch. The slab came upward under the prying force of The Shadow's gloved fingers.

Below, The Shadow saw steep steps: wooden strips that were like a ladder, tapering toward the bottom. He started the descent, letting the slab close above him.

When he reached the bottom, ten feet below, he tested the floor and found it solid stone. The space was cramped; it had no outlet. The Shadow brought his flashlight into play. The glow showed a solid steel barrier just opposite the steep steps.

The metal sheet was set in stone. Probing the edges, The Shadow found a crevice; worked with a long flat picking instrument to find a catch. That effort failed until he bent the metal strip, wedging it past the edge of the metal door.

When the catch clicked, it came with a sudden snap. The door slid a fraction of an inch; The Shadow was prompt enough to press it sideways before the catch could lock again.

Chilled atmosphere greeted The Shadow as he stepped into a dimly lighted passage. He had reached the upper floor of Borth's air-conditioned abode. Sliding the well-oiled door shut behind him, The Shadow started along the very corridors that Clyde Burke had followed, a few nights before.

The doorways, fortunately, were deep. When one opened suddenly, The Shadow had time to press into a recess that was diagonally opposite. The man who stepped from the open door did not see The Shadow; but he, himself, came plainly into the cloaked watcher's view.

The man was Yakbar, coming from Doctor Borth's office.

YAKBAR closed the office door and walked stolidly along the corridor. As soon as the Turk had made a turn, The Shadow followed. He saw Yakbar unlock a door and enter a dull-lighted room.

After a few minutes, Yakbar came out again. He returned directly to Borth's office; again, he failed to see The Shadow. The mysterious visitor was in a doorway before Yakbar arrived.

Once Yakbar had closed the office door, The Shadow approached it. The door was unlocked; its knob yielded under subtle pressure. In inching fashion, The Shadow worked the door inward, to get the view he wanted. At the desk, he saw the shock-haired figure of Doctor Nicholas Borth.

A question issued from the old man's lips.

"What of the prisoner?" demanded Borth. "Could he talk to you, Yakbar?"

"Not yet, master." The Turk's tone was apologetic. "He has awakened; but his stupor is not ended."

Borth showed annoyance.

"Your mistake was excusable with Burke," he said, testily. "Alone, with a journey ahead, you had need to use the hypodermic. But with this man, Vincent, it was unnecessary!"

## HILLS OF DEATH

"I am sorry, master."

"That may not help. This man Vincent may prove dangerous! He is not a reporter like Burke; whoever he is, he came here armed. We must learn his business; meanwhile, it would be folly to leave this stronghold. Yet, at times" – Borth stroked his chin – "I feel that it is folly to remain."

There was a stir from the corner of the room. For the first time, The Shadow saw Diane Delban as she stepped into his range of vision. The Shadow detected a look of alarm on the girl's face; but she suppressed it as she spoke to Borth.

"We are still secure," assured Diane. "Denovar tells me that Burke is still quiet in his cell."

"Burke does not matter," snapped Borth. "We can release him when we leave. But this man Vincent" – the doctor's tight fist pounded the desk – "may know much more than we suppose! It is unfortunate that he must drowse a few hours longer."

Borth looked at the oddly dialed clock upon his desk. After a short calculation, he added:

"Rouse him at twenty–one thirty, Yakbar."

The Shadow recognized that Borth was working on a twenty–four hour system; that twenty–one thirty would be half past nine. Harry's present status would continue until after the hour set for Cleeve's invasion.

That suited The Shadow's own plans perfectly. It meant that he would not have to make separate plans regarding Harry.

Borth arose from the desk; The Shadow heard him say something about a visit to the strong–room. He watched Borth go to the corner alcove; heard the sound of descending footsteps on the circular stairs.

Intent upon Borth, The Shadow momentarily forgot Yakbar and Diane. As a result, he was forced to an unexpected move.

The Shadow whisked from the doorway, not an instant too soon. Yakbar had approached, coming to the outer corridor. Deftly, The Shadow managed to close the door gap before Yakbar arrived; but the latch did not catch. Lacking time to attend to that detail, The Shadow whisked to the gloom of a doorway across the corridor.

THE office door puzzled Yakbar. The Turk was positive that he had closed it tightly when he entered, and he grumbled that fact to Diane.

At last, Yakbar shrugged his shoulders and went along the corridor; but he stopped at the first corner, to glare back in suspicious fashion. From the mutter of his lips, it seemed that the Turk intended to return after he had finished with some duty.

That was why The Shadow did not linger. Diane was looking in the direction that Yakbar had taken; her forehead showed the furrows of a worried frown. Moving from his doorway, The Shadow glided in the opposite direction, toward the passage that led back to the lodge.

Diane happened to turn as The Shadow went from sight. The glow of the corridor showed a moving silhouette along the floor; but that streak slid away as Diane stared. Simultaneously, Yakbar came back along the corridor; his eyes fixed steadily ahead.

## HILLS OF DEATH

Diane noted the suspicious expression on the Turk's face, but she said nothing. Instead, she stepped back into the office, to let the Turk pass.

The Shadow, meanwhile, had arrived at the steel door. On this side, it had a lever that opened it. Losing no time, The Shadow stepped through; the door was closing when he entered.

Through the closing crack, The Shadow saw Yakbar go past the entrance to the final passage. The Shadow was confident that he had managed an unwitnessed departure. He flicked his flashlight on the steep steps; began his ten foot ascent to the fireplace above.

Even during that brief climb, The Shadow was concentrating upon tasks that lay ahead; planning a surprise that would strike before nine o'clock. The Shadow had found his own route into Borth's domain; he could be there, in full control, when Cleeve and his men arrived.

Knowing only this one route, The Shadow could foresee difficulties for Cleeve when the latter invaded. The Shadow was taking that into calculations of the future.

The Shadow had almost forgotten the present. He was reminded of it, in startling fashion, just as he reached for the inside catch that held the locked hearth slab above his head.

Something clicked below. Turning his flashlight downward, The Shadow saw a change at the narrowed bottom of the shaft. The stone floor was sliding back beneath the wall, leaving a bottomless chasm four feet square!

Had The Shadow been on that spot, he would have had no standing place. His speedy climb up the ladder was all that had taken him from the sudden menace of that pit.

A whispered laugh from The Shadow's lips told that he felt himself secure. The mirth died, however, an instant after it began.

There was another click; it came from the steps themselves. In a flash, every step caved downward, hinging against the sharply sloping wall to form a solid slide, instead of stairway. The Shadow's flashlight dropped from his hand as he made a wild grab for some hold in the darkness.

There was none. The flashlight was going like a plummet into the depths, blazing a course along which The Shadow followed, straight downward. Arms wide, legs stretched in the darkness, The Shadow was clawing nothingness when he took that fall.

The light of the tiny flashlight dwindled to a speck, then vanished, leaving no revealing signs of The Shadow's fall. A sharp click sounded as the steps came back in place; then a slithering rumble added its ominous tone.

That final sound was the floor of the shaft sliding into place. It moaned its echoes to listening ears that heard it from beyond the steel barrier. That rumble served as testimony that a hapless victim had gone to death below.

## CHAPTER XVI. AT THE CROSSROAD

HOURS had passed since The Shadow's thwarted departure from Borth's; hours that had made but little change. Harry Vincent still lay in a stupor from the overcharge of dope that Yakbar had given him the night before. Clyde Burke was waiting with Cleeve, ready for the start to Borth's.

## HILLS OF DEATH

Oddly, thoughts of his agents were the impressions that first strummed through The Shadow's brain, when consciousness again was his. He sensed that time had passed; that his plans for others might be ruined. His own plight did not come to him with full force until after he had gathered those scattered details of the past.

Then, The Shadow was gripped by the incredible.

He was alive, despite the plunge that he had taken. A seeming impossibility, for he had viewed the depths awaiting him before he fell. Amazing though some of his past escapes had been, this twist from death was too unbelievable to be actual.

The aches that ran through The Shadow's head were terrific, proof in themselves that he had come to a solid landing place. When he pushed his hand to the back of his head, his fingers dipped oozing blood that stained his cloak collar. That was real enough; but still it didn't fit the facts.

Memory of the abyss was too vivid. The Shadow recalled his last glimpse; it had satisfied him that he was due for a drop of sixty feet at least. No one could plunge that far, undeterred, to land on solid stone without a broken limb.

Apparently, The Shadow's skull had taken the jar, for his only injury was the one that had stunned him. Yet the force of the long fall should have bashed his head completely.

Still, he was alive; and badly cramped at that. When The Shadow tried to move about, he found himself jammed close against a wall. He remembered the flashlight; he began to grope for it, until he realized vaguely that the torch would be useless.

On hands and knees, he probed the stone floor about him, only to find the flashlight missing. That, too, was curious. Apparently, the metal flashlight had shattered into atoms while its owner remained intact!

One hand struck suddenly upon a ledge close to The Shadow's knees. As his fingers rested there, The Shadow realized slowly that he was clutching wood. He steadied in the darkness; breathed thick, musty air. He placed his other hand in front of him; it touched another ledge, higher up.

Slowly, thoughts connected themselves. These were not ledges that The Shadow clutched. They were wooden steps, rising at a sharp angle, like those in the shaft that led up to the fireplace of the abandoned lodge. This thick darkness, the murky air were the same that The Shadow remembered when he had started his final climb!

Pushing his arms sideways, The Shadow found them cramped by stone walls. Twisting, he found a steel surface behind him. His lips phrased a laugh that was no more than a repressed whisper, The Shadow had solved the riddle of why he was still alive.

FALLING, he had flung wide with his arms and legs. He hadn't gotten a grip, going headlong down the shaft; but his skull had thumped a wall before he reached the open trap at the bottom of the flattened steps. That thud had been a lucky one.

Sprawled, The Shadow had wedged into the narrow vortex near the bottom of the tapering shaft. Less than four feet square, the opening had not been large enough to let his long-limbed body through. An oversight on the part of Borth, or whoever had devised this trap; but one that had proven most advantageous to The Shadow.

## HILLS OF DEATH

No wonder he couldn't find his flashlight! It had gone to the depths below, while The Shadow had jammed in safety. Probably, he had been slowly slipping while he hung suspended; but he had stayed long enough.

The same hand that had opened the trap had closed it, satisfied that The Shadow had rocketed to the pit below when his wedged form had relaxed, The Shadow had simply settled upon solid surface.

The steps were back again. That was helpful. Scaling a sliding surface would be possible ordinarily; but not the way The Shadow felt at present. He swayed; lost his grip as he tried to make the climb. Only by resting at intervals did he manage to reach the top.

There, The Shadow's fingers fumbled nervelessly with the catch that held the hearth. When it finally released, he was barely able to push the hinged harrier upward.

Once he rolled upon the wooden floor of the living room, The Shadow was able to relax. The air was better here. Despite the steady throbbing of his head, he gained strength enough to reach for the skylight. His efforts faltered, until he found an old table stowed with some other rickety furniture. He managed to negotiate the skylight and flounder on the roof.

MOONLIGHT covered the Watchung mountainside. The storm from the west had drifted; both the hill above and the valley below were plain in the early evening glow. Night, however, made the whole scene a mass of trees, bleak sentinels of blackness; except where rocky ledges made shimmery streaks of silver.

Deep draughts of air revived The Shadow. He dropped from the low side, of the roof; instinctively, he sought the shelter of the woods. Groping through the pitch—darkness under the trees, he stumbled over rocks and roots until he encountered the old dirt road.

After that, the route was easier. The Shadow paused at intervals to light matches and look for signs of the battered gateposts. At last he found them.

Leaving the road, he reached the bushes that hid the short—wave radio. A few minutes later, The Shadow was tapping out coded words to Burbank.

The Shadow's first question concerned the time; for he had smashed his watch in the fall. Burbank gave it as ten minutes after eight. He also reported that Hawkeye had seen Cleeve leave the Brayland Apartments at half past seven.

Cleeve was on schedule; Clyde was with him. They would reach the crossroad, red—marked on Cleeve's map, at half past eight. There was still time for The Shadow to be there first.

Pounding through The Shadow's mind were recollections of the plans that he had been making when he started his return trip from Borth's. He had intended to investigate further; to prepare his campaign exactly as he wanted.

There wasn't time for that. Preparations must be rushed. Afterward, events would snap into line.

To Burbank, The Shadow gave instructions regarding his agents who were scattered in the New Jersey hills. Marsland, "Tapper," others who had been called to search for Clyde were to converge as ordered. Crofton, a capable aviator, was to head for Newark Airport; then join the rest.

Never before had The Shadow sent such hectic instructions. Any recipient other than Burbank would have supposed that they were driftings from a jarred brain. But through the weave of The Shadow's orders,

## HILLS OF DEATH

Burbank saw the connecting threads. He recognized that something must have happened to his chief; but he could tell that each disjointed order was leading to a common purpose.

BURBANK verified the instructions. The Shadow signed off; gathering up the short-wave set, he made his way to his car. Jouncing along the dirt road, he hit the paved highway and sped for the crossroad.

State police were absent along that intervening five-mile stretch; and it was fortunate. To The Shadow, the road seemed a blurred stretch of gray that flowed beneath the wheels of his speeding car. He kept to the wide ribbon, but his course was eccentric; bordering one edge, then the other.

The Shadow realized that his brain was swimming; but he maintained the mad pace, relying on sheer instinct to keep him on the highway. He was clocking the speedometer with kaleidoscopic glimpses, that told him when he neared the crossroad. There, The Shadow applied the brakes; took a wide veer to the left.

Even that calculation was a vague one. The right wheels of the car jounced heavily as they struck the edge of the road. Bringing the machine under control, The Shadow zigzagged for thirty yards. Picking an opening between the trees, he turned into it, giving the brake pedal a final shove.

The car crackled through the underbrush; its tires settled in the mud of a tiny gully. Turning off the lights, The Shadow rested in the darkness.

He was ahead of schedule; he could afford these few steadying minutes. The night was still; but The Shadow's ears were hearing the shriek of swift air, as a recollection of his speedy ride.

As that illusion faded, the croak of crickets came from the woods, as if timed to the racking throbs that still palpitated The Shadow's brain.

Alighting from the car, The Shadow made his way back toward the crossroad. At moments he listened, hoping for sounds other than the drilling cricket tones. At last they came – the purrs of approaching motors.

Close to the crossing, The Shadow stepped from the road. He was blended with trees and underbrush when the lights of the cars arrived.

The procession was Cleeve's; three cars in all. Cleeve was in the first one; when the motors stopped, The Shadow could hear the leader's words, addressed to the occupants of his own car.

"It looks clear here," spoke Cleeve. "Well, we've reached the jumping off place. Let's go ahead!"

The Shadow heard an objection, voiced by Clyde Burke: "Maybe somebody's trailed us from New York."

"We'll see about that," interposed Cleeve. He gave a low whistle, that brought a figure from the rear car. "Spot anybody tailing us, Felkin?"

Felkin's reply was in the negative. Cleeve decided to proceed. Starters grated; motors hummed. The cars headed for Borth's. From his hiding spot, The Shadow heard the motors die in the distance.

There was a whispered laugh from the hiding spot – low, steady, a sign that The Shadow's rest had brought a further restoration of his strength. That mirth betokened knowledge of the future. Despite Cleeve's assurance that his party had been untrailed, The Shadow expected others to arrive.

Brief minutes proved The Shadow's foresight.

## HILLS OF DEATH

His ears again keyed to their full ability, The Shadow caught the tones of new motors, coming from the east. The first car to arrive was a coupe that The Shadow recognized as the one taken from Clyde Burke on the night of Fred's murder.

The second was an old sedan, the third a low-built touring car. Both of those automobiles were geared for speed, despite their ancient appearance.

There was no doubt regarding the identity of the occupants.

They were thugs, the survivors of previous battles, gathered for this last expedition. The pair that had been hiding out in New Jersey with Clyde's coupe as a trophy, were leaders of the outfit. They were the men who alighted, to growl orders to their companions.

"This is where we cover, see?" The speaker was within a dozen feet of The Shadow. "We're waiting half an hour, just in case The Shadow – or any other smart guys – show up here! Then we're moving in. We know where Cleeve's headed. When we close in after him, he'll –

A sharp rasp interrupted. Thugs were listening; they had heard an increasing sound. The man who had been interrupted gave a hard laugh.

"Just one of them airliners," he said. "They're liable to bear over this direction, coming out from Newark."

"That ain't the noise I'm listenin' to," piped another interrupter. "I'm hearin' a car, comin' along the road Cleeve took to get here."

"Yeah," agreed the hoodlum, "it's a buggy all right; but it's rollin' along our road!"

"Wait! It ain't just one car! It's two, closing in on us!"

There was an order for the mobsters to spread; to cover both roads and intercept the approaching cars. Crooks had forgotten the rumble from the air. Viciously, they spat oaths that promised slaughter to the persons who were driving toward the crossroad.

Flashlights glimmered, as their owners looked for spots that would serve their ambush. The crooks were forgetful on one point only: the situation that existed in their very midst.

None suspected the shape that was creeping from the underbrush, approaching the pair of leaders who still remained close by Clyde's coupe. An arm swished downward through the darkness; the weight of a heavy automatic found the first leader's skull.

That stroke, the gasped groan that came with the hoodlum's fall were heard by the man beside him.

The crook turned, flicked his flashlight above the figure of his fallen pal. There, outlined in the glow, he saw the shape of a weird fighter whose name he had mentioned only a few minutes before. The crook voiced that name again; this time with a hoarse outcry, that brought startled responses from the spreading thugs about him.

Husky-throated, frozen-lipped, the mobster was giving a call to action when he gulped the name:

"The Shadow!"

## CHAPTER XVII. SILENT STRATEGY

SILENCE had covered The Shadow's approach into the midst of his foemen. For the present, he was willing to discard such strategy. There was reason, too, for the change that came.

In the midst of a deadly horde, The Shadow needed every advantage that he could obtain. Seldom did crooks hold The Shadow in a cordon. He wanted them to overlook the temporary chance that had come to them.

A weird taunt burst from The Shadow's lips – a chilling, awe–compelling laugh that fitted his unexpected arrival. Ignoring the thug that stood at his very elbow, The Shadow swung about the circle of ambush–seeking thugs.

Big guns were looming from his fists. To each staring hoodlum, the muzzles were an individual menace. So was the mockery that The Shadow voiced.

Crooks dived, seeking distance before they opened fire. Their leader, gaping, realized that he was deserted. With a raucous shout, he tried to break the spell. He succeeded; but brought disaster on himself. His method was a lunge, straight for The Shadow, who was turned the other way. As he sprang, the crook came up with his gun.

The Shadow sidestepped; his twist took him from the focus of the crook's flashlight. The fellow stopped short; darting his head from side to side, he blasted shots from his revolver. With those reverberations, new mockery sounded from behind the crook's shoulder.

Holding his trigger finger, the thug wheeled. Again he saw The Shadow, almost beside him. The mobleader snarled as he aimed, confident that his next bullets would not be wasted. That shapeless, weaving blackness was The Shadow. He knew that much, but no more.

The Shadow's peculiar twist had ended in a lunge of his own. The arm that sideswiped from the darkness seemed to come from nowhere. Again, a sledging gun clouted a waiting head.

The crook's trigger finger tugged convulsively; his revolver spurted a final useless shot. He crumpled, with his gun and flashlight, the snarl dying on his lips.

Others heard the shot. They trained their flashlights. Instead of their leader, they saw The Shadow weaving toward the shelter of the coupe. As he turned, The Shadow opened fire; wildly, the outspread thugs returned it. The crossroad roared with battle's tumult.

Revolving in turret–fashion, The Shadow was volleying a rapid fire that scattered his enemies farther. Self–preservation was more important than their urge to deliver death. Not one of the surrounding dozen could seize a chance for steady, calculating aim.

That didn't worry them. They thought they could outlast The Shadow. When his ammunition failed, he would be helpless.

They had forgotten a factor that they considered unimportant: the approach of the automobiles that they had heard. The Shadow, however, had remembered those arriving cars. He was timing his shots accordingly.

There was an instant when The Shadow's fire ceased. Crooks thought his guns were empty, and bounded from the underbrush. Then, as lights appeared around the bend, The Shadow tongued his remaining shots in quick succession.

## HILLS OF DEATH

Two thugs sprawled; others leaped away for new shelter that they failed to reach. Brilliant headlights blinded them; guns talked from the whizzing car that was bringing the first of The Shadow's agents. Another pair of lights gleamed from an incoming road. The harried hoodlums guessed that new aid was coming up.

Crooks leaped for their own cars; they started a mad flight, spurred by the pelt of bullets all about them. They abandoned Clyde's coupe, along with half of their crew. Only one road was open: the one that led to the north, past The Shadow's hidden car.

Mobsters took that route, and The Shadow's agents let them make their start. It wasn't luck that allowed that get-away, it was The Shadow's own design.

Off to the north, where the road ran through a gap in the Watchungs, those thugs would find a snare awaiting them. State police had already received an anonymous tip-off, stating that crooks would arrive at a given spot. The Shadow had purposely left that open path to the north.

THE cars that bore The Shadow's agents were moving from the crossroad. The Shadow sprang into Clyde's coupe and ran it into shelter. The crossroad lay clear in the moonlight, forming a mammoth X. There were moments of silence while watchers waited; then the silvery glow was blanketed by a blackish shape that settled silently upon the junction point.

A curious machine had reached the battleground, to make a perfect landing. It was The Shadow's wingless autogiro, piloted here at his order. The long, broad blades were spinning lazily as the pilot stepped from the ship to join the other agents. The Shadow came from the fringing darkness to take the giro himself.

The motor zoomed; the huge blades churned the air with blurring speed. Braking one wheel, The Shadow swung the ship toward the eastward road, which had a slight downward slope. Rolling forward, the autogiro was lifting as it was swallowed by the blackness of the trees.

Watching agents still heard the motor's roar; they saw the strange ship rise suddenly above the woods and climb straight upward, dwindling in the moonlight.

As the giro diminished to a toylike size, the roar of its motor became a purr. Listening ears could easily mistake it for the hum of a distant airliner, fringing a range of the Watchung hills. Crooks at the crossroads had gained that impression. The Shadow was confident that Cleeve and his companions would do the same.

Therein lay The Shadow's strategy.

THE SHADOW had undertaken two tasks. The first was to cover the crossroad after Cleeve and his men had passed it; the other, to enter Borth's stronghold before Cleeve's invaders arrived there. Both of those aims accomplished, The Shadow could prevent trouble from the rear while he assumed control of the coming battle in Borth's citadel.

Earlier, The Shadow had planned to let his agents handle the crossroad, by waiting there until Cleeve had gone by. Circumstances had made it impossible for him to post the agents before Cleeve arrived; hence The Shadow had gone to the road junction in person.

Thanks to the arrival of the autogiro, The Shadow still had time to accomplish his second task. Cleeve's schedule allowed a half hour before he closed in on Borth. It would take his squad some minutes more to work their way up the mountainside. The Shadow, meanwhile, had handled battle in a dozen minutes; another ten were all that he required for the flight by autogiro.

## HILLS OF DEATH

The impending conflict between Cleeve and Borth had all the elements of an equal struggle.

Cleeve was arriving secretly; he held the advantage of numbers. Depending upon a surprise attack, Cleeve felt confident of success. His chance of victory was a good one.

Borth, on the contrary, was crafty. His buried citadel was a house of tricks, where anything might happen. The wise old doctor was certainly smart enough to know that a calculating invader would use a surprise attack. Borth, therefore, might be ready for surprises.

A third factor was needed to swing the outcome. Only The Shadow could provide that service, through measures of his own preparation. Trusting upon his own devices, he intended to be on the scene when conflict came.

From a one-mile altitude, The Shadow looked down upon the moon-bathed mountainside. He could see the dull ribbon of the paved road weaving serpentine among the black-massed trees. Along a higher contour were tiny glints that indicated rocky spots.

Cleeve and his men were lost beneath the thick trees. If they had heard the autogiro, they could not see it. Once the motor's thrum ended, they would agree that it was a plane flying elsewhere.

The time for new silence had arrived. The Shadow stifled the giro's motor. His ship began a mile drop with all the stealth of a settling bird of prey.

Those windmill blades spun faster and faster as air whistled through them. Their noiseless resistance increased; the giro was literally hovering as The Shadow guided it. His full faculties restored, The Shadow was sighting for a landing spot much more difficult to detect than the crossroad where his pilot had first landed the ship. The Shadow was looking for the roof of the abandoned lodge.

In itself, that roof was impossible to find. It was covered with a black-tarred surface that rendered it invisible. But The Shadow had taken that into calculation. There was a clearing about the old building; and that open space was the landmark upon which he depended.

Though the woods seemed thick to persons on the ground, the aerial view showed several cleared passages. At half-mile altitude, The Shadow had no choice between them; but when the autogiro had dropped another thousand feet, he saw the marker that he needed.

One open space was centered by a blotchy square, that represented the old lodge in the center of its clearing.

The Shadow veered his descent. The autogiro parachuted at an angle; it straightened and settled squarely upon that blackish square.

The jar of its wheels against the roof was trivial; shock-absorbers took it, while the forward roll made the force a glancing one. Then came the brakes. The autogiro stopped, almost in the center of the roof.

Thanks to the broad expanse of the building top, the ship could not be seen from the ground below. Neither Cleeve, nor Clyde, nor any of their companions would learn that this ship of the night had arrived before them.

STEPPING from the autogiro, The Shadow approached the roof edge and listened. There were no sounds of approaching men, but his eyes detected the glimmers of flashlights among the trees.

## HILLS OF DEATH

One such glow appeared near the path that Harry had followed to the hunting lodge. The Shadow knew that it represented the flank of Cleeve's, searching party.

Instead of moving toward the lodge, the light turned promptly in the opposite direction. The Shadow's laugh was low, significant. He had the answer to the last problem that had confronted him.

It hadn't seemed logical that Cleeve would adopt searching tactics to approach so conspicuous an object as the lodge that served as cover for Borth's underground abode. Nor would Cleeve consider entry easy if he expected to go down the shaft beneath the fireplace.

The Shadow had already considered the likelihood of another route into Borth's. The actions of Cleeve's crew proved there was another way.

Clyde had used that other route and probably thought it the only one. He was leading Cleeve into the hillside. Therefore, the invaders would come up into Borth's stronghold from below. That left The Shadow free to enter from above, with no others to follow.

Crossing the roof, The Shadow raised the skylight. Again, his laugh toned low. He was willing to risk the dangerous steps beneath the fireplace, confident that no one would suspect his new arrival. He had plenty of time to be deliberate; for he could picture Doctor Nicholas Borth still in his office, lulled by a false sense of security.

The Shadow could see no cause for complications that might produce unexpected trouble within the stronghold. That analysis was justified by The Shadow's own observation; but it happened to be incorrect.

Recent minutes had produced a change within Borth's citadel. Events were brewing there; events so important that they would have spurred The Shadow to absolute haste, had he known of their existence.

## CHAPTER XVIII. ALARM BELOW

THE SHADOW was right in his picture of Nicholas Borth. The shocky-haired doctor was actually in his office; and he sat there unperturbed. He was glancing at his clock, allowing a half hour more before he ordered Yakbar to bring in Harry Vincent.

Yakbar, too, was in the office, stolid as ever. But there was a restless person present; the one who was to provide the shift of circumstances. That person was Diane Delban.

The girl was sure that Cleeve would invade to-night. She had every reason to suppose that Clyde had completed his mission. She was wondering, though, where Harry Vincent fitted in the picture. Diane wanted to find that out.

Finding a chance to leave the office, Diane made an excursion to Harry's room. She unlocked the door; looked in to see Harry seated on his coach. He had awakened in a bewilderment similar to Clyde's experience.

Diane spoke in a low tone. Harry saw the girl; he blinked to clear the blur that bothered his eyes. Diane came tiptoeing into the room. She spoke a quick question:

"You've come from Cleeve?"

## HILLS OF DEATH

Harry didn't answer. He was a little puzzled about what to say. He knew that Diane must be the girl that Clyde had mentioned; but he remembered that Clyde had promised Diane that he would go directly to Cleeve's. Maybe it would be best, Harry thought, to claim that he was one of Cleeve's Feds.

While Harry was still undecided, Diane turned suddenly toward the door. The girl placed her forefinger to her lips. Stepping quickly into the corridor, she closed the door behind her. She didn't shut it all the way. A harsh voice stopped her, with the demand:

"Why did you come here?"

"I was passing," Harry heard Diane reply. "I heard the prisoner moving about. I was looking to see –"

"I shall look! It is my duty!"

The door opened. Harry saw Yakbar. The Turk entered; gripped Harry's shoulder and drew the prisoner to his feet. Yakbar spoke the simple command:

"Come with me!"

IN a dopey manner, Harry accompanied the Turk to Borth's office. Diane followed; her face was troubled. When Borth saw Harry, however, he was too interested to bother with minor circumstances. He started a sharp interrogation.

"Why did you come here?" he demanded. "Are you one of my enemies?"

Harry looked blank as he shook his head. He spoke as though connecting scattered recollections; and he did it well.

"The woods – the road" – Harry's tone was vague – "yes, I remember them. Then the cabin, or hunting lodge – whatever it was –"

"Where you were captured," snapped Borth. "With this in your possession, Mr, Vincent!"

From the desk drawer, Borth produced an automatic that Yakbar had found on Harry. Borth gestured with the weapon; flung it back into the drawer, as he questioned:

"Why were you armed?"

"The woods were lonely," volunteered Harry. "Sometimes criminals hide in the Watchungs."

Harry looked boldly toward Borth as he spoke. The doctor caught the inference. He indulged in a withering smile.

"I am no criminal," declared Borth. "I am a man who has a mission: the protection of treasure and wealth that were entrusted to me. I intend to leave here to-night. If you are what you claim to be – a person who fell into chance misfortune – I shall release you.

"On the contrary" – Borth spoke shrewdly – "if you are an enemy, I shall hold you as a hostage! My enemies have been active lately. Look what they did in New York, only last night."

## HILLS OF DEATH

Borth picked up a newspaper; planked it before Harry's eyes. There, Harry read the news of Barsley's flight; with it, a piece of information that intrigued him. Joe Cardona, searching Barsley's office, afterward, had found a few thousand dollars in counterfeit money tucked deep on the closet shelf.

It happened that The Shadow, too, had read that news. Also that Cleeve had shown the news account to Clyde, at which time Cleeve had cursed his own stupidity for not searching Barsley's himself. Harry did not know those details; but the matter of counterfeit currency made him connect Barsley with Borth.

Perhaps the doctor noted Harry's interest. Borth's next statement indicated it.

"Kirk Barsley is my agent," declared the doctor, grimly. "His actual duty is the sale of jewels. He never handled counterfeit money in his life. The police have trumped a false charge against him."

Borth's gaze was narrowed, to see the effect of his words. Harry gave a nod, as though he agreed. Borth wasn't quite satisfied.

"I am a lenient man," declared Borth, crisply. "I am patient, even with my enemies. This citadel is filled with pitfalls; but only for use in emergency. I have never had to use them, and hope that I shall never have to do so.

"Therefore, Mr. Vincent" – Borth's tone took an a smoothness that sounded fatherly – "if you are an enemy, your best course is to confess it. I shall not be harsh; I promise you. I am always lenient, unless persons show themselves unworthy of fair treatment. For instance –"

BORTH was thinking of Clyde Burke. That gave him a sudden flash of thought. Before Harry caught the connection, Borth shot the question:

"Tell me, Vincent; do you know a reporter named Burke?"

Harry was still somewhat dopey. He tried to phrase a quick answer and slipped. At last, he caught himself; indulged in a puzzled look, as though the name was new to him.

"Answer me!" rasped Borth. "What do you know about Burke?"

Harry tightened his lips, shaking his head at the same time. Borth came to his feet; wagged an accusing Anger.

"You know Burke," giped Borth, "but you don't care to talk about him! Perhaps Burke knows you, and may have something to say. The solution is simple. I shall bring Burke up here and let you meet him."

Yakbar started toward the alcove that held the spiral stairs. Borth stopped the Turk.

"I shall go," announced Borth. "There are others below who can accompany me to Burke's cell. Remain here, Yakbar."

As Borth left, Harry looked toward Diane. The girl was perceptibly pale. She knew what was due; Borth would find Denovar, the scar-chinned servant, guarding an empty cell.

Diane would have been totally lost, if it hadn't been for Harry. The understanding look that he gave was all she needed. Diane's expression tightened. She looked toward Yakbar.

## HILLS OF DEATH

The Turk had noted Diane's falter. His glare was suspicious; he wondered why she had shown alarm. Diane, however, was equal to Yakbar. Cleverly, she started a game that would have failed with Borth but which succeeded with the Turk. Stepping to Yakbar, Diane gripped the Turk's arm.

"There may be danger, Yakbar!" she said, with well-feigned breathlessness. "If this man" – she pointed to Harry – "came here to find Burke, others may be on their way to search for both of them!"

There was a glint in Yakbar's eyes. The Turk showed restlessness.

"Look into the corridor," suggested Diane. "Listen there; make sure that no one has come down from the lodge."

Yakbar stared at the wall, where Harry saw a bell and an unlighted electric bulb. They were evidently the alarm that had sounded Harry's own entry into the abandoned lodge. Yakbar shrugged, as though he thought all was secure; but Diane shook her head.

The Turk decided to go out into the corridor. Remembering Harry, he looked at the prisoner. By that time, Harry had caught Diane's purpose; to aid it, he had slumped in his chair, faking a groggy spell. The bluff fooled Yakbar; he thought that Harry had succumbed to after-effects of the dope.

To satisfy Diane, the Turk went out into the corridor and made a routine trip to the steel door. That interval was all that Diane needed. She sprang to the desk, yanked open the drawer and brought out Harry's automatic. Holding the gun, she questioned:

"When will Cleeve be here?"

"I don't know," returned Harry. He was on his feet, alert. "But Burke took your message –"

"Then Cleeve will be due to-night. We can't wait for him, though. We've got to capture the place ourselves!"

Harry nodded.

"Yakbar first," whispered Diane. "Listen! He is coming back!"

HARRY shifted behind the door. Yakbar entered; looked suddenly toward Harry's chair. An instant later, the cold steel of Harry's gun muzzle was pressing the Turk's neck.

Yakbar grimaced; his muscles tightened. The Turk was willing to risk one of his quick wrestling moves. Diane called a quick warning to Harry. He jabbed the gun mouth harder, ordered Yakbar to raise his hands. The fellow obeyed.

Diane brought suitcase straps from the closet. Harry beckoned; behind Yakbar's back, he shifted the gun to the girl's hand. When Yakbar next saw the weapon, Diane was facing him with it, and the determination of the girl's expression told the Turk that she wouldn't spare bullets if they were needed.

Yakbar submitted meekly when Harry wrenched his arms behind him and strapped them there.

Action had put an end to all of Harry's dopiness. The constantly changing atmosphere of the air-conditioned room had produced complete refreshment to his lungs.

## HILLS OF DEATH

Diane looked on approvingly as Harry spilled Yakbar on the floor and trussed the prisoner's legs. Harry used a dusting cloth to gag the Turk; after that, he rolled the helpless man into the closet.

There were hasty footsteps on the steel staircase. One man was coming up alone, and Diane recognized his footsteps.

"It's Doctor Borth! Be ready!"

Harry motioned the girl to the desk. He took the gun from her and slumped in his chair, nestling the weapon beside him. Diane smiled wisely. She liked Harry's idea of waiting to see what Borth would have to say.

Arriving, the doctor looked about for Yakbar. Borth was puffing; he couldn't ask where the Turk had gone. Diane gave an answer while Borth stared.

"Yakbar is making an inspection," she told Borth. "He went out to examine the steel door."

"Good!" panted Borth, catching his voice at last. "I bring – bring bad news from below. Burke – Burke has escaped!"

"Escaped?" echoed Diane. "But Denovar was on guard –"

"Denovar has turned traitor! That is the only answer."

"Has he confessed?"

Borth shook his head. His lips framed a hard smile, that promised an ill future for Denovar.

"The other servants are holding him," stated Borth. "He is in Burke's cell. We are going to question him. I want you and Yakbar to be with me, Diane. Yakbar guarded the cell before Denovar did; and after Denovar took over his duty, he reported to you. Therefore, you are the two who should confront him."

Diane was nodding, as if she agreed. When Borth stepped toward the door, Diane turned her gaze to Harry. Her nod continued. It was meant for Harry. Understanding, Harry came up from his chair, with the sharp order:

"Stand where you are, Doctor Borth!"

A pained expression strained Borth's dryish face. Turned toward Harry, the old doctor let his shocky head droop forward. His look was one of complete resignation. He seemed feeble when he gazed at Diane. His tone carried a piteous reproval:

"You, Diane! A traitor – like Denovar! I see it all – you bribed him –"

"Enough of that," interposed Diane, sternly, "You've said all that Vincent and I need to know. There's no one on the middle floor. That means we're going to the strong-room, and you, Doctor Borth" – the girl's tone was a positive one – "will open the door for us!"

Harry gestured for Borth to turn about. Warily, his hands upraised, the doctor marched toward the steel staircase. Harry followed close behind him; then came Diane. Their footsteps faded as they descended the stairs.

Complete silence filled the empty office, where Yakbar lay bound behind the partly closed closet door. When The Shadow reached that vacated room, he would learn that others had dealt with Doctor Borth.

Opportunity had arrived before The Shadow.

### CHAPTER XIX. TWISTED TRAPS

THE middle floor was silent and somber when Harry and Diane marched their prisoner through the corridors. They reached the door of the doctor's impregnable vault. It was Diane who gave the order for Borth to open it – a command that Harry supported with a gun nudge.

Borth did not stall. All that slowed him was the tremble of his hand. Harry could see good reason for the old man's falter. He remembered Clyde's report regarding the strong-room: that it housed counterfeiting machinery instead of treasure.

It was Diane who had learned that, for she had given the details to Clyde. This was Diane's triumph; she recognized it as she watched Borth fumble with the combination.

"When Cleeve gets here," whispered Diane, to Harry, "we'll have something to show him. He won't have to blow the door to get the stuff he's come for. It will be wide open –"

A final click interrupted. Borth tugged the big door. It swung on its silent hinges. Inside, Harry saw a darkened room; it was more than a vault. An ample space, air-conditioned like the rest of Borth's citadel, that room represented the heart of Borth's stronghold.

Borth's hands were raised as he turned about. His words were a dry, bitter crackle.

"Shall I enter?" he questioned. "Do you want me to turn over my own possessions?"

Harry was about to nudge Borth into the strong-room. Diane reached out to hold Borth back.

"We'll go in with him," Diane told Harry. "This door can be opened from inside the vault. Burke was nearly caught by that trick. It won't work with us."

Turning from Harry to Borth, Diane added: "You have missed your last opportunity, doctor!"

Borth's eyes were heady. His head tilted backward; he crackled an insane laugh, as if something in his brain had broken. He was convulsive, uncontrollable. It seemed that defeat had turned him into a doddering fool.

It wasn't the sort of bluff that either Harry or Diane had expected. That was why they were deceived. As Borth's crazed laughter echoed in their ears; they failed to detect creeping sounds in back of them.

There was a sudden surge of men. Strong arms whipped Harry and Diane back into the corridor. The gun was plucked from Harry's fist. Diane's clawing hands were pinned in back of her. They stared into the faces of Borth's servants, four huskies who they thought were still on the floor below, watching Denovar.

Borth's mad mirth was finished. The white-haired doctor stood with folded arms; his expression was one of dignity and triumph. The change amazed Harry; made him marvel at Borth's strange personality. Harry expected Borth to show the manner of a fiend. Instead, the old man acted like a hero bringing victory to a righteous cause.

## HILLS OF DEATH

"TAKE them below," ordered Borth. "They can share the cell with Denovar. Ah, Diane!" Borth shook his head. "I could scarcely believe Denovar when he confessed that you had bribed him. I came upstairs, hoping that he had lied.

"But I took precautions, also" – keen eyes were glittering, wisely. "I knew that if you were a traitor; you would force me to open the strong-room. That is why I told you that the middle floor was clear. Instead, my men were posted in side corridors, waiting until they heard the laugh that told your treachery was fully proven."

They had reached the end of the corridor that led to the floor below. Borth pressed the switch. The end wall slid back. A sudden spasm of thought wrenched Harry. He looked toward Diane, then at Borth, who was pointing down the stairs. There was something that Harry wanted to say but couldn't.

He'd wait, he decided, until they reached the floor below. He wanted to hear the questions that Borth asked; then frame his answers afterward. It was better to go peaceably, until they reached the cell. The trip probably wouldn't be a long one.

That was a wrong guess on Harry's part.

They hadn't gone down a dozen steps before the captors stopped. One of the huskies turned about, shot words to Borth in a foreign tongue. Borth listened from the top of the stairs. He heard the same sounds as the others.

"Quick!" uttered Borth. "Back – up here!"

The servants tried to shove Harry and Diane ahead of them. They were too late. A flood of flashlights burned from below. Revolvers glimmered in the glow. Harry saw Clyde Burke leading the intruders, with another man beside him.

Clyde's companion was a rangy, dark-haired man whose square face was as firm as his gun fist. Harry knew who he must be, even before Diane shrilled the name:

"Cleeve!"

Borth's men tried to drop the prisoners, to make their own escape. The intruders reached them; they were overwhelmed, carried along by the massed force of Cleeve's followers.

Cleeve broke through to join Diane. The girl pointed toward Borth, as the agile doctor darted away along a corridor.

"That's Borth!" was Diane's cry. "Get him, before he reaches the strongroom!"

Clyde had reached Harry. Together, they followed Cleeve and Diane. Borth was trying to shake his pursuers; but Diane knew these underground passages as well as he did. At the final corridor, Diane shoved Cleeve ahead, gasping that his chance had come.

Harry was almost there when Cleeve rounded the last corner. He saw Cleeve take steady aim. Springing beside Cleeve, Harry spied Borth, faltering as he neared the vault door.

Borth was a dozen feet short of that opened barrier, with the blackness beyond it offering shelter. Cleeve had him covered; he was ready to press the trigger when Harry grabbed his gun hand.

## HILLS OF DEATH

"Don't fire!" panted Harry. "We can take him alive! Look – he's stumbled!"

Harry was right. Borth's legs failed; the old doctor sprawled helplessly on the floor. When he came up to his hands and knees, he stared back helplessly.

Cleeve motioned with his gun. Borth arose and approached. Cleeve shoved him toward the wall; had him stand there with his arms raised.

THE rest of the squad came up, bringing Borth's servants. Cleeve put the rest of the prisoners in line; after studying them, he turned to Diane.

"Where's the Turk who grabbed Burke?" he demanded. "And the other fellow, Denovar, whom you lined up for us?"

"Vincent captured Yakbar," explained Diane, with a smile. "Denovar is a prisoner, down in Burke's cell."

"Who's Vincent?" Cleeve spoke blankly; then turned to look for Harry. "Is this the fellow you mean?"

Diane nodded. She was puzzled as she gazed from Cleeve to Harry. It was Harry who answered for himself.

"I'm a friend of Burke's," he told Cleeve. "I just happened to fall in here, so I thought I'd help things along."

The explanation brought a chuckle from Cleeve. He asked Clyde about it; the reporter nodded. He said that Harry had been looking for him, but he hadn't suspected that his friend had fallen into a trap.

Harry, meanwhile, was reclaiming his automatic from the hip pocket of one of Borth's servants. Turning around, he juggled the gun while he asked Cleeve:

"Anything else Burke and I can do for you, Mr. Cleeve? We've worked with government men before."

"You have?" Cleeve seemed pleased. "I'll tell you what, Vincent. Suppose you and Burke go into the strong-room first. Then we can give you credit for leading us there. How's that?"

"Great!" decided Harry. "Thanks a lot, Mr. Cleeve. Come on, Clyde."

Taking Clyde's elbow, Harry turned him toward the vault. As they took their first step, Harry gritted in Clyde's ear:

"Four paces; steady. Then dive for that strong-room with all you've got in you! Get me?"

"But, Harry, what –"

"Never mind. Do what I say!"

A nod from Clyde. They had finished the fourth pace. Harry gave Clyde a terrific, headlong shove; saw the reporter make a wiry dive for the blackness. But Harry didn't follow. He figured only one could get through; another would have to fight it out, to insure his comrade's safety.

Dropping short of the strong-room, Harry spun about as he came to on one hand and both knees.

## HILLS OF DEATH

Harry was aiming back along the corridor, expecting what he saw. Cleeve and his entire squad were aiming along the corridor, ready to drill both men that they had sent ahead!

FOR the moment, they were forgetful of Borth and his captured servants, who stood helpless and unarmed, not even daring to cry a warning word. The only reason why guns hadn't started to blast was because Harry had outguessed Cleeve.

Harry had shoved Clyde to safety; in his own turn, he was low on the floor, forcing Cleeve's band to change their aim.

All that Harry wanted was the first shot. There'd be a lot more coming afterward; volleys that he didn't expect to be alive to hear. But that first shot would be some satisfaction. Harry thought of that when he was dropping; but before he could even aim, some one else took over the privilege of opening the battle.

Guns roared – not once but with quick-timed bursts. They tongued from the one spot where no one expected them – from the blackness of the strongroom itself. Long spurts of flame sped from above the floor where Clyde had rolled to safety. Jabbing above the level of Harry's crouched shoulders, those stabs sped devastating bullets into the ranks of Cleeve's aiming crew.

Hard-faced men were toppling before Harry could begin his fire. He didn't hesitate; he joined the outburst an instant before Cleeve and his amazed outfit began to use their revolvers.

The echoes of that roaring fire from the vault told Harry who had started the unexpected rescue. Only one fighter could deliver such quick devastation.

The Shadow!

Bullets were ricocheting along the corridor. Cleeve's dropping cohorts couldn't pick the vault door in their hurry. It was Cleeve, himself, who gained the first good aim. Steadying among his failing crew, Cleeve gave a desperate shout. Aiming straight, he pumped three bullets into the blackness of the strong-room.

The Shadow's fire stopped. Its halt came an instant before Cleeve's shots. Triumphant, Cleeve turned to his fake Feds and called for them to rally. With Cleeve's command came a fierce, mocking laugh, weird, sinister, as it poured its echoes from the depths of the vault.

The Shadow had seen Cleeve's coming aim. He had drawn to shelter before Cleeve's fire started. The Shadow's guns were busy again; they roared the few shots that they still held. Harry fired; so did Clyde.

Madly, Cleeve gave a shout for massed attack. He and his few unscathed followers still had bullets. This was their chance to use them.

Cleeve's attack never started. As he and his few men loomed up from their crouched position, a sharp fire started from the rear of the corridor. The Shadow clipped Cleeve with a final shot. Cleeve spun half about, to see his men being jerked by flying lead. The Shadow had received aid from an added marksman, who had waited at his bidding before opening the rear attack.

Over the sprawling shapes of Cleeve's henchmen, Harry saw Yakbar. The Turk's shots were coolly placed where they did the most good. Cleeve's band was whittled down to a bewildered handful; an easy prey for the last attack that came.

## HILLS OF DEATH

BORTH and his unarmed servants provided that finishing touch – a hand-to-hand grapple, in which they wrested away the guns that wounded thugs were still trying to use. Flat against the wall, Borth and his men had been clear of the gunfire's path, ready to take their coming part.

Diane, too, had found security against the wall opposite. Her thought was escape; but her path was blocked when she darted for the end of the corridor. Yakbar flung out a brawny arm; turned the treacherous girl about, to roll her in among the other prisoners.

The lights of the vault glowed suddenly. Clyde blinked as he saw the actual contents of the strong-room. Doctor Borth had arrived when The Shadow pressed the switch. Borth was opening boxes, showing massed clusters of heavy jewelry. These were the actual treasures that Borth had brought to America, as he had claimed.

There were boxes of cash and checks; deposit books and account sheets that showed the meticulous care with which Borth had handled his funds. Leaving The Shadow with Doctor Borth, Clyde walked from the strong-room to join Harry.

THERE were visitors, later, who arrived at Borth's, summoned by mysterious tip-offs that had reached them earlier. One was Joe Cardona; another, Vic Marquette.

As stocky as Joe, but more dour, Vic was a bona-fide government man. Both the police inspector and the Federal man knew that they had been summoned by The Shadow.

Clyde and Harry were present in Borth's office when he told his story to the visitors. The Shadow's agents pieced in information that made the whole case plain.

"This stronghold was prepared before I reached America," stated Doctor Borth. "When danger threatened, I brought the treasure here, with persons whom I trusted. I never suspected Diane's treachery."

"She bluffed me, too," put in Clyde, "with that counterfeiting yarn. It was my bad luck to fall for it."

"So did I," added Harry. "It wasn't until Doctor Borth had opened the strong-room that I saw through Diane's game. She showed her real self when she thought I came from Cleeve. Before I had a chance to switch to Borth's side, Cleeve showed up."

Doctor Borth smiled a recollection.

"The Shadow learned the deception long before," he said. "He told me that he came here to balk Cleeve. Vincent and Diane had taken me to the strongroom. The Shadow found Yakbar and released him. They heard the scuffle when I broke away from Cleeve."

"The Shadow made for the strongroom," nodded Harry, "knowing that you would head there. I thought I saved you, Doctor Borth, when I made Cleeve hold his shot. What I really did was prevent The Shadow from dropping Cleeve right then."

It was Cardona's turn to voice some explanations.

"Cleeve sent the mob that murdered Fred, the service station man," said Joe. "They were trailing Barsley. They figured Fred knew too much, so they killed him. When I located Barsley, last night, Cleeve decided to scare him away. He called up his thugs and had them cover Barsley's get-away."

## HILLS OF DEATH

"That made us link the thugs with Barsley instead of Cleeve, What's more, Cleeve planted some counterfeit dough in Barsley's closet, to make him look crooked. I'd like to know, though, how The Shadow figured the answer to that one."

Doctor Borth smiled. The Shadow had told him.

"Cleeve joined the chase," explained Borth. "Afterward, the thugs doubled back and boxed The Shadow. Only one person could have told them where to find The Shadow. That man was Cleeve."

Clyde's eyes popped. He realized why Hawkeye had watched Cleeve's. He understood, too, how thugs had bobbed up so suddenly. Cleeve had telephoned them to get rid of Clyde. In preventing that, The Shadow had gained further proof of Cleeve's real status.

Clyde had been safe when he doubled back to Cleeve's, because Cleeve hadn't wanted a murder in his own apartment. The Shadow, however, had stayed near until he learned that Cleeve intended to take Clyde along to Borth's. Since The Shadow intended to be at Borth's when Cleeve arrived, he knew that Clyde would be safe.

As for the crooks at the crossroad, The Shadow had foreseen that Cleeve would have henchmen cover that vital spot. He had been there to polish off the reserves, so that Cleeve could be trapped if he managed flight.

Vic Marquette added a summary of his own.

"Those fake badges never fooled The Shadow," assured Vic. "He figured Cleeve as a smart international crook; and he was right. Cleeve looks a lot like a certain criminal we've been hunting under another name."

"The Delban girl will tell us plenty! She knew Cleeve back in England. She's admitted already that she saw The Shadow here this afternoon and tried to drop him through one of the traps. This whole case is as good as cleared. Only, I advise you to move your jewels, Doctor Borth, before all this news breaks."

Doctor Borth smiled as he commented:

"That matter has already been arranged."

CARDONA and Marquette left with the prisoners. Clyde and Harry followed later, believing that The Shadow had gone long before. They learned differently when they reached the woods just below the clearing. That was when they gained a clue to the significance of Borth's last cryptic remark.

There was a sudden, familiar roar above the roof of the old hunting lodge. Looking back, Clyde and Harry saw a strange plane rising into the moonlight. They recognized the spinning blades of The Shadow's autogiro. They watched the ship lift toward the yellow moon.

This was The Shadow's real departure, with Doctor Borth a passenger. With them they carried a precious cargo, that crooks like Cleeve would no longer have a chance to seek.

The treasure entrusted to Borth was going to a new, unknown hiding place. There, that valued store would lie under the protection of a guardian whose recognized power would discourage other criminal thrusts.

Reclaimed millions lay in the keeping of The Shadow!

THE END