

# **THE LEAGUE OF DEATH**

Maxwell Grant

# Table of Contents

<u>THE LEAGUE OF DEATH</u> .....	1
Maxwell Grant.....	1
<u>CHAPTER I. MAN OF MURDER</u> .....	1
<u>CHAPTER II. DEED OF DEATH</u> .....	5
<u>CHAPTER III. OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS AGAIN</u> .....	8
<u>CHAPTER IV. CRIME UNEXPLAINED</u> .....	13
<u>CHAPTER V. SKELETONS RATTLE</u> .....	17
<u>CHAPTER VI. AT STONY LODGE</u> .....	21
<u>CHAPTER VII. WAYS IN THE DARK</u> .....	25
<u>CHAPTER VIII. TOO MANY COOKS</u> .....	28
<u>CHAPTER IX. THE PAST TRAIL</u> .....	32
<u>CHAPTER X. VANISHED EVIDENCE</u> .....	35
<u>CHAPTER XI. UNCLE ROSWELL DECIDES</u> .....	39
<u>CHAPTER XII. THE UNFORGOTTEN MAN</u> .....	43
<u>CHAPTER XIII. THE HAPPY ISLE</u> .....	47
<u>CHAPTER XIV. THE FAMILY PARTY</u> .....	52
<u>CHAPTER XV. MURDER TO COME</u> .....	56
<u>CHAPTER XVI. The NEW CHOICE</u> .....	60
<u>CHAPTER XVII. STRANGE FLIGHT</u> .....	63
<u>CHAPTER XVIII. SCENES OF STRIFE</u> .....	68
<u>CHAPTER XIX. THE SHROUD OF SILENCE</u> .....	71
<u>CHAPTER XX. THE LAW OF DEATH</u> .....	75

# THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

Maxwell Grant

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- [CHAPTER I. MAN OF MURDER.](#)
  - [CHAPTER II. DEED OF DEATH.](#)
  - [CHAPTER III. OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS AGAIN.](#)
  - [CHAPTER IV. CRIME UNEXPLAINED.](#)
  - [CHAPTER V. SKELETONS RATTLE.](#)
  - [CHAPTER VI. AT STONY LODGE.](#)
  - [CHAPTER VII. WAYS IN THE DARK.](#)
  - [CHAPTER VIII. TOO MANY COOKS.](#)
  - [CHAPTER IX. THE PAST TRAIL.](#)
  - [CHAPTER X. VANISHED EVIDENCE.](#)
  - [CHAPTER XI. UNCLE ROSWELL DECIDES.](#)
  - [CHAPTER XII. THE UNFORGOTTEN MAN.](#)
  - [CHAPTER XIII. THE HAPPY ISLE.](#)
  - [CHAPTER XIV. THE FAMILY PARTY.](#)
  - [CHAPTER XV. MURDER TO COME.](#)
  - [CHAPTER XVI. The NEW CHOICE.](#)
  - [CHAPTER XVII. STRANGE FLIGHT.](#)
  - [CHAPTER XVIII. SCENES OF STRIFE.](#)
  - [CHAPTER XIX. THE SHROUD OF SILENCE.](#)
  - [CHAPTER XX. THE LAW OF DEATH.](#)
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## CHAPTER I. MAN OF MURDER.

THE big limousine stopped near the corner of the avenue; its chauffeur leaned toward the back seat and gave a sideways nudge with his thumb. The young man who was riding as a passenger followed the direction of the chauffeur's gesture and saw an electric sign, two blocks away, that said: "Hotel Grantham."

"All right, Bradwood," spoke the young man. "This is where I get out. No use wishing me luck. I'll have it."

Bradwood's poker-faced expression did not change. His eyes simply studied the passenger intently, to make sure that the words were meant. It didn't take the chauffeur long to decide. He could tell, by the hard, ugly smile on the young man's lips that Terry Lorven meant business.

Stepping from the big car, Terry took his suitcase along. He strode off in the direction of the Grantham without looking back at the limousine.

Bradwood's gimlet eyes were busily checking on passers-by, observing that none of them had noticed the alighting passenger. Sliding the limousine into gear, the chauffeur pulled away along the side street, his poker

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

face unchanged.

To Bradwood, the delivery of Terry Lorven was a matter of routine. To Terry Lorven, it marked the real beginning of an enterprise to which he was fully steeled, despite the evil that it represented.

Seen in the light, Terry's smile was a leer. It expressed his contempt, not only for New York, but all that the city represented.

Months ago, Terry Lorven had come to Manhattan to seek opportunity that would bring fortune. He'd heard of people who came to New York with a nickel and built it up into millions. As his contribution toward a success story, Terry had arrived with a few hundred dollars, and squandered his cash down to the last thin dime.

But he had found his opportunity. You could meet the right people in New York. The right people for you, even though the world might deem otherwise. Terry Lorven had met the right people, according to his own estimate. He'd left New York at their suggestion, and during his absence, he had learned a lot.

Terry had learned that if you did what certain people wanted, they would offer plenty for such service. If the thing they wanted happened to be murder, the profits would be quicker, and larger. Already a murderer at heart, Terry Lorven intended to become one in fact.

During those two blocks to the Hotel Grantham, the prospective murderer felt his confidence increase. People who passed him didn't shy off when they saw him. Why should they? They had their own idea of killers: ill-dressed hoodlums, who rode around in rakish cars and came jumping out with guns. Terry Lorven didn't belong to that type.

When he rode into town, he came in a stylish limousine. When he walked along the street, he let people see that he was dressed well. When he entered a swanky hotel like the Grantham, he did so in the accepted fashion.

Terry demonstrated the final point as he strolled into the hotel lobby. He beckoned to a bellboy and handed over his expensive suitcase. He approached the desk, signed his name on a registration card; then, turning it so the clerk could read it, he remarked in brisk tone:

"You have a reservation for me."

"Yes, Mr. Lorven." The clerk was very courteous. "You asked for a room with a western exposure, on one of the lower floors. We have given you Room 818—"

Noting Terry's frown, the clerk paused, then added, apologetically:

"You see, Mr. Lorven, the west side of the hotel adjoins an office building. There are no rooms with western exposure below the eighth floor. If you would prefer something else—"

"The room will do," interposed Terry. "I felt that the west side would be quieter, away from the avenue. The eighth floor is low enough."

Low enough.

Terry Lorven chuckled when he stood alone in Room 818, his bag perched on a luggage rack beside the window. Looking out, Terry saw the adjoining building that the clerk had mentioned. It was a squatty old

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

office building, its roof only a dozen feet below the level of Terry's window.

There was a trapdoor in the roof, and its top was tilted slightly ajar, very invitingly, in Jerry's opinion. A drop from the window, a short jog across the roof, and he could go right down into the office building, which was closed for the night.

The roof itself was quite dark, enough so to hide Terry's departure, since he was wearing a blue-serge suit. But that was to come later. There were other matters to consider, for the present.

Turning to the door of his room, Terry opened it and glanced along the corridor. Seeing no one, he stole out and went to a door well along the hall, but on the other side. Terry gave a cautious knock—two long taps and a short one.

The door was promptly opened, and he stepped into an unlighted entry, where a young man awaited him. Before Terry could speak, he felt a firm grip on his arm.

"Everything is set," the young man whispered. "Look through there. You'll see the window to the courtyard."

Terry looked through the inner door. He saw the window, very dimly, and made out the figure of another man against the window itself.

"Suppose I take a look—"

"There isn't enough time," spoke the young man, interrupting Terry. "Our uncle just called us. He says that Dreeland is due any minute. You do your part, and leave the rest to us."

A bit annoyed, Terry started to push past. By then, the man from the window had arrived. His whisper was as earnest as the other's, and he emphasized it by thrusting an envelope into Terry's hand.

"Here's the dope sheet, Terry," he said. "Get back to your room and read it. Get rid of it, because if you dropped it anywhere, it would be too bad."

"Don't worry," assured Terry. "I'll burn it. Your uncle mentioned that point."

As he spoke, Terry was peering into the unlighted room. It was a large room, and Terry saw that it contained some trunks, which formed blocky masses in the gloom. He heard the nephews whispering between themselves.

"You gave it the weight test?"

"Yes. Eighteen hundred pounds."

"Three times what we need!"

"Which makes it triple sure for Terry. We don't want him to bother about anything but the dope sheet."

By then, they were urging Terry to the outer door. He heard them whispering something about a telephone call that would serve as signal, and Terry gave a grunt of understanding.

One nephew opened the door, looked along the corridor, and beckoned. The other nudged Terry through, and started him toward 818. As he reached his own room, Terry heard the other door closing.

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

IN 818, Terry read the contents of the envelope by match flame. With a pleased chuckle, he set fire to the sheet of paper, burned it to the last corner, and flicked the ashes from the window, watching them disintegrate as they descended.

Stooping to his suitcase, Terry opened it and drew out a coat that was inside. Removing his own coat, he put on the other.

Even in the slight glow from the transom, Terry's new coat could be seen in the mirror that he faced. It was a very fancy coat, scarlet in color, adorned with glittery brass buttons. It was part of a uniform, exactly like the coats worn by the bellboys in the Hotel Grantham. Trousers were not needed with it, for those that the bellboys wore were blue, almost the same color as Terry's own.

Placing his own coat over the foot of the bed, Terry reached into the suitcase again and brought out another object that glittered. Its shine was silvery, for it was a stubby revolver, of .38 caliber. There wasn't room for it in the tight-fitting bellhop's coat, but it slipped easily into Terry's hip pocket. Pulling down the coat in back, Terry hid the gun quite completely.

Then, impatient rather than disturbed, Terry went to the door. Opening it, he walked boldly along the corridor with what he considered to be a bellboy's swagger. It was a good imitation of what he had observed in the lobby, and he paused at the door of the room across the way, thinking that the nephews might appreciate a view of him on dress parade.

About to knock, Terry decided otherwise. Remembering that time was short, he strode back to 818.

He was just in time.

The telephone bell began to ring as Terry was closing the door. He didn't hurry to answer it; instead, he waited, counting the steady rings. Finally, Terry lifted the receiver, poised it a few inches above the hook, then lowered it. There was a short wait; the telephone began to ring again.

Once more, Terry Lorven applied the lifting process. This time, the lowering of the receiver did not produce another ring.

Turning about, Terry reached the door of the room; going out, he left it unlocked, with the key dangling on the inside. As he strode along the corridor, he turned his leering face toward the door across the way.

Terry Lorven hoped that one of the nephews might be peering through the door crack, to tell the other that he had seen Terry pass, and to mention the expression that the imitation bellboy had displayed. For, in that leer, Terry had put all the hardness that he felt, silently proclaiming himself to be a man of murder.

What lay ahead offered no qualms for Terry Lorven. He was fully sold on the purpose that he had avowed. Death meant nothing to this man of murder, provided that his own life did not lie at stake.

Only one thing could have smothered his urge toward crime, and it was something that Terry did not suspect. His picture of two waiting men in the room across the way was wrong.

Except for the bulky trunks, the room was empty.

## CHAPTER II. DEED OF DEATH.

THE lobby of the Hotel Grantham was astir, as it always was, when James Dreeland arrived. A big, imposing man, with the air of a feudal baron, James Dreeland looked as if he owned the Hotel Grantham, which he did.

Some people might have considered the Hotel Grantham an important thing to own, but not James Dreeland. The Grantham was but one of a dozen hotels in the chain that belonged to Dreeland, and very soon he would be rating the Grantham as a Class B property.

Back from a tour of the country, Dreeland had been acquiring hotels right and left, some in part, others in entirety. The prices had been high, but they were worth it, for Dreeland had ambitions to become America's No. 1 hotel magnate, and his resources were sufficient to back up his effort.

From employer down to assistant porter, the employees of the Grantham were trying to impress Dreeland. They did everything except lay a carpet for his entrance, because all had hopes of promotion when the hotel chain expanded.

But Dreeland, in his pompous style, scarcely noticed the employees, except to count them. To his secretary, who followed at his elbow, Dreeland confided:

"This hotel is overstaffed. Make a note of it, Jefferson. Estimate twenty percent."

In formal fashion, Dreeland signed a registration card, as Terry had, but the clerk did not need to ask if he had a reservation. Dreeland did not reserve rooms at the Grantham; he kept them. His particular place of residence was a double suite on the top floor, the twelfth, and though the rooms were excellent, Dreeland did not appreciate them.

He wished that the Grantham had thirty-six floors, instead of twelve, in which case, it would prove profitable. As it stood, the Grantham was nothing more than an advertisement for Dreeland Hotels, Incorporated, because it was in New York and had a name.

As for the staff, after he had clipped it down, Dreeland intended to let the rest stay just where they were. But by this time, Dreeland had forgotten the hirelings who were so anxious to impress him.

"Another thing, Jefferson," he said to the secretary, "call the Cobalt Club and find out if Mr. Cranston has left there. He may not have received the telegram that we sent from the train."

"Very well, sir."

Hurrying to find the telephones, Jefferson went in the wrong direction. Around a corner from the desk, he ran into the house phones by mistake. Two young men were at one of the house phones, one making a call, with the other standing by. The man at the telephone was speaking in an annoyed tone.

"No, no, operator," he said. "If the room does not answer, there is no use calling it again... You think there was an answer?... Ridiculous! You have tried twice—" With that, the young man slammed down the receiver and stalked out, his companion following. They looked very much alike, and could have been mistaken for brothers, rather than cousins, but Jefferson was too concerned over his own mistake about the telephones, to think about the two young men who had so recently left a courtyard room on the eighth floor.

Finding the outside telephones, Jefferson called the Cobalt Club and learned that Mr. Cranston had just left.

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

Hurrying back to join Dreeland, he was just in time to catch one of the three elevators that were taking Dreeland's luggage up to the twelfth floor. The hotel magnate had gone ahead in another car, accompanied by the manager.

There were two bellboys in Jefferson's elevator, and when it stopped for a "tip" signal at the eighth floor, another man in uniform entered it. The two bellboys stared at the arrival in puzzled style, but made no comment. They hadn't seen Terry Lorven when he entered the Grantham as a guest, and they simply supposed that he was a new man, hired to make an additional showing on the occasion of Dreeland's visit to New York.

WHEN the elevator reached the twelfth floor, Terry was promptly lost in a flood of bellboys who were moving in and out of Dreeland's suite like the members of an anthill.

Dreeland had plenty of luggage for all, and none were losing the opportunity to carry it. But by the time that Jefferson entered the suite, the manager was gesturing for the uniformed tribe to get out.

"We are glad that you have returned, Mr. Dreeland," said the manager. "I might remind you that the rooms facing the courtyard are more quiet."

He stepped to a window of the big living room. Opening it, the manager gestured out into the darkness.

"More quiet," he repeated, "and there are no lights to annoy you. We find that many guests prefer the rooms in the court."

Dreeland gave an annoyed nod and swung to Jefferson, who had just attracted his notice.

"Well, Jefferson? Was Mr. Cranston at the club?"

"He'd left, sir," replied the secretary. "I suppose that he is on his way here."

"You suppose!" stormed Dreeland. "I hire you to find out things, Jefferson, not to suppose them! Call the Cobalt Club again"—he gestured to a telephone—"and find out if they know where Cranston went."

A buzz sounded as Jefferson picked up the telephone. Puzzled, the secretary was staring at the instrument, when the hotel manager turned to answer the door, from which the sound really came. Then, his hand on the knob, the manager turned questioningly to Dreeland.

"Open the door," ordered Dreeland. "It may be Cranston."

The manager didn't open the door. He was staring past Dreeland, and the hotel owner, noting the manager's horrified stare, turned in the same direction, as did Jefferson.

A man had stepped from another room of the suite; at first sight, he appeared to be a bellboy, for he was wearing a red uniform jacket. But the manager did not identify him as one of the regular employees; furthermore, his manner marked him as a person of a different ilk.

The entrant was Terry Lorven. In his hand he clenched the stubby revolver, and the murderous leer on his face told that he was here to kill. Terry's gun was raised, its muzzle trained straight for Dreeland's heart, as the astonished hotel magnate turned to face the assassin.



## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

There wasn't time for Dreeland to turn his gasp into a plea. Coldly, deliberately, Terry tugged the gun trigger. With each spurt of the muzzle, he caught the gun's recoil and jabbed again for Dreeland's heart.

His ribs smashed by the impact of three .38 slugs, Dreeland went floundering forward, a lifeless hulk.

It was murder, of the most brutal sort, in the presence of three witnesses. Of three, because, with the first shot, the hotel manager had tightened his hand convulsively upon the doorknob, to give it an involuntary twist. At the second shot, the door was sweeping inward, sending the manager ahead of it. As the third shot jabbed, a tall man in evening clothes was springing into the room, in time to see Dreeland's sprawl.

He was Lamont Cranston, the expected visitor. He wasn't frozen, like the two witnesses who had been standing in the room. The sound of the first report had brought Cranston into rapid action; determination was engraved upon his hawkish features as he lunged for Lorven, the killer.

WITH a snarl, Terry aimed his gun at Cranston, ready to add the challenger as a victim; but the newcomer was swifter than the murderer.

No longer was Cranston empty-handed. In passing Jefferson, he snatched the telephone from the secretary's trembling hands. He was flinging it as Terry swung to aim. With the telephone arching for his head, the killer dived as he fired.

Terry's shots went wide. Not so the telephone. Cranston had taken full account of the killer's shift, and by rights, the missile should have reached Terry's skull.

Unfortunately, the cord wasn't long enough, so the telephone jerked short. But Cranston was following the throw with a long dive and a sudden cut-in, that kept him clear of Terry's hasty fire.

Flinging the empty gun at Cranston's head, Terry ducked through the doorway to the other room. Slamming the door, he flung his weight against it from the other side just as Cranston hit the barrier.

The door didn't have a key, but the killer had previously arranged to block it. As Cranston twisted the knob, there was a thump from the other side. The knob tightened, proving that Terry had rammed a chair back under the doorknob.

Such a barricade would ordinarily have sufficed long enough for a fugitive to be on his way. But Terry hadn't estimated on the strength that lay beneath Cranston's lithe shoulders. The door was strong enough to resist attack, and the combined efforts of three men could hardly have dislodged the chair, since heavy pressure would only have jammed it tighter. But there was system behind Cranston's shoulder-thrust.

Driving low, he struck the door squarely, just above the knob. The impact carried through like a well-delivered stroke from a sledge hammer. The chair couldn't stand the brunt; there was a clatter as it shattered.

Flinging the door ahead of him, Cranston came through with a long, low sweep, gathering up a rung of the broken chair to serve him as a cudgel.

By then, Terry had reached a window to the courtyard. The window was open, for the killer had raised it when he first was in the room. Though the room was dark, Cranston could see him by the light from the opened doorway.

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

If the murderer intended to swing from the window and try to escape along a ledge, his plan was hopeless, considering the promptness of Cranston's pursuit. But Terry Lorven had a different intention.

Without an instant's hesitation, he flung himself sideward through the window, like an acrobat arching from a trapeze. He was gone, outward, downward into the courtyard's darkness before Cranston could reach the window sill.

As he went, Terry threw back a high, gleeful laugh, as though he enjoyed this spectacular way of eluding a captor, and cared not for the consequences.

The raucous glee still sounded as Cranston reached the window. Then, from the very echoes that were ringing through the courtyard, came the most startling of changes. The killer's laugh had turned into a shriek, so fervent and fearful, that only recognition of a sure and terrible fate could have produced it.

It was a trailing wail, the agonized cry of a man betrayed, that lost none of its horror as it dwindled to the depths. The thing that ended it was the frightful impact of the murderer's body as Terry Lorven struck the courtyard, a dozen floors below. But even the rising echoes of the smash could not erase the death shriek that had preceded it.

Lamont Cranston was alone at the window, staring downward, trying to make out the blur that now represented the crushed body of Terry Lorven, the willful murderer who had terminated his brief career of crime with a suicidal plunge.

Back at the doorway of the inner room stood Jefferson and the hotel manager, both trembling, as though they had caught the quiver of Lorven's death shriek. Though they couldn't reason why, the doom of the murderer had horrified them more than the death of Dreeland, the victim.

From the fixed lips of Lamont Cranston came a low, grim laugh, a mirthless whisper, that the others did not hear. In all his long experience with death and the things it represented, Cranston had never encountered a contrast such as this, wherein triumph, as voiced by Terry Lorven, had turned to such a bitter outcry of despair.

It was a strange case, this murder and the suicide that followed it, to so impress a witness such as Cranston. For this man who called himself Lamont Cranston was none other than The Shadow, champion among all who battled against crime!

### **CHAPTER III. OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS AGAIN.**

MANY blocks from the Hotel Grantham, a taxicab stopped in front of an old, but presentable, apartment house. A girl stepped from the cab, paid the driver, and looked up toward lighted windows on the third floor.

The windows were open, and from them the girl could hear music from a radio, which someone had tuned to its highest pitch.

She was a very determined girl, and determination added to her beauty.

Her eyes were dark, like her hair, but they had a sparkle. The thrust that she gave to her chin simply added to its mold, and caused it to match the attractive contours of her nose and lips. Her swift stride through the doorway of the apartment house revealed the trimness of a figure that deserved the very fashionable attire in which its owner was clad.

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

Taking the automatic elevator, the girl went up to the third floor, found the door of the apartment from which the music came and gave an imperious rap. She had to tighten her hand and knock until her knuckles hurt, before the door finally opened.

When it did, the girl showed indignation as she strode into the apartment, to face a young man in shirt sleeves who was swaying slightly as he closed the door.

The young man was handsome. He was light-haired, blue-eyed, and his lips wore a friendly smile. But his tone had a tinge of mockery as he spoke to the girl.

"Miss Arlingame, I presume," he said. "Miss Muriel Arlingame, who likes to bother people. Allow me"—he made a bow that nearly took him off his feet—"allow me to introduce myself. I am Stephen Osden, the world's worst reprobate!"

"That's enough, Steve," said Muriel, tersely. "Sit down. I want to talk to you."

She snapped off the radio, and Steve promptly blundered forward to turn it on again. The music had lessened, so Muriel let the radio play, partly to humor Steve and partly because it was his apartment. With a look of dejection, Steve plucked a bottle from beside the radio.

"It's empty," he apologized. "So sorry I can't offer you a drink. I'm sorry, and I'm frank. If I had the cash to buy another bottle—"

He silenced as Muriel pushed him to a chair. Looking at the girl, Steve moved his head from side to side, as though he mistook her for twins. When Muriel finally dissolved into one person, Steve spoke in a tone of self-reproach.

"I guess I'll never get straightened out," he declared. "Every time I think of the tough breaks I've had, I want a drink. Every time I take a drink, I want another—"

"And then you forget your promises," Muriel inserted. "If you wouldn't forget, Steve, that's all I'd ever ask."

The girl's dark eyes were very nearly tearful. If ever a man could register remorse, Steve Osden showed it. Muriel's arrival had sobered him, very suddenly and thoroughly.

"I know I promised to see your uncle," Steve admitted. "I started to his office this afternoon, just as I promised. But on the way, I decided I'd rather stand on my own feet."

"Try to stand on them now," suggested Muriel.

Steve made an effort to rise, then shook his head. The music was coming softly, and the room was beginning to swirl. He laid his head back against the chair.

"I can't," Steve admitted. "You're right, Muriel, and I'm wrong. But when it came to asking your uncle to give me some help—"

"You won't have to ask him," snapped Muriel. "I asked him for you. Can't you understand that Uncle Roswell is interested in helping people like you, by giving them opportunities that they can't find for themselves?"

Steve nodded slowly.

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

"Tomorrow," he said, "I'll go to see your uncle. I promise, Muriel. I know I promised you before, and probably tomorrow I won't want to keep my promise. But you can make me do it. I'll stay right here until you call me."

MURIEL'S eyes became solemn. She was debating Steve's problem with herself, when the telephone bell began to ring. Steve reached from his chair, but couldn't make it. With a wary smile, he requested:

"Answer it, will you, Muriel?"

The girl picked up the telephone and said, "Hello." With a grin, Steve repeated the word, "Hello," then stared as he saw Muriel's eyes light.

"Who is it?" demanded Steve, suddenly.

"Only my cousin Jack," replied Muriel. "He probably knew that I'd come here to find out why you hadn't gone to see Uncle Roswell." She turned to the telephone and spoke: "Yes, Jack... You say that Thaddeus wants to talk to me? Very well. Put him on the wire—"

"What about Gordon?" queried Steve, tilting his head. "Where's Gordon? You've got a cousin named Gordon, haven't you?"

Before Muriel could reply, the radio interrupted. It had changed from music to a news broadcast. It was coming in very loud.

"Police are confronted by a new murder mystery," spoke the announcer. "Only an hour ago, they were summoned to the Hotel Grantham to investigate the death of James Dreeland, owner of a chain of hotels which includes the Grantham. According to eyewitnesses, among them Lamont Cranston, prominent clubman, Dreeland was slain in cold blood by a young man named Terry Lorven. Before Lorven could be captured, he—"

By then, Muriel had laid the telephone aside and stepped across to the radio. She pressed the switch, cutting off the broadcast. Steve eyed Muriel, rather puzzled.

"Why did you do that?" he asked. "Because Thaddeus could not hear me," the girl replied. "He said the radio was making too much noise. Maybe he heard you first, Steve. In any case, I intend to talk to my cousin Thaddeus without being interrupted further."

Steve shrugged and settled back into his chair. Muriel, after inquiring if Thaddeus could hear her, began to explain why Steve hadn't come to her uncle's office that afternoon. She stated that she could guarantee Steve's appearance there the next day, but Thaddeus wasn't satisfied. After some more conversation, Muriel turned to Steve.

"Once and for all, Steve," she queried. "Will you talk to Uncle Roswell?"

"Of course!" returned Steve. "Any time you say."

"Tonight?" demanded Muriel. "Right away? Uncle Roswell is at home, and is willing to see you."

"All right," Steve declared. "Why not? The sooner I see him, the sooner it's over with."

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

Muriel relayed the news to Thaddeus. Finishing the call, she insisted that Steve put on his coat and vest, before calling upon Uncle Roswell.

When Steve complied, even to the extent of adding a hat to his regalia, Muriel piloted him out to the elevator and down to the street, where they were lucky enough to see an approaching cab, which the girl hailed.

After leaning from the open cab window for ten minutes, Steve felt much better. The cab stopped in front of a brownstone house on a side street. While Steve was fumbling in his pockets, wondering why he didn't have the money that he had spent for his last bottle, Muriel paid the driver.

Steve steadied as she piloted him up the stone steps, where a servant in uniform admitted them and took them to a little parlor. Seated, Steve was staring at the curtained doorway, when Roswell Arlingame appeared there.

At first sight, Steve liked Muriel's uncle. He expected Roswell Arlingame to be dignified, which he was, but not in the manner Steve anticipated.

Instead of being austere, Muriel's uncle wore a smile, which seemed as genuine as it was friendly. His face was round, topped by graying hair that followed the same curve. But his eyes, instead of being dark and meditative, like Muriel's, were very light and twinkling.

With one hand Uncle Roswell clapped Steve on the back, and with the other offered him a cigar, which Steve accepted. Soon, they were smoking and chatting like old friends, while Muriel, almost in the background, was smiling as she listened. Almost of its own accord, the conversation turned to Steve himself.

"So you think that the world deserves my sympathy," spoke Arlingame, in an easy tone, "and because of that, you ask no sympathy for yourself."

"That about sizes it up, Mr. Arlingame," returned Steve. "I'll take whatever comes along and make the most of it, but I'm beyond the point where I have any scruples. You might feel the same, if you—"

"I know."

Arlingame's interruption was kindly, and he accompanied it with a wave of his hand. Leaning back in his chair, he blew out some cigar smoke, then spoke slowly.

"Our modern youth has become disillusioned," declared Arlingame. "Young men have taken to strange ideas, and have come to believe in them. Nor can they be blamed, for this is a strange and ever-changing world. Life has become cheap, and our young men do not like it."

"It isn't life that's cheap," began Steve. "It's the world and what it stands for—"

Again, Arlingame interposed with a wave of his silencing hand.

"Young men want opportunity," continued Arlingame. "Not opportunity as those of my generation recognized it, but the sort that suits the convictions of those who make up the present world. I have recognized the trend, and for that reason have found that opportunity knocks often at my door."

"I am too old to answer all the knocks," Arlingame's eyes were beaming. "I like to have others about who can answer for me. Quite a few young men have done so, and you are welcome to join their number, Stephen. Does it appeal to you?"

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

Steve nodded.

"Then you must go to Stony Lodge," Arlingame decided. "That is the name of my country estate, where the others are. There is no time like the present, so you must start tonight."

Steve's eyes became doubtful, he looked toward Muriel, who nodded for him, but Steve still hesitated. Arlingame saw it and smiled anew.

"My niece needs a vacation, too," said Arlingame. He turned to the girl. "Why don't you go out to Stony Lodge, this evening, Muriel, and pay it a real visit? You can then observe the effect of new surroundings upon our friend Stephen"—he laid his hand on the young man's shoulder—"and I know that he will not change his mind about going there, if you accompany him."

Muriel nodded her acceptance.

"You're coming to Stony Lodge soon, Uncle Roswell?"

"Tomorrow," promised Arlingame. "I have had a busy week, but my work is practically done. But come!" he glanced at his watch. "It is time that you and Stephen started for Stony Lodge, for the trip is a long one. I must call the garage and have Bradwood bring the car."

THE combined persuasion of uncle and niece won out with Steve. He left the key to his apartment with Arlingame, who promised to send a servant over to pack Steve's things, for shipment to Stony Lodge.

Bradwood arrived promptly with the limousine, and Steve found himself in the rear seat, riding with Muriel and sharing her enthusiasm.

"You'll like Stony Lodge," the girl assured him. "That is, you will if you liked Uncle Roswell, which I am sure you did."

"Agreed," returned Steve. "If I'd known what a swell chap he was, I wouldn't have balked about seeing him sooner. I hope, though, that you didn't make me out to be too much of a derelict."

"I didn't," said Muriel, earnestly. "I spoke well for you, Steve. I even told Uncle Roswell that—"

"That you loved me?"

Steve's question came so suddenly upon Muriel's hesitation, that it took the girl's breath away. She turned and glanced from the window, but she didn't draw back her hand when Steve pressed it. Trying to be casual, Muriel took notice of happenings along the avenue which they were following.

"I wonder why all the police are about," she remarked. "Perhaps Bradwood can tell us."

It was an excuse to free her hand, so that she could draw down the partition between the rear seat and the front. Muriel asked Bradwood about the police, of whom there were many, and the chauffeur gestured back to a hotel which they had just passed.

"A shooting in the Grantham," said Bradwood. "I guess the fellow that did it got away; that's why there are so many cops around."

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

His hard eyes fixed on the rearview mirror, Bradwood saw Muriel nod. He also saw Steve fussing with the dial of a radio in the rear seat, but with no luck. Bradwood had disconnected the radio before bringing the car from the garage.

But Bradwood's face remained motionless as he drove onward toward Stony Lodge, the place from which he had brought Terry Lorven, the man of murder, who had capped his deed of death by committing suicide before even The Shadow could prevent him!

### CHAPTER IV. CRIME UNEXPLAINED.

THE police were so thick around the Hotel Grantham that they outnumbered the bellboys. There was good reason for the law's turnout. Police Commissioner Ralph Weston had arrived at the Grantham in person, to investigate the death of James Dreeland. When Commissioner Weston investigated cases in person, the real work went to Inspector Joe Cardona.

A veteran of long experience, Cardona preferred to study scenes of crime alone, but was tactful enough not to say so. However, in this case, Cardona found Weston no handicap. In fact, he was rather pleased that the commissioner had come along.

Brisk, self-important to the tops of his military mustache, Commissioner Weston liked to bombard questions at some people and shout orders at others.

Tonight, there was no reason to become excited; no call for an immediate man hunt. The circumstances of Dreeland's death were well established, and the killer, Terry Lorven, had traveled just far enough to stay right where he was—at the bottom of the courtyard.

As for questioning people, the chief witness to the murder happened to be Lamont Cranston, a close friend of the commissioner. Cranston not only took the affair very calmly, but he had an eye for detail and described everything with an accuracy that left no room for doubt.

In fact, it was Cranston who suggested that the murderer might have registered at the Grantham in order to put on the bellboy's uniform; and that suggestion had led to the discovery that the dead man was Terry Lorven, a guest who had taken Room 818.

At present, the investigation had reached 818. All three were in Lorven's room—Weston less brisk than usual, Cranston as calm as ever, with Cardona standing in the background. Joe often preferred backgrounds. They went well with the ace inspector's stocky build and swarthy, stolid face.

"Lorven's coat and hat," said Weston, exhibiting the garments in question. "His suitcase, in which he must have brought the uniform jacket. I wonder why Lorven took this room."

Cranston strolled to the window and looked out.

"He might have intended to cross the roof," he said, "and go down through the building next door."

"Preposterous!" Weston snorted. "Lorven could not have counted on escape, at all. Otherwise, he would have waited until Dreeland was alone before attempting to murder him."

Cranston was still looking from the window.

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

"Your own testimony proves the case, Cranston," the commissioner continued. "Why, the fellow fled into a trap, and jumped from the window before you could even reach him. His suicide was as premeditated as the murder which he committed."

For once, Cardona was inclined to agree with the commissioner, though he rather regretted it. Joe felt that Lorven's insistence on a room with western exposure, as reported by the desk clerk, was merely proof of the fellow's self-importance; the same sort of temperament that had caused Lorven to use his own name when he registered.

Cardona liked to play hunches, and his present guess was that Lorven must have been some sort of a fanatic, which fitted well with Weston's idea.

They went out into the corridor, and Weston saw Cranston studying the rooms across the way. The commissioner gave a smile.

"Mostly sample rooms, Cranston," he said. "To obtain one, Lorven would have had to represent himself as a salesman. Perhaps he would have preferred one, because they open on the courtyard and would have enabled him to see Dreeland's suite, four stories up and on the other side of the court. But I suppose that Lorven used some other way to check the time when Dreeland arrived."

THE manager had come up to the eighth floor, and Weston decided to look into a sample room, just to prove himself correct. The manager produced a passkey, went along from door to door, and finally opened one. Weston queried, abruptly:

"Why did you pick this room?"

"Because I happened to know that it was empty," the manager replied. "I wasn't sure about the others."

"It doesn't look empty to me."

The commissioner was referring to trunks that stood about the room. The manager went to one of the trunks, lifted it, and set it down again.

"Empty," he said. "The same with all of them. This room was reserved by the Ajax Novelty Co., of St. Louis. The trunks came here to await a new salesman, who did not arrive. We don't know who he is, nor have we heard further from Ajax. In fact, we aren't sure that there is such a concern."

A theory occurred to Weston.

"Lorven's work!" he exclaimed. "You were right, Cranston; the fellow preferred a courtyard room. Look! You can see Dreeland's suite from this window." Weston swung to the manager. "Was Dreeland delayed in coming East?"

"A few days longer than we expected."

"That explains it!" insisted Weston. "Lorven reserved this room first; then, fearing that his arrival would create suspicion, he decided to take another, under his own name."

The commissioner had stepped back from the window. Cranston was standing there alone, his steady eyes roving down from the twelfth floor to his present level, the eighth. What impressed him most was the darkness of the courtyard. The very proximity of that darkness seemed to produce a change upon Lamont



## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

Cranston.

Fortunately, his back was turned to the others, or they would have seen the burn that came to his gazing eyes, the singular effect of his hawkish profile against the gloom.

Except for his attire, which happened to lack the black cloak which he sometimes wore over his evening clothes, the tall personage beside the window had become The Shadow, whose chosen habitat was darkness. At present, however, The Shadow was not thinking in terms pertaining to himself. He was remembering that gleeful laugh of Lorven's; how it had changed to a shriek of despair before the killer had fallen halfway down into the death pit that the courtyard represented.

Could it be that Lorven had expected something to occur when he reached the eighth floor; something that the presence of empty and abandoned trunks might indicate? Perhaps this room contained the real answer to Lorven's so-called suicide leap.

Turning about, The Shadow strolled from the window in a style that suited Cranston, his face wearing the impassive expression that went with the clubman's personality. He studied the trunks indifferently, but all the while, The Shadow was groping for a scene that could include those articles of luggage, along with Terry Lorven, and others.

Breaking into The Shadow's meditation came the sudden ringing of a telephone bell in this very room. Commissioner Weston was as startled as if he had spied a murderer returning to a scene of crime, until he recalled that the killer, in this case, was dead.

Nevertheless, Weston showed caution. He gestured to the manager and whispered for him to answer the call. The manager did, and there-with solved the mystery.

Word had gone below that the investigation had moved into this particular room, so the switchboard operator had simply connected an incoming call with the proper telephone. The manager explained the matter, then handed the telephone to The Shadow.

"For you, Mr. Cranston."

THE SHADOW recognized the voice across the wire. It belonged to Clyde Burke, a reporter on the New York Classic, who was also one of The Shadow's secret agents.

Clyde was flashing hot news to his chief, but when The Shadow heard it, he decided to let the law share the information without delay.

Turning to Cardona, The Shadow spoke in Cranston's tone, loud enough for Clyde to hear:

"There seems to be a mistake. I believe the call was meant for you, inspector."

Cardona took over the telephone and did some eager listening. With a quick-snapped "Thanks, Burke," he hung up and turned to the commissioner.

"Lorven's name went out on a news broadcast," exclaimed Joe. "Somebody recognized it, and instead of notifying us, they called the newspapers. Every sheet in town has chased reporters up there, all trying to grab a scoop."

"Up where?" demanded Weston.

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

"At the rooming house where Lorven lived," returned Cardona. "Pawing through everything, I suppose. That's what the call was about, to tell them where Lorven lived. Burke was decent enough to let us in on it. I'll remember it."

"You can remember Burke while we're on the way there," snapped the commissioner. "We must get to the place before those reporters walk off with everything in it."

The commissioner's car was below. They hurried to it and sped for the address that Burke had given.

The reporters had staged their invasion, a dozen strong. But an oversized landlady in an undersized dressing gown had somewhat stemmed their progress. She'd shown them to Lorven's room, arguing that they had no right, to enter the place, but when she admitted that he'd been away two weeks and that his room rent was overdue, the reporters had insisted that they therewith had a right to go in.

The news hawks were musing through everything when the police arrived. Leaving Weston and Cranston at the door, Cardona sprang into the room and demanded that all trophies be handed over. Among other things that the reporters tossed on Lorven's bed were copies of a blue-covered paper pamphlet.

"You can have them, Joe," said one. "We've got our story. We know why Lorven knocked off Dreeland. He'd been reading up on the Philosophy of Achievement, by Philo Murlock, the crackpot professor who was bounced from five different colleges. Read it yourself; we can get copies."

Cardona picked up the pamphlets. They were all alike, which indicated that Lorven had bought several, intending to distribute copies among his friends. One of the reporters, going out, yelled back:

"Look on Page 30 and spot the paragraph that Lorven marked. That's the one we're going to run!"

Cardona passed samples to Weston and Cranston. The Shadow was familiar with the writings of Professor Philo Murlock, but not to the exact paragraph and page. Like his companions, he looked for the marked passage. It read:

Life can be measured only in terms of achievement. Small though the individual may deem himself to be, he may become great through accomplishment. One deed is sufficient, if it brings the full spotlight upon him. That deed accomplished, his real work is done. He need not care if life holds nothing more for him; he may regard himself the happier, the shorter his remaining life span. This may be his motto: "Achieve, and die!"

Cardona was muttering through the final words of the marked passage. Its point struck home to him as he finished. He looked at the others in alarm.

"This stuff is dynamite!" exclaimed Joe. "Look how Lorven took it. He figured he'd make himself great by knocking off someone like Dreeland. Achieve, and die—that's what Lorven did."

"You are right, inspector," agreed Weston, thumbing through the pamphlet that he held. "Lorven had to imbibe the rest of Murlock's philosophy to attain his murderous mood, but there is no question that he did it. Listen to these samples."

THERE were plenty of them. According to Murlock, there were no laws of right and wrong, except as concerned the individual. Wealth and high position were things to be condemned and obliterated by those who did not have them.

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

Not that Murlock advised murder as the remedy. He simply excluded murder from his vocabulary, therefore eliminating it, indirectly, as crime. He left it to his readers to form their own conclusions, as Lorven, quite apparently, had done.

"There was a lot of comment about Dreeland," recalled Weston, "the way he was buying hotels right and left. That condemned him, in Lorven's opinion. So Lorven decided that his big deed would be to murder Dreeland. Having no further need for life. Lorven committed suicide."

"When the newspapers run that stuff," gruffed Cardona, "every nut in town will take it to heart. But there's no stopping them now, commissioner. They'd howl about the freedom of the press, and what not."

Weston decided to call the newspaper offices and see what could be done. Cardona followed him downstairs, while The Shadow remained, to survey the wreckage of the room from which Lorven had been absent for the past two weeks.

A low, strange laugh came from The Shadow.

To The Shadow, this set-up was a blind. Having witnessed murder and suicide, both by Terry Lorven, he believed that one was intended, the other not. Lorven's death, in The Shadow's opinion, was the result of a double cross.

The pamphlets written by Professor Philo Murlock looked like planted evidence, to steer the police along a wrong trail. But there was one point, held by the law, with which The Shadow concurred: Other murders would logically follow Lorven's killing of Dreeland.

Not murders by fanatics stirred by the example of a man supposedly crazed. Murders by design, with Professor Philo Murlock as the scapegoat for a hidden master plotter.

It would be The Shadow's purpose to prevent those coming deeds of death.

## CHAPTER V. SKELETONS RATTLE.

THE story of Terry Lorven and the Murlock pamphlets broke full force, the next morning. None of the newspapers shared Weston's alarm. They said it was their business to report facts as they found them, and insisted that the exposure of Lorven's motive for murder would do more benefit than harm.

For one thing, it might halt the literary efforts of Professor Philo Murlock, who had left for parts unknown, a month or more before, to work on a new, and larger, book that would amplify his "Philosophy of Achievement." So the stories were run, and the "dynamite," as Cardona termed it, was simply waiting for more sparks like Terry Lorven.

Many persons refused to take the case too seriously. One such was Roswell Arlingame. Talking with visitors who happened to be in his office, Arlingame explained his views.

Fanatics always existed, according to Arlingame. If one thing did not start them off, another would. He couldn't share the opinions of wealthy friends, who were talking about hiring bodyguards. In fact, Roswell Arlingame laughed heartily at such a notion.

Roswell Arlingame often laughed. When he did, he laughed pleasantly, which was one reason why so many people liked him. The employees in Arlingame's office agreed that none had ever worked for a finer or more

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

understanding boss. They liked his nephews, too, and his niece, Muriel.

The nephews were all pleasant, like Arlingame, and quite as successful, in small ways, as their Uncle Roswell. They held responsible positions with excellent business houses, and whenever they found time, they dropped in to see their uncle more often than did Muriel.

It wasn't uncommon for two or three of the nephews to call at the same time, and occasionally, all four met with Roswell Arlingame.

On this day, two of the nephews lunched with their uncle and came back to the office with him. They were just about to leave, when a third called, so the others stayed awhile.

The employees glanced at the closed door of Arlingame's private office and smiled whenever they heard laughter emerge. Arlingame was evidently having a jolly time with his three nephews.

It happened that Uncle Roswell was rattling the family skeletons, and the nephews were enjoying it.

From behind his big desk, Roswell watched his nephews smile. He liked their expressions, for they were much alike. Three of a kind: Jack, Thaddeus and Gordon. It happened that Jack and Thaddeus were brothers; and old Roswell remembered that Gordon had a brother, too.

"Too bad that Bushby isn't here," said Roswell to Gordon. "Still, it was necessary for him to take a vacation at this time. He is with us in spirit, like my own brothers and our ancestors. We have a tradition in our family—a tradition that we have kept."

Picking up a newspaper, Roswell flaunted it before his nephews. They chuckled as they saw the headlines telling of Dreeland's murder and Lorven's suicide.

"To your credit, Jack," said Roswell, "you brought Lorven into the fold, so that I could redeem him. We shall soon see how well the others chose the men we needed. But here is something of more importance for the moment."

RISING, Roswell went to a safe and brought out a sheaf of papers, which he spread as he would a hand of playing cards.

"Contracts from Dreeland Hotels, Incorporated," declared Roswell, "authorizing me to dispose of some of the properties that Dreeland bought. I didn't want to take them." He shook his head and smiled. "No, I didn't want to take them."

The nephews grinned in Roswell's own style.

"Good properties while Dreeland was alive," explained Roswell, "but white elephants after his death. The corporation is willing to unload at a great loss, and I am trying to help them without accepting a commission. All that I shall ask is payment of necessary expenses.

"But our actual profit will exceed a million dollars. No one knows of our own hotel chain, that we have so carefully created by proxy. Six months from now, it will blossom into life, owning or controlling the properties which Dreeland bought at higher prices. How easy it is to gain through one man's death."

There was a nod from Jack.

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

"I heard you say that before," said the nephew, "when you talked to Lorven and offered him a hundred thousand dollars if he would get rid of Dreeland."

"It would have been worth it," agreed Roswell. "But we couldn't afford to let Lorven live. He might have been caught, you know. But before we proceed, let us hold our usual ceremony."

The ceremony was simple. Uncle Roswell brought an old family album from the safe and turned the pages, so that his nephews could see them. The old man had a history which went with each photograph, beginning with the tintypes.

The original Roswell had played both sides to perfection, back in the days of the American Revolution. His fortune, divided among three sons, had started the next generation along paths as crooked as his own.

So it went with all the Arlingames. But their main pride did not lie in the crimes that they had committed. The great claim was the fact that no Arlingame had ever served a day in jail, even for the most trivial of offenses. When an Arlingame had a head start, the law could never catch up with him.

"We of the present clan claim a new distinction," asserted Roswell, as he put the album away. "Hitherto, the Arlingames worked separately. We have learned the value of cooperation. Which reminds me"—he was looking from Jack to Thaddeus—"did you have much trouble convincing Lorven about the net?"

"It wasn't too easy," returned Thaddeus. "I couldn't have handled it without Jack."

"That settles it." Roswell turned to Gordon. "We shall have to show the dead wagon to Belder, tonight."

"It's ready," returned Gordon. "Thaddeus and I can take care of it. Jack ought to be around, though."

Jack nodded his willingness to cooperate. Old Roswell beamed in his happiest fashion.

"A sweet million today," he chuckled, "and another tomorrow. Of course"—he raised a warning forefinger—"we must not forget the future. One stroke is dependent on another, and the third will be the most important. After that, we can afford to count our chickens."

UNCLE ROSWELL took time out to answer a telephone call from the directors of the Dreeland hotel chain. Much to the admiration of the listening nephews, Roswell pleaded to be relieved of the burden that had been imposed upon him. It took persuasion from at least three directors to reconcile him to the work that lay ahead.

There was another interruption as soon as the phone call was finished. Someone knocked, to say that a package had arrived. Roswell looked to Gordon, who nodded. The package was brought into the office.

"The special newspapers," Roswell told Jack and Thaddeus. "Gordon took care of them. I shall keep copies for you at Stony Lodge. It would be unwise even to open them here."

He picked up the telephone, called the outer office and asked the switchboard operator to summon Bradwood, with the car. Tucking the bundle of newspapers under his arm, where they made only a slight burden in their rolled wrapper, Roswell Arlingame reached for his hat and cane. The nephews were rising, too, when Jack queried:

"What about Muriel?"

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

Old Roswell raised his eyebrows in inquiring fashion. His wrinkled forehead seemed to smile along with his lips.

"Muriel has done well," he said, finally. "She brought in a recruit last night. A very capable young man, named Stephen Osden."

"But does she know about these conferences?"

"Not yet. However, Muriel will be one of us. It is in the blood, and cannot fail. I might say that my brother Elredge, Muriel's father, was by far the greatest rascal in all the Arlingame clan. Ah, how deep his schemes went! I had more difficulty reconstructing them than in any other instance. Muriel will stand the test."

Both Thaddeus and Gordon accepted their uncle's assurance, but Jack remained uncertain. He put the argument that Muriel was a woman, and when Roswell replied that the feminine gender of the Arlingame tribe ran as true to evil form as did the masculine, Jack still wasn't quite convinced.

"Maybe she's in love with Steve Osden—"

"She is in love with him," interposed Roswell, "and that is precisely why I have not included her in our conferences. I intend to treat her as we do the dupes—to let her think that all is rosy for them."

"But when Steve's turn comes?"

"She can believe that he is safely away. As an Arlingame, she will defend his action and thereby reconcile herself to crime. As a woman, she will condemn him for putting crime ahead of his love for her. That will end her love for him, and Muriel will be glad when she learns what really happened to him."

It was Jack who led the chorus of admiration that greeted Roswell's remarkable display of logic. Like sheep, the nephews fell in line behind their uncle as he walked from his office.

Black sheep, but they looked white to those who saw them pass. Never had Roswell Arlingame seemed more benign, as he bowed to the office staff when they wished him a pleasant stay at Stony Lodge. Never had the visiting nephews seemed prouder of their uncle.

On the street, where Bradwood was standing by the open door of the limousine, Roswell voiced a parting aphorism.

"Logic is a tonic for conniving minds," he told his nephews. "Only fools would believe the maudlin sentiments which Professor Philo Murlock terms a philosophy of achievement. That is why our choice was wise when we picked Murlock for the scapegoat."

"He is a fool, and so are our dupes—Lorven and the rest of them. In identifying our dupes with Murlock, we are creating a false logic that no one can ever break down."

Uncle Roswell stepped into his limousine. Bradwood took the wheel, and the big car started on another trip to Stony Lodge. The waving nephews saw their uncle's beaming face as it turned back toward them.

If Roswell Arlingame had ever heard of The Shadow, it was quite certain that he included crime's master foe among those whom false logic would deceive.

## CHAPTER VI. AT STONY LODGE.

LIFE was pleasant at Stony Lodge; at least, Steve Osden had found it so, within a single day.

The country estate of Roswell Arlingame was situated upon a rolling hillside that afforded a view of half the county, and the grounds about the graystone mansion covered hundreds of acres, so Steve had been told. But, so far, Steve had found sufficient interest at the mansion among the people he had met there.

They were all like himself—chaps who had taken life the hard way, and didn't care. All had felt the influence of Roswell Arlingame and were willing to accept his terms, though they made no mention of what those terms might be. However, Steve had heard enough to convince him that Muriel's uncle could talk straight from the shoulder, and that was the sort of thing Steve liked.

To date, Steve had chided himself on one thing only: his weakness to do just what he wanted. He had mentioned that fact to Muriel, often, and instead of being horrified, the girl had agreed with him. Probably she had relayed those conversations to her uncle, and the thought pleased Steve.

He was looking forward to a confab with old Roswell. The benign old gentleman would learn something. He would find out that whatever he proposed, Steve would be ready to undertake it, provided that Roswell had proof that it could be done.

Such was the apparent attitude of the others at Stony Lodge, a full dozen of them. Muriel had left Steve with the crowd and had gone for a day's ride on horseback, over the many bridle trails of her uncle's estate. At present, Steve and his new associates were out in the Italian garden behind the house, sprawled on grass and benches.

With one exception.

A young man, with a thin, cold face, had set up a target and was tossing knives at it. His name was Roy Belder, and Steve admired him for his coolness and his marksmanship. At thirty feet, Belder could lay six knives into a bull's-eye so closely, that their points seemed to merge into one.

There was another in the crowd who captured Steve's admiration. He was a sharp-faced chap named Tresher, who had been expelled from medical school for reasons that he did not mind mentioning, in detail.

Scholarship hadn't been a factor, one way or the other, for Tresher had led his classes. In fact, he regarded himself a full-fledged physician, in all respects except his lack of a college degree and a license to practice medicine.

Like the rest, Tresher had been coaxed to Stony Lodge by one of Arlingame's nephews. He had been on the bum because all other friends had deserted him; hence, he had welcomed his new environment.

To Steve, who preferred the underdog, no matter how snarling and wrong it might be, Tresher was worthy of admiration, with his quick eye and ability to size up a situation. It was Tresher who noted Steve's admiration of Belder's knife throwing, and seized the matter with a touch of wit.

"Knives have their points," commented Tresher, "but they are antiquated, when compared with modern weapons. If I had reason to practice marksmanship, I would use a revolver. You should have seen the way Lorven handled that .38 of his."

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

Buzzed admiration came from the other listeners.

"Lorven could have clipped a pair of tonsils at thirty yards," continued Tresher. "Of course, the patient wouldn't have survived, but I'd rather have let Lorven blast me than take chances with some of those old dodderwits that taught us in medical school. By the way"—Tresher swung to the others—"I wonder how Lorven made out last night?"

"Why wonder?" queried Belder, coming over with his knives. "With the set-up Lorven had, he couldn't miss out."

"Not unless—"

Tresher paused, with a glance toward Steve. Then, in his quick style, the medico changed the subject. He caught the sound of an approaching motor, and used it as a pretext.

"Arlingame is here," said Tresher. "We'd better go into the house. He will want to talk to us."

THEY went into the spacious mansion. Dusk was closing in, and Steve thought that his own face was well mingled with those of the others, but Arlingame picked him out immediately and clapped him on the shoulder.

"I want you to come with us," said the smiling man. "I have much to tell you, Stephen, and you can learn it rapidly when you hear what I have to say to the others. This way."

He led them into his study, an ample room, lavishly furnished and with enough chairs for all. Unwrapping some newspapers, Arlingame distributed them among the crowd. Steve heard pleased exclamations when the others read the headlines. Looking over Tresher's shoulder, Steve saw what it was all about.

A large headline announced the death of a millionaire named James Dreeland, who had been slain by a killer who had mysteriously disappeared from a suite on the twelfth floor of a New York hotel. Avidly, Tresher read down the column, and turned to look for the page on which the story was continued. He couldn't find it.

"Sorry," remarked Arlingame, dryly, "I only brought the front pages."

He did not add how easily front pages of newspapers could be faked. It had been a common thing at the New York World's Fair, the business of supplying current newspapers with spaces whereon individual headlines could be printed. But Roswell's nephew, Gordon, had improved the idea, by faking a whole column along with the banner at the top.

"After all," declared Arlingame, gathering in the newspapers, "you know the rest of the story. By that, I mean the inside story. Any man as calculating as Lorven could easily land in a net, after shooting a victim like Dreeland."

Despite himself, Steve was intrigued. It was the very contrast that captured him. Dawning through Steve's brain was the fact that Roswell Arlingame, the kindest man that he had ever met, was a master designer of murder.

Only a while ago, Steve had been considering himself too tough for Arlingame, wondering what Muriel's uncle would think if he heard Steve cut loose with hardened opinions. It was Uncle Roswell who was teaching things to Steve, instead.



## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

Furthermore, there was the sentiment from Steve's new friends. Sentiment was hardly the word for it; they were calloused. But their hardness was as cold as steel, the very sort that Steve had always admired. In a single day he had learned to like their friendship, and wasn't yet ready to deny it.

"My nephews did the rest," chuckled Arlingame. "People used to wonder why they liked to go smelt fishing. Use of the net, its proper hauling, is an art in itself. Jack and Thaddeus are proficient. I believe that they managed it in less than half a minute, after Terry was safely through the window.

"Terry is on his way. His part is unknown, and he is gliding along a very lovely rainbow, which will land him in South America with a hundred thousand dollars as the pot of gold. At this particular hour, Terry is in—"

Glancing at his watch, Arlingame halted suddenly and raised his hand, saying: "Wait!"

He went to a radio cabinet in the corner. It was the only radio in the house. Tuning in on a station, Arlingame gave a pleased nod as he heard the announcement of a news broadcast. The first item concerned the weather; then came a sharp voice:

"Manhattan's newest mystery still baffles the police. The only solution, incredible though it seems, is that the killer of James Dreeland had wings. No plane was heard overhead at the time, hence the police are making tests with gliders to learn, if by some remote chance, it would be possible—"

Cutting off the radio, Arlingame returned to his desk. He pressed a button to summon Bradwood; while he was waiting, he beckoned to Belder.

"Your turn comes tonight," said Arlingame, pleasantly. "You will have no trouble, Roy, but I know what worries you. The same thing that bothered Terry—the matter of an out."

Belder nodded.

"It can't be the net," continued Arlingame. "There would be no place to put one, and I do not care to use the same escape twice. Actually, I have a better way for you." Rising from the desk, Arlingame looked to the door. "Ah, here is Bradwood."

THE chauffeur approached the desk. From the desk drawer, Arlingame brought a vial containing a purplish liquid and poured it into a glass of water. The slight odor of almonds filled the room. Steve heard Tresher whisper something about a very deadly poison.

Arlingame gave the glass to Bradwood, saying:

"Drink it."

Bradwood complied. The effect was immediate. The chauffeur staggered, the glass dropped from his hand; crashing, it spattered its remaining contents over Arlingame's desk. Still smiling, Arlingame studied the stiffened face of the chauffeur. He looked to Tresher, motioned for the medical student to approach.

"Tell me," suggested Arlingame. "is Bradwood really dead?"

Stooping, Tresher tested Bradwood's pulse, listened for a heartbeat. After a brief examination, he arose, sniffed the liquid on the desk.

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

"Dead as they make them!" declared Tresher. "Want me to bury him? I've snatched plenty of bodies. Sticking one under a tombstone would be a cinch."

The others laughed. Steve felt himself join the merriment. His tone was forced and his lips quivered, but if they could take it, he could. After all, Arlingame probably had good reasons for killing Bradwood. Old Uncle Roswell seemed to have good reasons for everything he did.

"It is hardly necessary, Tresher," remarked Arlingame very dryly. "Nevertheless, I appreciate the offer. But I would suggest that you watch Bradwood."

Tresher did. Of all the astonished throng, the medico was the most amazed. Slowly, before his very eyes, Bradwood came back to life!

To Steve, the chauffeur seemed a living corpse at first, but it was soon evident that Bradwood was quite as whole as ever. Reaching to his pocket, Arlingame brought out the vial with the purplish liquid and handed it to Belder.

"My own concoction," said Arlingame, proudly. "You saw how it deceived Tresher. It smells like deadly poison, and acts like it, but only for a temporary period. But I want you to use the full quantity, Roy. You will have to play dead in a thoroughly convincing fashion for half an hour, at least.

"In that case, they will take you for a suicide after you have accomplished your work. They will send you to the morgue in a thing they call the dead wagon. But it won't be the vehicle that they expect. It will be a very special dead wagon, brought by my nephews, Thaddeus and Gordon."

Arlingame's chuckle brought an echo from Belder's lips. With a wave, Arlingame dismissed the throng, including Belder, who was pocketing the vial. Following along, the benign man overtook Steve and clapped him on the shoulder.

"You took it well," complimented Arlingame. "Say nothing to Muriel, for the present. Stay with your friends, like Tresher. I know that you understand."

Steve nodded, feeling oddly convinced that his new friends were real. Looking back, he saw Arlingame closing the door of the study.

WHAT happened behind that door would have been an amazing revelation to Steve, as well as the others. Bradwood had remained with Arlingame; his gray-haired employer clapped the chauffeur on the back.

"The fake announcement was excellent!" approved Arlingame. "I wouldn't have known your voice myself, Bradwood. The cut-in operated perfectly. We must use the radio more often. As for the way you died, I almost wondered—"

"If you'd given me the wrong bottle?" put in Bradwood. "I didn't. You don't make mistakes like that, boss. It wasn't tough to fool Tresher with that fade-away pulse beat. I used to be a stooge for a hypnotist. I've bluffed plenty of doctors."

"So you told me, Bradwood. I knew, too, that Tresher would not be carrying his stethoscope. The scent of almonds convinced him, too.

"Real almonds provided it very nicely. It was good work, Bradwood. Do you know, you are like one of the family!"

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

The compliment pleased Bradwood. His poker face actually betrayed a grimace that he meant for a smile.

"Take Belder into town," added Arlingame, "just as you did Lorven. Meet the fake dead wagon—"

Arlingame stopped, at Bradwood's stare. Mouth agape, the chauffeur inquired:

"You mean there is one?"

"Yes," nodded Arlingame. "Just for show. It won't stay around after Belder has seen it. Nor will you, Bradwood."

Ushering the chauffeur from the study, Arlingame returned to his desk, pleased that his new scheme for a double cross was under way. With Bradwood as the go-between, Arlingame knew that his always-reliable nephews would set the scene for the evening's murder drama, in which Roy Belder was to be the principal actor.

With one crime slated so close upon another, only a new stroke of luck could bring The Shadow to the next scene where murder was intended!

### CHAPTER VII. WAYS IN THE DARK.

To Commissioner Ralph Weston, the solving of a crime should mean the end of it. This rule didn't hold in the case of James Dreeland. Though the police had found the killer, Terry Lorven, the public was not satisfied. At least, not that portion of the public which concerned Weston most intimately.

Late in the evening, Weston was pouring his tale of woe to his friend Lamont Cranston, who had joined the commissioner at the exclusive Cobalt Club, where both were members.

"All persons are equal in the eyes of the law," declaimed Weston, "but it is the duty of the police, who are pledged to protect lives and property, to consider the welfare of those people most likely to become targets for crime."

"By such people," observed The Shadow, "I presume that you mean others like James Dreeland."

"Precisely," returned Weston. "We know that Terry Lorven was a fanatic, inspired by the false philosophy of Professor Murlock. If Lorven's madness marks the beginning of an epidemic, new attacks will reach men of wealth—like these."

Weston passed The Shadow a list as long as a menu card. It contained the names of many successful New Yorkers, particularly those who had recently figured in important business transactions.

"I've heard from all of them," Weston emphasized. "They are cranks, Cranston. Each one feels that his life is threatened by some fanatic. Fortunately, I found one answer that satisfied most of them. I said that I shall find Professor Philo Murlock."

"Will you?"

"Eventually, yes. By then, the mess will have blown over. So far, I haven't started to look for Murlock. We cannot yet regard him as a party to Lorven's crime."

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

With a pencil, Weston checked one of the names on the list, speaking the while in an indulgent tone.

"I had to humor this chap," said the commissioner. "William Caythorn, president of Pan-Ocean Shippers. He's been buying up a lot of smaller companies, and his affairs are so involved that he refuses to trust anyone, even his own associates. He talks vaguely of enemies, but won't mention any by name until he sees me."

"Caythorn is coming over here?"

"No, indeed! He wouldn't think of leaving the shelter of his own domicile. He wants me to come over there, but I'm not going, Cranston. I'm too busy"—the commissioner leaned back, in satisfied style—"so I sent Inspector Cardona instead. He started for Caythorn's about ten minutes ago."

Mention of Cardona's excursion reminded Cranston that he had an appointment of his own. Leaving the Cobalt Club, the impassive Mr. Cranston stepped into a waiting limousine. He gave an address to his chauffeur, naming a destination quite close to Caythorn's residence.

As the big car wheeled away, darkness blotted Cranston. It came from beneath the rear seat, that darkness, in the shape of a black cloak and a slouch hat, garments that Cranston took from a hidden drawer. The limousine's passenger was no longer Lamont Cranston.

He had become The Shadow.

So far, The Shadow had figured actively in attempting to halt a thrust of crime, and he had later been the dominant factor in its investigation. But he had appeared only in the guise of Cranston, which indicated that his progress had been comparatively slight. When hard upon the heels of criminals, The Shadow usually appeared in his garb of black.

At present, however, appearances were deceptive.

The Shadow did not regard Caythorn's case as a definite link back to Dreeland's. He simply considered it as something worth while for an off night. Possibly, Caythorn was under some threat, though not necessarily from the same source that Dreeland had been. At any rate, Caythorn's was the only name on Weston's list that might possibly count.

It would be interesting to look in on Caythorn's interview with Cardona. More interesting than trying to trace the missing professor, Philo Murlock, which The Shadow had started to do, through Clyde Burke and other agents, but with no results, so far.

WHILE Cranston's big car was moving to its destination, another limousine stopped on the very street that The Shadow had picked as a logical starting point for a secret trip to Caythorn's.

The limousine was Arlingame's, chauffeured by Bradwood, with Roy Belder as its passenger.

Bradwood stopped near the entrance to an alley. Two young men recognized the limousine and approached it. They were Arlingame's nephews, Thaddeus and Gordon. Shoving a package under his left arm, Roy Belder stepped from the limousine and shook hands with the two men who received him.

It was Thaddeus who gestured Belder into the alley, while Gordon was chatting with Bradwood. There was a light truck parked in the alley, and Thaddeus pointed it out with pride. The truck was painted a very shiny black, and it had gold letters on it, which said: "CITY MORGUE."

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

"The dead wagon," explained Thaddeus. "Gordon and I have a couple of uniforms, too. Ever see the boys from the morgue work?"

Belder shook his head.

"They don't waste time," said Thaddeus. "They roll in, pick up what's waiting for them, and get back. Nobody bothers any more about them, until the medical examiner shows up. That may not be for a couple of hours. In your case, Roy, a couple of hours mean a perfect getaway, with another mystery for the police."

Gordon had returned. The two nephews pointed Belder through the alley, which made a short route to the rear of Caythorn's house, a few blocks away. The limousine moved along the street, while Thaddeus and Gordon climbed into the dead wagon. Thaddeus gave a chuckle much like his uncle's.

"Belder is sold," assured Thaddeus. "He didn't even ask for the dope sheet. He probably figures we'll hand it to him when he joins us, later."

"We'd better stick here a little while," returned Gordon, "just in case he decides to come back for it. I told Bradwood to swing around past Caythorn's, to make sure that Belder went in there. He'll tip us off if there's a slip."

"You told Bradwood to pick up Jack, later?"

"Yes, and Jack knows where to meet us."

The nephews waited for a few minutes, then decided to be on their way. Thaddeus was just starting to nose the fake dead wagon out of the alley, when Gordon gestured for him to stop. A large car had swung in from the next corner, so Thaddeus reversed into the alley, until it passed.

"It's Bradwood," announced Gordon, "but he isn't stopping. He probably came back past here to let us know that Belder went into Caythorn's."

Gordon was mistaken. The car wasn't Arlingame's limousine. It was another, just as big, which was why the nephew was deceived. Limousines were none too common in the side streets of Manhattan, especially in the rather decadent neighborhood where Caythorn was living. He resided there because he happened to like his old-fashioned house.

The limousine was Cranston's.

Pulling out from the alley, Thaddeus swung the shiny dead wagon along the one-way street, in the same direction that the limousine had gone. The big car was out of sight, which caused the nephews to suppose that Bradwood had continued on his way.

This time, both were wrong.

The Shadow had spotted the truck in the alley. In Cranston's tone, he had ordered his chauffeur to pull into a parking space near the next corner.

When the lights went off, at The Shadow's order, the limousine didn't look much different from the other cars that were lined along the secluded street.

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

Keenly, The Shadow watched the truck when it passed. Out in the center of the street, it caught what little light there was. The Shadow noted its shiny black paint and the gold letters on its side. Those tokens did not convince him.

This didn't look like the usual sort of vehicle that would come from the morgue. It might have passed ordinary inspection, but not The Shadow's. Furthermore, dead wagons didn't cruise the streets like taxicabs, nor park in alleys as mob cars might.

Ordinarily, The Shadow would have taken up the trail of the mystery truck; but not on this occasion.

The truck itself was ominous. It stood for death. In this neighborhood, it was testimony that Caythorn's fears of enemies might be real. Even the tune of the truck's motor sounded as a prelude to murder. As Cranston in tone, at least, The Shadow spoke to his chauffeur.

"Follow that truck, Stanley," he ordered. "Use discretion, of course, and after you learn where it has gone, come back to the club. I'm dropping off to keep an appointment."

THE SHADOW did drop off, so silently that Stanley would not have known it except for the thump of the limousine's door, which was a signal for him to be on his way.

Often, in the past, Cranston had disembarked on unusual missions which Stanley had considered to be his employer's own business. A few times, Cranston had delegated Stanley to follow some other car, but only when there seemed a reason for it, as in this instance.

Trailing the truck was easy. It was shiny enough to be kept in sight, and its closed rear made it difficult for the men in front to notice that the limousine was following them. Stanley took up the task with a zest that pleased The Shadow, as he noted the big car's departure.

Then The Shadow was blended with the darkness of the alley. His shrouding cloak hid his swift-moving form, making it seem a part of night itself. Using the same route that Belder had taken five minutes earlier, The Shadow was taking the only way, and the shortest, to Caythorn's house.

But The Shadow could only hope he would be in time to avert impending doom. His instinct told him that a man of murder must have gone ahead!

## CHAPTER VIII. TOO MANY COOKS.

HUDDLED in a corner of what he termed his library, William Caythorn was voicing fears to Inspector Joe Cardona. It happened that Joe was not impressed, either by the room or by the man.

To begin with, the room wasn't much of a library. It looked more like a sitting room, with a single bookcase in one corner. As for Caythorn, he didn't seem to know what his fears were all about. He had begun by mentioning the term "they"; at last, he had narrowed it down to "he."

"Who is this 'he'?" queried Cardona. "I've got to know his name to find him, don't I?"

Caythorn licked his lips. They were thin and pale, like the rest of his peaked face. But Caythorn's eyes were quick and birdlike, too much so to suit Cardona. If Joe had been called upon to pick a fanatic and arrest him, he would have taken Caythorn as first choice.

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

"His ways are hidden," declared Caythorn, in a wheezy voice. "The companies that I intend to purchase have passed through many hands. There is no way of telling who controls them. But I have an idea—"

"Let's hear it."

Caythorn shook his head.

"I need proof first," he insisted. "I am willing to mention the name that I have in mind, but not officially. I might tell the commissioner, personally, but it would have to be quite confidential."

Cardona shrugged. He wasn't in a position to speak for Commissioner Weston on such a matter.

"Meanwhile," pleaded Caythorn, "I want police protection. Look at the plight I am in, inspector! I have had to dismiss all my servants except the cook, Miguel. He is the only one that I can trust, but I cannot expect him to keep working twenty-four hours at a stretch."

If Miguel had been working that long already, he was managing not to show it. He entered the room, as Caythorn mentioned him, and Cardona agreed that Miguel did look honest, as well as tireless.

Miguel was a Filipino, and very efficient. He had admitted Cardona to the house, and was taking advantage of the inspector's presence to attend to some routine duties.

Spick and span in a white jacket, Miguel emptied ash trays into a wastebasket, put some books in place. He picked up a metal decanter, shook the water bottle and found that it was empty, so he carried it out into the kitchen.

From there, Cardona could hear him going upstairs, but knew that he would soon be down again. Miguel had a way of moving in one door and out another, accomplishing tasks along the way, and since there were three doors to Caythorn's library, the Filipino might appear from anywhere, at almost any time.

Caythorn began to talk again. It was the same story—his business was being undermined, though none of his associates would recognize it. That was because they did not know the shipping business as well as Caythorn did; otherwise, they would believe him. He was pleading for protection and could convince the commissioner that he needed it, if Weston would only visit the house personally.

"I'll talk to the commissioner," promised Joe, rising from his chair. "You'll hear from him later."

"No, no!" shrilled Caythorn, anxiously. "Don't go! I feel safer while you're here, inspector. Wait until Miguel comes back; then you can call the commissioner. The telephone is in the hallway."

At that moment, Miguel did come back through one door and laid a fresh box of cigars on Caythorn's table. Crossing to another doorway, Miguel paused there to adjust a curtain that was awry. Beckoning to Cardona, Caythorn opened the box of cigars.

"Have another smoke, inspector. Then make your telephone call. I think that the commissioner will agree to see me."

Cardona accepted a cigar. He was lighting it, when, from the corner of his eye, he noted Miguel entering from the kitchen. The white-jacketed man was bringing the decanter on a tray, along with some glasses. He turned away to place the tray on a window ledge, then stepped to the bookcase in the far corner to rearrange some volumes.

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

It didn't surprise Joe that Miguel had returned so suddenly. He had last seen the Filipino at the doorway that led out to the hallway. He assumed that Miguel had gone to the kitchen by a roundabout route, to bring back the water bottle and the glasses. But when Cardona leaned back to look at Caythorn, the man's appearance startled him.

His peaked face livid, Caythorn appeared to have really gone crazy. Cardona's small belief in the shipping man's sanity was suddenly shredded.

Tiny eyes bulging, lips wide in a frenzied grimace, Caythorn was bobbing his head from side to side. Lifting his scrawny hand, he spread two fingers, so that they pointed at different angles. He seemed to be making a sign to ward off witches.

Then from Caythorn's throat came a gurgling shriek, a single word, which did not need his lips to aid it:

"Look!"

Cardona looked. Caythorn's double point convinced him that the man wasn't crazy. If anyone happened to be crazy, it was Joe himself. He was glad, at that moment, to be with Caythorn, for their mutual sight of the impossible made Joe decide that they both had their sanity.

Caythorn was pointing to two Miguels!

One was still by the curtain of the hallway door. Apparently, the curtain had slipped from its rod, for the Filipino was fixing it back in place. His back was turned, and Cardona could not see his face.

Perhaps the man had a reason to hide it. His hair looked black, but that could have been because of the gloom near the curtain. Cardona wasn't at all sure that he was Miguel.

As for the other, his back was turned, too, and he was well out of the light, which made his hair look black and also made it impossible to identify him. He was over at the bookcase, quite busy there.

One thing, alone, struck Cardona as certain. There were too many cooks who called themselves Miguel. One was an impostor; the question was which.

It didn't occur to Joe that Miguel had arranged the books earlier, which was a point against the man who had just brought in the decanter and glasses. Cardona considered it more relevant that the man by the hallway door was spending a long while fixing the curtain. Joe didn't like such stalling tactics. They aroused his suspicions.

So much, in fact, that Cardona forgot that the Miguel by the curtain could not have seen the other, who entered later; whereas the Miguel who was bothering with the books might very well have noticed his double by the doorway.

Joe was sure that he had guessed which Miguel was phony. Impatiently, Cardona surged forward, pushing back Caythorn as the latter tried to stop him.

It was Caythorn who had figured a way to find the Filipino, but Cardona didn't give him time to put the test. Joe was already at the doorway, when Caythorn shrieked:

"Miguel!"



## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

THE man by the curtain turned. He was the real Miguel, and answered naturally enough to his master's call. If Cardona had waited, if even he hadn't been so close to Miguel when the Filipino swung about, all might have been well.

But Miguel, hearing Caythorn's call, could only suppose that it was a warning against Cardona, for Joe was almost upon the startled cook, blocking his vision of Caythorn and the false Miguel across the room.

Furthermore, Cardona was pulling a gun and Miguel therefore took him for an enemy.

Grabbing the police inspector, Miguel gave him what could be termed a "Filipino flip." It was a cross between a jujitsu hold and a good old-fashioned shove.

Joe went backward, his gun sailing from his hand, and Miguel sprang toward him, hoping to pin him to the floor. Cardona's feet came up, met the Filipino's chest and launched him through the door.

Again, Cardona's move was untimely.

Spinning as he went, Miguel came full about to face another gun, brandished by a black-cloaked arrival who was coming through the rear hall. Just in time to hear the scuffle, The Shadow sighted its finish: Cardona flat on the floor, Miguel hurtling through the door. Caythorn was in sight, his head turned toward the fray, but the other Miguel was out of view, still in the corner by the bookcase.

With the real Miguel springing for his throat, The Shadow wheeled to hurl the attacker off. Miguel gained a grip and clung so tightly that The Shadow had to wheel full around, flinging his adversary into the curtain, which came down suddenly, enveloping Miguel and almost smothering him. Short though the interval was, it proved too long.

At that moment, Caythorn gave the cue that he should have furnished earlier. He turned to the corner over by the bookcase. Only Caythorn saw the other man who wore the white jacket. The false Miguel had turned, revealing a hard face that lacked Filipino features.

Caythorn recognized him and cried a name:

"Roy Belder!"

It was Caythorn's last utterance. Belder had not spun about empty-handed. A knife was glistening as it left the assassin's fingers, flung with the same accuracy that Steve Osden had observed that afternoon. At such short range, Belder couldn't miss his target, which in this case was Caythorn's heart. The knife buried home in the victim's chest, driving clear to the hilt.

The Shadow, sensing danger in Caythorn's cry, had swung, but only in time to witness death, as he had the night before. All that he caught was a flash of the glimmering blade as it reached its mark; but that was enough to guide him toward Roy Belder, the cold, calculating killer who had made the fatal throw.

Murder had been done despite The Shadow. Again, his only task was to capture the killer. But this time, The Shadow recognized the necessity for swifter action.

Recalling Lorven's suicide, which had sealed a murderer's lips, The Shadow was determined to prevent a similar deed of self-inflicted death—wittingly or otherwise—on the part of Roy Belder!

## CHAPTER IX. THE PAST TRAIL.

As Caythorn's body corkscrewed to the floor, Belder turned defiantly to stave off any newcomers. There was venom in his glance; his whole bearing resembled Lorven's manner of the evening before. These men of murder liked to proclaim themselves; to gloat over deeds of evil.

Like Lorven, Belder regarded further death as necessary, should anyone challenge his next move. Nevertheless, he was still calculating, for he knew that witnesses would be needed. Seeing three such persons in sight, Belder decided to dispose of one: The Shadow.

It wasn't much a matter of choice. The cloaked fighter was speeding in like a thunderbolt in black. His .45 automatic, shoved ahead of him, could easily have riddled Belder, point-blank, but The Shadow preferred to take the killer alive.

He wanted Belder to behave as Lorven had—to flee from the threat of doom, only to attempt suicide. By thwarting the latter attempt, The Shadow could do more than take a living prisoner. The very peculiarities of the situation could be analyzed later, and used in quizzing Belder as to his real motive in slaying Caythorn.

But Belder's capture was not so easy.

The killer had another knife, which he produced in whipping style, profiting by The Shadow's failure to open fire. Skillfully, Belder launched the blade with a quick, underhand lob, but the glitter betrayed the weapon before it had left the tosser's hand.

The Shadow's sideward swirl carried him free of the whizzing knife, and Belder, astonished because he had missed, was suddenly rooted by a sound he heard.

It was a mocking laugh voiced by The Shadow's hidden lips. A grim taunt of vengeance that was ghostly, rather than human. Perhaps The Shadow was a ghost! At least, the evidence indicated it to Belder.

Sight of his own blade quivering from the doorway where it had struck, was a new experience to the expert knife thrower. Considering the shivery mirth that echoed from the library walls, Belder could well believe that he had slung his emergency weapon right through the black-clad target. Fighting against creatures that had no substance was not in Belder's bargain!

Unfortunately, Miguel did not regard The Shadow as a spook. In wheeling away from Belder's knife toss, The Shadow encountered the Filipino just as Miguel extricated himself from the curtain. Miguel wasn't merely irritated over the ill luck of his first encounter with The Shadow; he still regarded the cloaked fighter as an unwanted invader.

Lost in the curtain at the moment of Caythorn's death, Miguel hadn't seen what happened to The Shadow. With his former adversary twirling right toward him, Miguel tried a new grapple, more scientifically than before. By accident, he brought the curtain with him, but it helped. Tangling in the folds, along with Miguel, The Shadow couldn't shake off the Filipino immediately.

He thought he could leave Belder to Cardona, for Joe was now on his feet and Belder was weaponless. So was Cardona, for that matter, but his gun wasn't far away on the floor. But Joe went after Belder instead of the gun, and the killer, finding himself blocked off from the direction that he wanted, made a dive for the Police Positive and picked it up.

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

Then Belder was on the dodge, making Cardona duck at gestures from the gun. He wasn't trying to get out of the room, though there was a doorway near at hand which he could have used. Belder, quite oddly, was trying to reach the window ledge where he had left the decanter and the glasses.

Pressed too closely by Cardona, Belder decided that he could do without the police inspector as a witness. He aimed the gun, to kill.

It wasn't Belder's unfamiliarity with a revolver that spoiled his aim. He was quite capable of riddling Cardona at this close range. But he couldn't aim right when under fire himself, and a gun had begun to blaze at Belder before he could take a single shot at Joe.

The Shadow was supplying the disturbing fire. One arm thrust from the curtain, he was jabbing with his automatic, trying to nick the killer. Only Miguel's interference prevented The Shadow from reaching the target.

The Filipino was grabbing, clawing at The Shadow's gun hand. Nevertheless, the zing of The Shadow's bullets was too much for Belder.

Trying to change aim from Cardona to The Shadow, Belder popped away with the revolver, hitting all sorts of targets except the two he wanted. He cracked lamps, dug holes in the ceiling, even smashed a large clock on the library mantel; but amid his mad fire, Belder reached the window ledge.

The gun was empty, and Belder realized it. He flung the weapon at Cardona and it grazed Joe's ducking head. Belder had time to seize the decanter, wrench out its cap, and pour himself a glassful of a purplish liquid that the water bottle contained. He was raising the glass to his lips when Cardona lunged in upon him.

At that same moment, The Shadow whisked clear of Miguel and the curtain, leaving the Filipino sprawled within the drape. The Shadow still had bullets in his gun; a single shot could have cracked the glass that Belder lifted. But the glass was gone from sight. Cardona had obscured it by thrusting himself between The Shadow and Belder.

Hurled back against the window ledge, Belder let the glass come with him. A long gulp of the liquid poured into his gaping mouth. Then Cardona had knocked the glass away, scattering its remaining contents and scenting the atmosphere with the odor of almonds. He was pinning Belder's arms behind him, when the killer took a forward lurch.

Joe went along with his burden. He was carried down by Belder's weight, which suddenly took on unaccountable proportions. As the killer thudded the floor, Cardona came to hands and knees and looked at his prisoner. Cardona didn't speak to anyone in particular, except himself, but he stated the truth when he voiced the single word:

"Dead!"

Halted almost at the spot where Caythorn lay, The Shadow could see Belder's body as well. The odor of almonds, the dead weight that Belder's form had taken when it fell, were evidence that the murderer had managed to take his own life very suddenly.

The poison had proven even quicker than Lorven's death plunge from a window at the Hotel Grantham. As with that case, Belder's finish had all the aspects of suicide.

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

His presence no longer needed, The Shadow vanished through the doorway to the kitchen. Cardona, recalling The Shadow's laugh and the timely shots that accompanied it, looked around expecting to see a black-cloaked form. He spied a white-jacketed figure instead.

Miguel was on his feet, clear of the rumpled curtain. The faithful Filipino was staring from Caythorn's body to Belder's, his face blank.

THERE was a listener at hand when Cardona began to question Miguel.

The Shadow had rounded through the kitchen and returned to the hallway. He was in the darkness just beyond the doorway, that no longer had a curtain.

Miguel explained himself well enough. He hadn't seen his double earlier. It was Miguel who had taken the decanter to the kitchen, but he had left it there, he recognized the name of Roy Belder when Cardona mentioned it. He identified Belder as well, though the murderer's face was quite as distorted in death as that of his victim, Caythorn.

"Maybe a month ago," nodded Miguel, "this Belder man came here, talked to Mr. Caythorn, asking for a job. Mr. Caythorn said no, very sorry."

"Did Belder make any threats?"

"No threat," replied Miguel. "Seemed very sad, though. Said he thought rich man like Mr. Caythorn could find a job for poor one. Mr. Caythorn said maybe, perhaps some time."

"Do you know where Belder lived?"

Miguel shook his head.

"We'll check on that later," decided Cardona. "Let's have a look in the kitchen and see if Belder left his coat there."

They found the coat, but it contained nothing of importance. There was some wrapping paper on the table with it, indicating that Belder had brought the white jacket in a package.

Obviously, he had remembered the layout of Caythorn's house from his visit a month before, and had probably seen Miguel bring the decanter into the library. Doubling for the Filipino had been a cute trick on Belder's part, but it had also been the simplest and most logical way to get at Caythorn.

The Shadow did not look into the kitchen, he had already been there. At present, he was making a whispered phone call from the hallway, to a contact man named Burbank, giving special instructions. The Shadow finished the call about the time Cardona was ready to use the telephone.

Coming into the hallway, Joe failed to see the black-clad shape that glided to the darkness of an alcove.

Cardona's routine calls brought two detectives and a medical examiner within ten minutes. Joe had also put in a call to the commissioner, who arrived just when the physician was pronouncing both Caythorn and Belder dead.

Having figured that one out beforehand, Cardona had also called the morgue. Hence, before the doctor had finished with his reports, two men in uniform appeared to take the bodies away.

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

Murderer and victim were carried to the morgue car and unceremoniously placed within. This dead wagon looked quite different from the one that The Shadow had seen earlier. It was shabbier, more cumbersome, and appeared more official, even though antiquated.

From sheltering gloom beside the front steps, The Shadow watched the disposal of the bodies. He noticed that the men from the morgue were given a free hand with them. The Shadow could easily picture why the other dead wagon had been around. Had Belder seen it, which was probable, he would have acknowledged it to be a neat means of escape for a man who didn't happen to be dead.

The eagerness with which Belder had swallowed the purplish substance, which he had doubtless poured from a vial found in his coat pocket, matched the willing way in which Lorven had plunged from a hotel window. Having previously concluded that Lorven had not hoped to die, The Shadow applied the same reasoning to Belder's case.

GLIDING toward the corner, The Shadow reached a cab that was parked with lights out. It was The Shadow's own cab, piloted by an agent named Moe Shrevnitz, otherwise known as Shrevvy. The Shadow preferred it to the limousine, when bound on strenuous missions; hence, he had ordered Burbank to send the cab to Caythorn's.

Once in the cab, The Shadow told Moe to follow the dead wagon and make sure that it was going to the morgue. On the way, The Shadow opened a panel behind the front seat of the cab, brought out a special short-wave radio set into view, and began to talk to Burbank on a two-way hookup.

Burbank, of course, had a telephone available, so The Shadow told him to call the Cobalt Club.

When Burbank got the number, The Shadow spoke in the short-wave set, and Burbank picked up his voice with a mike, similarly transferring the other end of the conversation to The Shadow, who was using Cranston's tone. Learning that Stanley had returned, The Shadow asked to talk to the chauffeur.

Still trailing the genuine dead wagon, The Shadow heard Stanley tell where the other had gone, and thanked the chauffeur in Cranston's style. There was no reason for continuing to the morgue. In a whispered tone, The Shadow's own, the cloaked investigator gave Moe a new destination.

From the past, The Shadow had gained a trail. He was hoping that it would lead to a future sphere of action, against the unseen conspirator who had twice maneuvered murder through such tools as Terry Lorven and Roy Belder!

## CHAPTER X. VANISHED EVIDENCE.

STANLEY had seen the fake dead wagon wheel into the rear door of a large, but obscure West Side garage. The place was in the region of Tenth Avenue, a dark and dismal area far removed from the brighter sections of Manhattan. Approaching the garage by cab, The Shadow saw that the rear door was around the corner from the front, leading into an isolated portion of the big garage.

The street was wide, and some cars were clustered on the other side. They looked as if they had been brought from hotels and parked there until space could be found for them. Naturally, many of them were expensive vehicles and a cab would have appeared oddly out of place among them; hence, The Shadow told Moe to pull close to the rear of the big garage.

Moe was doing so, when The Shadow received an answer to something that had happened earlier, a matter

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

which hadn't particularly impressed him at the time. He learned why the fake dead wagon had pulled from the alley just after Stanley had driven past: namely, because the men in the truck had mistaken the limousine for another.

The limousine that they had in mind was at present parked with the batch of cars behind the West Side garage. It wasn't empty; it had two occupants. Both suddenly opened fire on The Shadow's cab as it swung up toward the rear of the garage.

With the first of those staccato shots, The Shadow recognized that the marksmen were not mobsmen. They didn't try to hurry things. They were using revolvers, not sawed-off shotguns, which would have been more logical weapons for a close-range attack. They were cool, precise in method, as the close whine of their bullets told.

They evidently didn't know who was in the cab, and probably didn't care. If anything, they preferred to polish off the occupants, rather than merely chase the cab away.

They felt that the cab had a purpose opposite to their own, and being a de luxe breed of criminal, they were quite willing to deal out murder, knowing that it would be blamed on the usual hoodlums who frequented this Tenth Avenue sector.

The Shadow sized the situation instantly. He recognized, also, that the gunfire could have another purpose, that of tipping off persons inside the garage. The Shadow's methods could be double-barreled, too. He countered with a move that not only carried the cab clear of the sniping fire, but promised disaster to those within the garage.

A word to Moe and the cabby jerked the wheel hard, stepping on the gas as he did so. The cab leaped straight for the rear door of the garage and shattered its flimsy woodwork into toothpicks, along with a shower of glass that was chopped to mincemeat.

In a trice, the cab was safe from gunfire and The Shadow was within the garage, the destination that he had intended to approach on foot.

Of course, the cab's smashing entry was a warning to the men that The Shadow sought; but they had received the tip-off, anyway, from the shots outside.

Past intervening cars, The Shadow saw two figures spring away from a truck about the size of the fake dead wagon that had been in Caythorn's neighborhood. The two men had just finished washing the vehicle, and decided suddenly that they weren't going to stay around to polish it.

Flinging open the door of the cab, The Shadow went after them so speedily that they didn't have time to draw guns, if they had them. He hurled a challenging laugh, the sort that sometimes caused crooks to turn and give battle, on other occasions terrified them and made them falter in the midst of flight.

But these two kept on, right through a little door, which they slammed behind them and barred from the other side.

It was a steel fire door, that The Shadow couldn't well demolish, and it led outside. So rapidly had the truck washers fled, that The Shadow did not get a look at their faces. His introduction to Arlingame's nephews, Thaddeus and Gordon, was herewith postponed for a later occasion.

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

THERE was nothing to do but regain Moe's cab and speed out through the back. In doing so, The Shadow planned to spring the surprise.

He had marked the exact position of the car from which marksmen had opened fire. If the car had not moved, it would be The Shadow's turn to supply the opening shots, in a fashion that would inform his foemen just how effective the first few shots could be.

If on its way, the car would be an even better target, particularly if it stopped to pick up the men who had been washing the shiny dead wagon.

Of course, a great deal depended upon Moe, but the cabby had already pulled to the front of the garage, where he could turn around, and The Shadow expected him to be right on hand when needed.

Moe wasn't on hand.

From the front of the garage, The Shadow heard shouts. He saw men in coveralls yanking Moe from the driver's seat of the cab. They had monkey wrenches and other sizable implements that weren't intended for hammering a person's skull, but would serve the purpose very nicely, if required. They were threatening Moe with just such treatment if he put up resistance.

The Shadow was glad to see the monkey wrenches. From such tools, he recognized that these were regular garage employees, not crooks. They had heard a lot of shooting, then the crash of the garage door.

They supposed that Moe was responsible for both, particularly as The Shadow had hammered a few shots against the steel fire door after Arlingame's nephews went through. Dealing with these garage attendants would be a simple matter; but, of course, The Shadow intended to handle it gently.

He came in with a surge, swinging an automatic in each hand. But his fists were the missiles that landed, not the weapons. However, the automatics carried weight and the recipients felt it. The Shadow took jaws for targets, while the garage men were wielding their improvised weapons toward his skull. The jaws were closer targets.

Half a dozen garage men looked as if a hurricane had gone through them, and they felt as if one had. They didn't even realize that The Shadow had pulled his weighty punches. They sat where they landed, hands clapped to their jaws, with tools scattered all around, while The Shadow was shoving Moe behind the wheel of the cab. They saw a lot of black spots and the largest one was The Shadow.

Back in the cab, The Shadow did not need to tell Moe to get started. The cabby spurted out through the front door, which was the easier exit, the way the cab was faced. But by the time that Moe had rounded the corner and come back to the parked cars, one of the lot was missing. The marksmen had made their departure, taking along two others.

In other terms, Jack Arlingame and Bradwood, the chauffeur, had supplied the preliminary fire. Then Uncle Roswell's limousine had picked up nephews, Thaddeus and Gordon, after those two had escaped The Shadow. The only evidence that remained was the fake dead wagon that had been used as a means of bluffing Roy Belder.

These were facts as yet unknown to the police, though The Shadow suspected the game. However, The Shadow had not yet learned the names of the principal participants, so he told Moe to park the cab. In gliding fashion, The Shadow went back to the garage, reaching it just after a police car arrived.

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

THE regular employees were talking to two officers, pointing out the smashed door and claiming that about a dozen sluggers had come through in the wake of a taxicab. The night manager explained the situation further.

"They were trying to gang the two fellows who had the flower truck," he said. "I don't know their names, but I think the guy who owns it is their uncle. They took the truck out tonight, and were washing it when the trouble started."

Police went to look at the truck. So did The Shadow, his process consisting of a stealthy glide between parked cars. This was the first time that The Shadow had ever heard of flowers in connection with a dead wagon that bore the name of the city morgue.

The riddle was explained when The Shadow saw the truck. It was no longer shiny black, and its bright gold lettering was gone. The truck was a dark-green, and on its side, in dull-silver letters it bore the name: "J. E. ELKIN--FLORIST."

It was actually a florist's truck. The men who took it out tonight had coated it with a glossy paint no more permanent than shoe blacking. The gilded lettering, too, had been quite temporary.

No wonder they had washed it immediately after their return. Soap and water had removed paint and gilt, destroying all evidence of the purpose that the truck had served. The mystery of the fake dead wagon was merely an echo of The Shadow's memory, nothing more!

Returning to Moe's cab, The Shadow rode to the Cobalt Club, where he arrived in the guise of Cranston. He found that Commissioner Weston had not returned, but he soon learned where his friend had gone, so The Shadow rode there in the limousine that Stanley drove.

The place was a shabby rooming house, and the third floor rear had been occupied by Roy Belder until a few weeks ago. Again, reporters had received a tip-off as to a murderer's lodging, but tonight, the Classic had not been included among the journals that were informed.

The police had arrived right after the reporters, because Cardona had found a card with Belder's address among papers in Caythorn's desk.

The most important find in Belder's room was a copy of the "Philosophy of Achievement," the now-famous literary work of Professor Philo Murlock. Many of its passages were underscored, including the offending paragraph that had been marked in Lorven's copies. Having seen the pamphlet, the reporters intended to make the most of it.

Finding that Cranston had arrived, Commissioner Weston emphasized the points of the night before. It was plain, in his opinion, that the wave of fanaticism had spread. Belder had read of Lorven's murderous thrust against Dreeland and the killer's subsequent suicide, both attributed to the philosophical teachings of Professor Murlock.

In his turn, Belder had decided to kill Caythorn and choose a rapid exit afterward.

It was a problem for Commissioner Weston, for it meant that the wave of fanaticism might spread throughout the city. As Weston put it, any fool who had read up on Murlock, would be a potential killer.

Indeed, Weston was so concerned over the planted evidence he considered real, that when he returned to the Cobalt Club, he brushed aside a police report about a lot of foolish shooting and the breaking of a garage door over near Tenth Avenue.



## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

Weston didn't care if a couple of florist's assistants had put themselves in wrong with a crowd of hoodlums who had tried to scare them with a lot of fireworks. He regarded the case as inconsequential.

Not so The Shadow.

Before leaving the club, The Shadow had Burbank call a florist named J. E. Elkin and make inquiries for an imaginary insurance company. A short while later, Burbank reported back.

He told his chief that Elkin no longer owned the truck: that it was one which he had traded in without bothering to have his name removed. Who had bought it, Elkin did not know.

To that report, Burbank methodically added another point that greatly intrigued The Shadow: namely, that J. E. Elkin, the florist, had no nephews.

### CHAPTER XI. UNCLE ROSWELL DECIDES.

THE newspapers had decided to co-operate with Commissioner Weston. Newspapers would always co-operate, if they saw a story in it. After cutting loose with all the evidence in the Caythorn murder, the daily journals accepted Weston's opinion that Professor Murlock must be found.

It was Murlock who had started the crime wave, and he might be the man who could stop it. Some of the newspapers wanted Murlock, others were after his scalp. But to find one, it was necessary to uncover both, and no one happened to know where the professor was. So the newspapers pooled together and offered a five-thousand-dollar reward for Professor Murlock alive, not dead.

The offer rather dwarfed the Caythorn case, which pleased Roswell Arlingame. He talked it over with his nephews, Jack, Thaddeus and Gordon.

"I have not heard from Pan-Ocean Shippers," said Roswell, as he beamed from behind his office desk. "I am glad that I have not. They do not suspect, as Caythorn did, that a group is behind the sale of the smaller companies that Pan-Ocean hopes to acquire.

"We, of course, are the group. We are selling off a lot of ghost ships that we can obtain quite cheaply. By transferring forgotten vessels to other flags, then back again, to American registry, wonderful results may be accomplished. Particularly if the names of the ships are also changed.

"Other people would sell those ships as junk. Such would be beneath the prestige of an Arlingame. Our motto is: 'Arlingame Always.' I am quite sure"—he was nodding as he thumbed papers on his desk—"that we can make two million dollars before we have finished with this transaction. Pardon me"—Roswell smiled blandly—"I should have said 'swindle.'"

The nephews laughed. Among themselves, they liked to call all evil deeds by the proper titles. They felt very secure at present. The Pan-Ocean deal was excellent. Only William Caythorn would have delved into the mass of detail necessary to trace all facts concerning the lesser companies. He had been the real brain of Pan-Ocean.

Actually, the big shipping company was buying valuable properties. It was just a case of sliding in some lemons among a basket of better fruit. Even if the thing should be discovered, it wouldn't come back to the Arlingames. As usual, they had made their sales by proxy.

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

Leaving his nephews, Roswell Arlingame carried along another bundle of fake newspapers, which told a different version of the Caythorn murder.

The headlines on the counterfeit sheets described the amazing disappearance of a dead body on its way to the morgue. The murder of Caythorn was described, and attributed to an unidentified killer, who had taken poison afterward. Both bodies had been sent to the morgue, but for some reason, only Caythorn's had arrived there.

Riding out to Stony Lodge, Roswell read real newspapers on the way. He chuckled over the offer of five thousand dollars to anyone who could find Professor Murlock. Uncle Roswell was willing to wager a like amount that Murlock could not be found. He asked Bradwood if he had read about it, and when the chauffeur nodded, the leading Arlingame confided:

"We may as well pick up that reward ourselves. By proxy, of course, when the proper time arrives. Perhaps I might give you the job, Bradwood. If I do, I shall personally double the amount that the newspapers offer, as a trifling bonus."

One newspaper that hadn't joined in the Murlock hunt was the tabloid Classic. Roswell Arlingame knew why. It was because he didn't like the Classic; one of its reporters, Clyde Burke, had talked out of turn to the police. So the Classic had been left off the list, last night, and had been scooped by every sheet in town. The Classic was peeved, and Arlingame was glad.

If Arlingame had known how ardently Clyde Burke was working on the Murlock matter, it might have troubled him. Clyde wasn't working alone, but his associates did not belong to the Classic staff. They were other agents, employed by The Shadow. Crime's master foe was quite determined to find Professor Murlock, regardless of the cash award.

HAVING finished with the genuine newspaper, Arlingame tossed it from the window. He was very careful about such matters. His colony of future murderers, who constituted an active league of death, could be nourished only by correct propaganda, the sort that appeared in the fake newspapers that Arlingame brought with him.

Arriving earlier than usual, Arlingame strolled to the Italian garden to chat with the members of his colony. Despite his perpetual smile, this master of the double cross had secret moods that were anything but pleasant. He knew how to analyze the individuals at Stony Lodge, and he had given each a definite rating.

At present, the list was topped by Tresher, the former medical student. The lowest of the group was Steve Osden, not because he was a newcomer, but because Arlingame doubted that Steve had accepted murder as a suitable vocation.

In passing out the newspapers, Arlingame studied the reactions of the men who read them. Others were still gloating over the details of Belder's imaginary success when Arlingame drew Tresher aside.

"I'm not quite sure of Stephen," said Arlingame indulgently. "Suppose you bring him inside, Tresher, so that we can have a heart-to-heart talk."

Leaving the rest to Tresher, Arlingame went into the mansion. A voice greeted him as he crossed the living room, and the smiling man stopped at sight of his niece, Muriel. She had returned from a horseback ride, and was wearing a natty riding habit.

"Back so soon?" queried Arlingame. "Why, it isn't dark yet. I thought you never returned earlier."

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

"I'm going into town, Uncle Roswell," the girl replied. "I might come back later in the week, if I am still welcome at Stony Lodge."

"You are always welcome," assured Uncle Roswell. Then, his tone actually serious: "But have you forgotten about Stephen? Will he like it if you leave?"

"Steve can get along," Muriel answered. Her tone showed a touch of irritation. "He has found friends that he likes."

"But he likes you better—"

"Perhaps. If he does, it is time that he showed it. I shall tell him that I am returning to the city. If he so chooses, he can come along."

Uncle Roswell's face really wreathed itself. The spreading of his smile was ominous, though Muriel did not realize it.

The girl, as yet, had no idea that Steve's presence was necessary at Stony Lodge, for she had never been admitted to the murder conferences. Her uncle was going to make sure that she did not cause Steve to leave; for that matter, Roswell was none too anxious that Muriel should end her visit.

"You are tired," he remarked. "Relax and have a cigarette." He proffered one from a platinum case. "How was the ride today? Very strenuous?"

"I got by with one fall," laughed Muriel. "A trifle harder than some of the others, but not serious."

Her uncle turned as Steve entered with Tresher. His face became sober for Steve's benefit, but Arlingame spoke to Muriel.

"A fall from a horse can prove quite serious," he said. "Perhaps it would be better to rest a while before going to New York. Another night—perhaps a few days more—"

Muriel interrupted with an impatient headshake. She puffed the cigarette nervously, then tamped it out in an ash tray. Rising, she turned toward the stairs.

"I have told Estelle to pack my things," she said. "Bradwood can take me to the station, where I can catch the next train. I'd rather have company into New York, but I suppose I shall have to go alone."

Steve started to protest, for he knew that the remark was meant for him, though Muriel insisted that it wasn't. Arlingame suggested that they sit down and talk things over quietly, to which both finally agreed, though Muriel was hesitant.

Again her uncle proffered his cigarette case, first to Muriel, then to Steve. It was Tresher who noted that Arlingame turned the case so that the girl would take a cigarette from one side while Steve received one from the other.

Appointing himself as umpire, Arlingame discussed the merits of the case. He felt that Muriel wasn't having a very enjoyable visit, considering that all the other guests were men. It might be that she and Steve could spend more time together, though Steve did not care for horseback riding. Still, it wasn't wise for Muriel to do so much riding. Falls from horses could prove serious.

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

QUITE suddenly, Arlingame ended his comments to look at Muriel in alarm. The girl's half-finished cigarette was dropping from her fingers. As it fell to the floor, Tresher picked it up and placed it in the ash tray. Muriel's eyes became wide.

"Everything is... so slow—" Her tone was tuned to the thought. "So... very... very slow—"

"That fall from the horse," undertoned Tresher to Arlingame. "She must have struck her head and received a slight brain concussion. I think she should be put to bed."

Arlingame nodded and gestured to the stairway.

"Call Estelle."

To Muriel, it seemed ages before Estelle arrived. The maid started her toward the stairs at what seemed a snail's pace. Looking back, Muriel tried to smile at the anxious faces of Tresher, Steve and her uncle Roswell. She thought she would never reach her room, and when she did, she watched Estelle close the door, moving it by inches.

Estelle helped her remove the riding habit, and Muriel wondered why it took so long. It seemed hours more before Muriel was finally undressed, and by then she was puzzled because the sun had not set.

While a nightgown was settling lazily over her shoulders, Muriel heard slow, clumping sounds from the stairway. They continued while she was drifting into bed, and finally Muriel heard steady but far-spaced knocks at the door.

The maid admitted Tresher. He left the door open, and Muriel saw Steve watching from the threshold. She was more interested, though, in the curious way in which Estelle was picking up scattered clothes from the floor. Each time the maid stooped she went completely off balance, only to regain it by a tedious process of locomotion.

Tresher approached the bed, placed his hand upon Muriel's forehead, and took her pulse. He ordered Estelle to lower the window shades and keep the room dark. Rejoining Steve, the medico closed the door and said in a professional manner:

"I was right. She received a slight concussion."

"Don't hand me that," snapped Steve. "I know the slow-motion symptoms. She took the cigarette her uncle gave her and it was doped with marijuana!"

Tresher stared as if he had never heard the term before. Steve tightened his fists and thrust his jaw forward.

"I'm going to talk to Muriel," he said. "I shall tell her nothing, so don't worry. I know quite well why she must remain here. But if anything happens to her, Tresher"—Steve's fist rose warningly and his tone hardened—"I swear I'll kill you! What's more"—Steve emphasized the afterthought—"you can tell old Arlingame that it goes for him, too!"

Tresher turned to the stairway. Opening Muriel's door, Steve entered, wondering if this was the last time that he would see the girl he loved. Not because of danger to Muriel; he really felt that she was safe at Stony Lodge. Steve was wondering just how his own case would be decided after Tresher carried the word to Roswell Arlingame.

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

THERE was no need to worry for the present. In his study, Arlingame accepted Tresher's report with a chuckle.

"So he threatened to kill you, Tresher," gloated Arlingame, "and even intimated that he might add my scalp to his belt. Good! Such spirit pleases me. It proves that Stephen is really one of us.

"Since he wants to kill, we shall give him the opportunity. It will be easy to arouse him to a point of hate against a victim. Particularly since we shall appeal to his greed, and put the matter of Muriel's future into the balance, if necessary.

"I am quite sure, Tresher, that Stephen will be the right man for our next job. Yes, we shall use him on the next occasion—"

Abruptly Arlingame ended the uncompleted statement by bowing Tresher from the room. As he closed the thick door, the master of murder undertoned the rest of his sentence, the part that he could not let even Tresher hear:

"—and thus dispose of him."

Such was the decision of Roswell Arlingame in the matter of Stephen Osden. But Arlingame was impartial. What went for Steve would apply to all others in the league of death. It applied to outsiders, too, whenever they interfered with Arlingame's plans.

Death was sweet to Roswell Arlingame, whenever others received it. There was an outsider whose interference Arlingame had begun to recognize, and whose death, when delivered, would be the sweetest of all.

That outsider was The Shadow!

## CHAPTER XII. THE UNFORGOTTEN MAN.

Two days without a murder. Commissioner Weston felt that he had accomplished something, though how, he could not have explained. Nevertheless, Weston was willing to take the credit, just as a matter of policy. He felt that when the police claimed to be curbing crime, the claim itself would produce a restraining effect.

Weston mentioned these points to Cranston, and was rather annoyed when his friend showed traces of a smile.

The Shadow had valid reasons for taking credit to himself, though he was not doing so. Twice he had been an actual witness to murder, and on both occasions had nearly thwarted the so-called suicides that followed the assassinations.

Moreover, he recognized that those suicides were unintended, and had proven his point by actually tracing other persons in the game.

The set-to at the West Side garage had been The Shadow's open challenge to hidden hands of crime. If they had reported it to the head man who ruled them, that unknown master of evil might find it provident to postpone further strokes of death.

Still, The Shadow took no credit. Crime was too well covered. The details of Dreeland's widespread hotel

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

business were too involved to offer any quick solution regarding his death. Similarly, Caythorn's vague talk of enemies, as reported by Cardona, was not enough to help. The affairs of Pan–Ocean Shippers would have to be straightened out before any clues could be obtained through that channel.

On one score only did The Shadow agree with Weston. He believed, as did the commissioner, that it would be wise to find Professor Murlock. But even there The Shadow disagreed with Weston's reasons for the hunt. The law regarded Murlock as indirectly responsible for murder, which The Shadow did not.

The Shadow's analysis was direct. Unfound, Murlock would remain a mystery figure. More assassinations would increase the storm against the professor. Should Murlock suddenly reappear, he might repudiate his teachings, in which case the murder ring would change its system. Such would nullify what gain The Shadow had already made.

Unquestionably, the unknown master of the murder game knew where Murlock was. Unless he had disposed of the eccentric professor, he was keeping Murlock for some future purpose. If the police found Murlock, they would spoil it by publicizing the fact. The Shadow wanted to discover the professor and keep it quiet.

In his search, The Shadow was getting leads from the police. First, as Cranston, he heard Weston's opinions on the progress of the man hunt. Again, through Clyde Burke, The Shadow had access to the many reports that came to Joe Cardona. The police inspector was amicably disposed toward the Classic reporter, and therefore gave him inside facts.

The trouble was that several hundred people believed that they had seen Murlock, but none could prove the fact. From all accounts, he might be anywhere from Key West to Alaska.

All over the nation, elderly men of eccentric habits found people peeking in their windows. Teletypes were rattling constantly down on Centre Street, informing the New York police that Murlock was found, only to be followed by admissions that these were cases of mistaken identity.

AT the Cobalt Club, Commissioner Weston was listening while Inspector Cardona winnowed down the facts.

Lamont Cranston happened to be present, but did not appear to be listening. He was too interested in reading a blue–covered pamphlet, but actually he caught every word.

"Here are the facts, commissioner," declared Cardona. "On the twelfth, Murlock bought a round–trip ticket to the Pacific coast; one of those special rail excursions. He left for Chicago, taking along the manuscript of his new book.

"He stopped off in Buffalo, talked to some friends there and said he might go to St. Louis next. One report indicates that he changed his mind entirely and started back to New York, because an old man answering his description left a package on a train at Elmira, only to have someone call and identify it later.

"But that's out. We've found out that Murlock reserved Pullman spaces on trains from Buffalo both to Chicago and St. Louis, on different lines, and forgot to cancel the one he didn't use. Which one he did use, we're still trying to learn."

As Cardona paused, Cranston chuckled, which was unusual. Weston looked in his direction, partly surprised, partly annoyed. He heard his friend say:

"Listen to this, commissioner."

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

Weston listened, as did Cardona. " 'I might hie me to the mountain top,' " read Cranston, " 'that I might be farther from the haunts of man. But great heights produce the illusion of power, which is something never to be sought. Rather should I gaze to the mountains and watch the sun rise above them, and feel that they are solitary watchers designed by nature to greet the new day.' "

Weston strummed the table impatiently while Cranston thumbed to another page.

" 'The individual is never lost,' " Cranston quoted. " 'By losing himself, he is found. Let him seek solitude within the forest; there rear a shelter that will serve his wants. There will he find himself and learn the true philosophy of life.' "

There was another pause while The Shadow turned to another passage and read it in Cranston's tone:

" 'Happy is he who dwells upon an island, where his bounds are limited to suit his needs. Such an isle can be a true domain, for it offers no access to the world beyond. The man who lives there gains mastery over self and life. When the day dawns that calls him to the larger world, he shall hold mastery over it as well.' "

"Who wrote that tripe?" demanded Weston with a snort. "And what makes you consider it worth reading, Cranston?"

The Shadow tossed the pamphlet on the table. Weston saw its printed title: "Philosophy of Achievement." It was the much-discussed pamphlet by Professor Philo Murlock, which Weston himself had not yet troubled to read. Cranston's tone came musingly:

"Murlock has an imaginative mind—"

"A crazed mind," interrupted Weston. "I suppose insanity is twin brother to imagination."

"But he is practical," said The Shadow. "His fanciful statements always lead back to his main theme: achievement. He regards introspection as the first step to success—"

"And murder!" added Weston.

"Those passages you just read mean nothing. They simply fit with facts that we already know—that Murlock's notions are unsound, and that those who accept them put folly into practice."

"Come, inspector"—the commissioner swung to Cardona—"let us compare the various reports from Chicago and St. Louis."

WHEN Cranston left the Cobalt Club, the pamphlet was still lying on the table. The Shadow did not need it; he had other copies.

In his limousine, Cranston became The Shadow, in appearance as well as fact. Clad in black, he was so shrouded that the limousine seemed empty, except for the whispered laugh that stirred within it.

In fairness to Weston, The Shadow had provided the commissioner with clues that he himself had acquired. It made the quest for Murlock a sporting proposition. But despite the emphasis that his friend Cranston had placed upon certain points, Weston had refused to recognize their importance, and Cardona likewise.

The Shadow's whispery laugh was repeated later, in a black-walled room, where shrouding curtains gathered the sibilant mirth and lisped it back. There was a click as a blue light appeared above the surface of a polished

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

table.

This room was The Shadow's sanctum, the hidden headquarters in New York that only its owner frequented.

Ungloved hands crept into the glow. From a finger of the left hand glittered a magnificent fire opal, the sacred gem of the Aztecs, also called a girasol.

The stone caught the blue light, reflected it in ever-changing hues. The girasol was like a solitary eye, shining up at The Shadow. It was The Shadow's own token, that fiery gem that carried the same hypnotic burn that could be seen in his keen eyes.

Deft fingers, moving like detached creatures, sorted through report sheets and came to the one which Weston had rejected—a copy that mentioned the old man on the train, bound east from Buffalo.

Next, the Shadow produced a large scale map that was marked with squares. It showed the terrain near the northern boundary of Pennsylvania, below the line of New York State. His finger running along a belt of mountains that ran from northeast to southwest, The Shadow checked for lakes to the left, and found some.

From the key squares on the map, he brought new charts from a black filing cabinet in a corner of the sanctum. These were topographical survey maps, one mile to the inch, and they showed many details, including contours of hills. Of the lakes that The Shadow studied, only a few had islands, and one especially impressed him.

The lake was a few miles long, and the island a quarter mile across. But the island itself was rugged. Its thick contours on the southeast shore indicated a cliff.

Back from the cliff, the island dipped almost to a bowl, though it had a few other points of elevation. Though the map did not show it, The Shadow knew that the island must be heavily wooded, for it was in a forest area.

An isle, with narrow boundaries that made it a true domain. Deep woods, that would offer the solitude of a forest shelter. An eastern point, the cliff; from which a man could view the morning sun rising above mountain peaks that greeted the new day.

All these were indispensable features, in the opinion of Philo Murlock, for anyone who sought to learn the real riddle of life. In such a locale, the professor would find the very elements to inspire the new work that he was writing.

Probably he had started west with such a place in mind. Reaching Buffalo, he could have met someone who offered such opportunity closer at hand.

If so, Murlock would have come east again; in which case, the two trails leading west were both false, arranged by someone who wanted to confuse any persons who sought the missing professor.

REACHING beyond the bluish light, The Shadow produced a pair of earphones. As he lifted them, a tiny bulb gleamed from the wall. A methodical voice came over the wire:

"Burbank speaking."

"Instructions," Shadow announced. "Call Vincent. Tell him to be at the municipal airport within an hour."

"Instructions received."



## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

Turning off the bluish light. The Shadow went to the metal filing cabinet. A flashlight glittered, while he put away the maps that he did not need. In drawing out the lowest drawer of the tall cabinet, The Shadow caused the others to follow, at lesser extensions, like a pair of steps.

The flashlight's glimmer ended. There was a swish of a black cloak as The Shadow ascended the improvised stairs. His lips delivered a parting laugh. Black curtains stirred as they echoed it, for a sweep of air had come from an opening above the filing cabinet.

A panel slid silently shut after the cloaked figure had stepped through. Its slide actuated the drawers of the cabinet; they, too, were noiseless as they went back into place. Sibilant echoes faded; the black-walled sanctum was empty. The room's strange owner had embarked on a new mission.

The Shadow had chosen a long way around to reach a goal which he knew must be close at hand. Having divined the whereabouts of Professor Murlock, The Shadow was to handle that case first. It was a case of playing through weakness into strength.

From Philo Murlock, The Shadow hoped to get a lead to Roswell Arlingame, the crime master whose identity was still unknown, even to the cloaked investigator who sought the leader of the league of death!

### CHAPTER XIII. THE HAPPY ISLE.

LIKE a man-made dragonfly, the wingless autogiro hovered above the lake shore, picked a landing spot and descended, with the moonlight as its path. Two figures came from the curious ship. One was The Shadow, cloaked in black, the other, a young man named Harry Vincent.

Long in The Shadow's service, Harry was the right man for the difficult expedition that lay ahead. He had several points that were in his favor. He was keen-eyed, clean-cut, and well-dressed. His keenness would be needed, but not the rest.

The Shadow tossed a bundle of Old clothes from the giro, told Harry to put them on and fit himself to the part.

While Harry was making the change, The Shadow brought a rubber boat from the ship, inflated it and left it at the shore, a paddle beside it. He came back to look at Harry in the moonlight. The only bad factor in Harry's roughened get-up was his well-shaven face.

It could be explained. Among other odds and ends that The Shadow gave Harry to put in his pockets, was a safety razor with some blades. Taking a small mirror, The Shadow cracked it and handed Harry the largest chunk. He also squeezed most of the shaving cream from a new tube, and gave his agent what remained.

They entered the rubber boat and The Shadow shoved off into the lake. He told Harry the name of the lake.

Locally, it was called Mountain Pond, but on the maps it was listed as Sylvan Lake.

Keeping to the shore where the moonlight did not strike, The Shadow paddled noiselessly toward the far end of the lake, where the island was situated, past a point.

The Shadow made an invisible shape in the rubber boat, and Harry was practically so. He was wearing a dark sweater under his ragged blue coat, and his oversized cap was grimy. In one pocket, Harry felt the weight of a revolver; in the other, he had a small flashlight, along with odds and ends like the razor.

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

In an undertone, The Shadow was explaining what Harry's task would be, provided that the island proved to be the habitation of Professor Murlock.

As they swung the point they saw the island, and with it, an excellent token. In the moonlight, a faint curl of smoke was visible, coming from the heavy woods. The Shadow spied the cliff at the eastern side, but veered the other way.

He wanted to come in from the side closest to the mainland, and, as indicated by the map, the channel was not wide. Nevertheless, it would be necessary to explain Harry's arrival, even if the agent had to go in for a swim. Fortunately, The Shadow found an alternative.

Passing an abandoned camp site, he saw the battered remains of an old diving float, and pulled ashore. Together, The Shadow and Harry slid the float into the water, where it made a very poor raft.

With a broken board for paddle, Harry worked the float across the channel, The Shadow following in the rubber boat. Harry was somewhat wet when he arrived, but to make it all the better, he sloshed overboard from his grounded raft and waded, waist-deep, to the island.

Using flashlights, The Shadow and his agent moved to the center of the island. The Shadow's light, though very bright, was quite small and kept its beam well centered. Harry's larger flashlight was dim, for its batteries were well used up. The Shadow had provided those particular batteries, as a special touch to the part that Harry was to play.

The smoke had come from a cabin deep in the woods. Sighting the cabin, which had lighted windows, The Shadow approached it. Looking in, he saw a thin-faced, balding man crouched above a table, scratching away with a pencil.

Despite his rather rough attire, the man looked dignified, especially because he was wearing eyeglasses that had a fancy ribbon attached to them. There was no doubt as to his identity. He answered the description of the unforgotten man, Professor Philo Murlock.

Rejoining Harry, The Shadow started his agent toward the cabin. At that moment, The Shadow heard a swashy sound from the outer shore, not far away. It sounded like the approach of a rather swift boat, though no motor was audible.

Instead of holding Harry back, The Shadow moved him ahead, but whispered the admonition:

"Time may be short. Work quickly!"

HARRY'S entrance into the cabin was dramatic. Slashing the door ahead of him, he barged half across the floor, pulling his revolver as he swung toward Professor Murlock. Instead of being frightened by the arrival of a water-soaked, rough-clad invader, Professor Murlock looked quite pleased. Peering up from his manuscript, he cackled:

"Ah! An outcast, like myself!"

Shifting back to the door, which had swung shut behind him, Harry caught a warning whisper through the crack. Turning toward an inner door, Harry was just in time to cover a Chinese cook who was advancing from the kitchen with a cleaver in his hand. The fat Chinaman dropped the cleaver when confronted by the gun muzzle.

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

"It's all right, Ling," laughed Murlock. Then, to Harry: "Are you hungry?"

Harry hesitated, then nodded.

Murlock ordered Ling back to the kitchen, told him to prepare some food. Harry let his eyes show suspicion. Looking from Murlock to Ling, he gruffed:

"No funny stuff!"

"There will be none," assured the professor. "I shall be responsible for Ling's good behavior. Sit down, my friend, and tell me something of your troubles."

Taking a chair by the door, but keeping the gun handy, Harry gave his story. He prefaced it by pulling a few newspaper clippings from his pocket and tossing them on the table, so that Murlock could read them.

The clippings were dated two weeks ago; they referred to a small-town bank robbery.

"You're a good guy," Harry told Murlock. "I don't mind telling you the truth. I was in on that job."

Murlock seemed very pleased. He eyed Harry with real delight.

"You're a bank robber by profession?"

"No." Harry frowned. "I'm just a fellow that can't hold a job. Why should I always be broke, when others aren't?" He shot the words angrily. "My name is Harry Vincent, and I come from that town. I know the town; that's why the crooks got me to work with them. But I was wasting my time.

"If I want other people's money, I'll go after it in a big way, on my own, not with a bunch that has to run, the way that crowd did. I've spent what little I got from the job, and I've been hiding ever since, around these woods. D'you know"—Harry juggled his gun—"if I didn't like a guy, and he had plenty of money, I'd kill him just like that!"

To demonstrate. Harry leveled the revolver at Murlock, who did not flinch. Lowering the gun, Harry nodded.

"I like you," he told Murlock. "You must have guessed it. What's your name?"

Murlock gave it. Then:

"You have the wrong philosophy," he said, "but it is only half wrong. If you do not like a man, it might be your duty to kill him; however, you should not base your likes, or hatreds, on artificial terms like money. You must first acquire a thirst for achievement, for true achievement—"

There was another warning whisper from the outside blackness. As if he had heard something else, Harry sprang to his feet and wheeled to a corner, at the same time silencing Murlock with an impatient gesture. Darting a quick look to the kitchen, to make sure that Ling was still where he belonged, Harry faced the outer door.

"Don't be hasty!" warned Murlock, low-voiced. "It is only another friend. I can explain—"

"I'll give you a chance," interposed Harry, "and the same will go for your friend."

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

A window was moving upward a few inches. It was behind Murlock's back, so he did not see it, but Harry observed the motion and noted the gun muzzle that wedged beneath.

It was one of The Shadow's automatics; invisible against the blackness, the cloaked fighter was ready to back up his agent. Harry felt quite at ease when the door opened.

THE man who entered was young, and smiling; he was dressed in camp clothes that looked as if they had been bought in a fashionable New York store. He was about to speak to Murlock, when he saw Harry. The newcomer's hand started for a gun; then paused. His hands lifted; his facial muscles tightened, but did not lose their smile.

"What's this about?" he queried.

"We have a visitor," clucked Murlock. "But he won't kill people unless they have money, which we do not have. He said as much."

The young man looked at Harry.

"How did you find this place?"

"I saw the smoke," Harry returned. "I thought it was time I talked to somebody, so I came over on a raft. You'd do the same if you'd been in the woods a week, the way I have."

The other's eyes remained doubtful.

"I've got nothing against the professor," assured Harry. "If he says you're all right—"

"How do you know he's a professor?"

"He just told me. What did you say your name was, professor? Philip Murlock?"

"No," returned the professor. "It is Philo Murlock. I am a writer on philosophical subjects."

The name didn't particularly register with Harry, and the man at the doorway noticed it. He took it for granted that Harry's story was correct, and when Murlock began to read from the clippings, it seemed plain that the invader wasn't hunting for the professor. Out of contact with the world for a week, Harry couldn't know about the man hunt.

"Allow me to introduce you," suggested Murlock. "This is Harry Vincent. If you will put away your gun, Mr. Vincent, you can shake hands with Bushby Arlingame."

Harry put away the gun and received a genuine handshake from Murlock's friend. By then, The Shadow was gone from the window. It was plain that Bushby knew about the hunt for Murlock, whereas the professor himself did not. Since Harry was also ignorant, and could not be seeking Murlock for the reward, Bushby was satisfied.

It wasn't so with Ling.

From the kitchen, the Chinese chef noted that Harry's gun was put away. Picking up the cleaver, Ling decided to go back and spring a surprise attack. But Ling hadn't gone two steps, before the back door opened at his elbow and two gloved hands gripped him, one taking his wrist, the other his throat.

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

Ling's eyes bulged. He couldn't see his attacker, for he was being drawn into blackness of which the strange being was a part. Ling was sure that a ghost had clutched him, because it talked Chinese.

Sinister words were reaching Ling's ears, warning him that unseen spirits from his native land would avenge any deadly deed that he might undertake.

Then the grip was gone. Ling had dropped the cleaver. He pressed both hands to his throat and stared at the door, which had silently closed. The Shadow's familiarity with the Chinese language had produced results.

Quite sure that one of his sacred ancestors must have spoken from the grave, Ling heeded the warning. He decided to serve Harry sandwiches, instead of the meat cleaver.

BACK at the window of the main room, The Shadow watched Harry eat and listen, while Murlock and Bushby talked. Both were highly sympathetic toward Harry: Murlock, because the young man lacked the right philosophy; Bushby, because their new friend needed cash.

"That trouble in your town will blow over," assured Bushby, "but whether it does or not, I can help you out."

"Like you helped me," said Murlock, "when you found this excellent place where I could work undisturbed."

"Vincent wants friends," stated Bushby. "Chaps like himself, who have been up against it. How would you like to meet a crowd of that sort, Vincent?"

Harry nodded, to show that he would like it.

"I have an uncle," explained Bushby, "who has a houseful of guests like yourself. We could drive to his place and make it before morning. You'll be as safe there as here, and a lot more comfortable. It would be better, too, to leave Professor Murlock alone so that he can work."

Harry began to empty his pockets of things he wouldn't need. He turned on the flashlight when he brought it out, and Bushby's smile widened when he saw how feeble the bulb was. Those used batteries supported Harry's story. Coming to the gun, Harry hesitated.

"Keep it," advised Bushby. "I carry a revolver, too. You can use it at my uncle's. They do a lot of target shooting. You'll like the place."

They shook hands with Murlock, and went out. The Shadow followed to the shore, where he saw Harry and Bushby enter a trim rowboat that had an electric motor. The craft headed smoothly for the eastern shore. The Shadow was quite satisfied.

He had gotten an answer to the uncle riddle. Apparently, Bushby Arlingame was one of several cousins, all of whom served their uncle, who could only be a prominent New Yorker named Roswell Arlingame.

Unquestionably, Roswell Arlingame ran a colony of future murderers, and in Harry Vincent, Bushby had recognized a suitable recruit.

No need to return to the cabin. The Shadow skirted the island, reached his rubber boat and began the long paddle to the other end of the lake, where the autogiro awaited him. But in ignoring the cabin, The Shadow missed hearing a brief conversation that would have interested him.

It was Ling who began it by placidly telling Murlock:

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

"Ling see ghlost."

"A ghost?" cackled the professor. "Nonsense!"

"Ghlost flom China," assured Ling. "Blother Ling, because he get lonesome. Maybe if Ling listen to bloadcasts—"

"But we have no radio, Ling. Mr. Arlingame said not to bring one."

"Ling blingee, just the same. You mind if Ling keep him in klitchen, and use earphones? Mr. Arlingame gone for couple of days, maybe, so he won't mind."

Murlock told Ling that he could install the radio and keep it to himself. Ling went out back, to put up an aerial. Climbing a tree, the Chinaman was out on a bough, when he heard a faint sound from far down the lake.

Staring, Ling saw a grotesque thing like a tiny pinwheel, that rose straight up in the air and skimmed from sight.

It was The Shadow's wingless autogiro, a type of craft that Ling had never seen before. The Chinaman blinked, then muttered to himself in his native tongue. To Ling, the sight was quite as strange as the voice that had spoken to him earlier.

Ling decided not to mention this new phenomenon to Professor Murlock, who evidently did not believe in ghosts, or dragons that flew by moonlight.

Thus was The Shadow's departure, like his visit, to remain a secret, except with Ling, who would never guess why the master of night had come to this lonely isle!

### CHAPTER XIV. THE FAMILY PARTY.

IT was afternoon when Harry Vincent had his first look at Stony Lodge. He and Bushby Arlingame had driven half the night to reach the place, and in darkness Stony Lodge had loomed simply as a massive structure, with no special features.

Bushby had told his new acquaintance to sleep as late as he wanted, so Harry had.

By day, it was possible to view the elaborate grounds surrounding Stony Lodge, and Harry could not help but admire the well-kept estate, even after Bushby introduced him to the other guests.

Individually, perhaps, such men as Tresher might have seemed merely social misfits, who would improve if given a real chance. Collectively, however, they showed what they were.

Cutthroats, all, with one notable exception: Steve Osden.

Superficially, Steve could have been classed with the rest, for he was apparently one of them; but so, for that matter, was Harry. Both Steve and Harry were playing parts, and carrying them well.

Steve had really thought himself hard-boiled, until he had come to Stony Lodge, where he found that he wasn't as tough as he believed. As for Harry, he knew how to act hard-boiled, even in the new clothes that

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

Bushby had provided for him, and he had a false reputation that helped him.

It might have been a final test on Bushby's part, showing Harry the fake newspapers that Uncle Roswell had given to the members of the murder colony. Harry accepted them as if they were real, and intimated admiration for the crimes that were mentioned.

"That's what I meant," he told Bushby. "What right have fellows like Dreeland and Caythorn to live, anyway? They only hog things that other people ought to have. I don't blame the chaps who bumped them off."

"They were friends of ours," said Bushby, dryly. "One was named Lorven, the other Belder. We saw to it that they escaped safely."

"Good enough," said Harry. "Only those fellows should have cashed in for their trouble."

"They did. Uncle Roswell paid them a hundred thousand dollars each. He may offer you the same, Vincent. You'll like Uncle Roswell."

Harry agreed that he probably would. Bushby added that all Arlingames were alike, and Harry believed him, until they went into the living room, where they found Tresher and Steve talking to an attractive dark-haired girl who was attired in an exquisite negligee.

Bushby introduced her as his cousin, Muriel, but resemblance was lacking, for Muriel was frowning instead of wearing the habitual Arlingame smile.

"I'm going into town," she told Tresher, firmly. "I'm tired of staying in bed. My head hasn't bothered me for two days."

Bushby mentioned a family party to be held that evening, but Tresher flashed a warning. Apparently, Muriel's uncle hadn't invited her to the gathering. With Tresher insisting that Muriel needed more rest, Steve offered a compromise: namely, that the girl go back to bed until train time—to which Muriel agreed.

With Muriel still a patient, and Tresher the only doctor in the house, Steve was taking much into his own hands, as he proved five minutes later. Going up to Muriel's room, he knocked, and learned that she was in bed.

Entering, Steve found Estelle putting Muriel's slippers and negligee in the closet, with the girl's other clothes. Brushing the maid out to the hall, Steve closed the closet, locked it and took the key. Smiling at Muriel's indignation, he picked up the clock that was on Muriel's table.

"No need to watch the time," he said. "You're staying here until tomorrow, or the next day, or as long as Tresher thinks best."

Out in the hall, Steve locked the door of the room. Springing from bed, Muriel pounded on the door, demanding that Steve or Estelle come back. Neither did. Muriel quit pounding, exhausted.

LOOKING from the window, Muriel saw Steve stroll out into the Italian garden with Tresher, Harry, and others. Steve was juggling the keys, and they were laughing at the way he had convinced Muriel that she needed a real rest.

Going back to bed, Muriel decided that she hated Steve utterly. She wondered how he had gained the idea that he was qualified to tell people what was best for them.

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

The answer would have startled Muriel. She didn't know that her safety, perhaps her life, depended upon her remaining at Stony Lodge. Her Uncle Roswell couldn't afford to have anyone go back to New York, now that the league of death had started its activities.

Steve knew it, but he couldn't tell Muriel. His only hope was to play for time, and keep Muriel in ignorance.

As yet, Muriel had not been admitted to the select family circle composed of Roswell and his nephews. There were times, though, when Steve wondered what would happen when she was. He had learned of the family tradition from fellows like Tresher, and they reminded him that Muriel was really an Arlingame. Steve feared that she might approve the practice of murder, when informed of it.

There were many reasons to support that possibility. Reasons that Steve had not heard in detail, but which were, at this very hour, undergoing thorough scrutiny.

In his sanctum in Manhattan, The Shadow was studying the Arlingame family tree and finding that it had skeletons hanging from every bough.

From Harry's meeting with Muriel Bushby, and the recollection of others who had unwisely mentioned their uncle, The Shadow was considering wholesale murder as a family affair. Just as Roswell Arlingame had used his own character as an index to analyze all others of the tribe, so was The Shadow proceeding on the basis that crime belonged to the Arlingame blood.

Many family records were obtainable. Going through them, checking them with crime files of certain years, The Shadow had discovered that the hidden evil behind the name of Arlingame was more than a tradition. It was a curse. It carried from generation to generation in ever-increasing proportions.

Of the names on the list, none stood blacker than that of Elredge Arlingame, Roswell's brother and Muriel's father.

Elredge Arlingame had gone to Australia in quest of gold, which he had found. Singularly, Elredge's strike had come soon after the death of his partner, a man named Frank Forster, who had been buried by a cave-in. Generously, Elredge had provided for Forster's wife, which didn't surprise The Shadow, considering that Elredge had probably wanted to hush any scandal regarding Forster's death.

Moreover, it hadn't cost Elredge much. Forster's wife had died in an automobile accident, soon after her husband's burial. Moving to Melbourne, Elredge Arlingame decided to get married himself, his bride being the daughter of a very wealthy San Francisco merchant named Marfield.

She had died a few years after the marriage, and Elredge Arlingame had returned to America, bringing their daughter, a child named Muriel.

Elredge Arlingame had therewith come in line for the Marfield estate, but he had not survived his father-in-law, Muriel's grandfather. Elredge had died quite suddenly, under peculiar circumstances, which The Shadow felt could be attributed to certain persons who had suffered earlier from Elredge's activities in secret crime. His fortune, what was left of it, had gone to Muriel.

Added to that, Muriel had a legacy from her grandfather, who had finally died, so she was well fixed financially, as were all the Arlingames. But the girl's case was so special that The Shadow placed her name in a column by itself, on a sheet of paper where he had listed the other Arlingames.



## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

If heritage held, Muriel Arlingame, daughter of Elredge, would have more criminal tendencies than the rest of the present generation.

THE SHADOW laughed softly, as he considered that fact. He had given special attention to Muriel's case; now, it was time to think of the male contingent.

Of course, Uncle Roswell topped all. He belonged to the former generation, and was a law unto himself. Doubtless, he had organized the younger Arlingames and fully controlled them.

Having seen one example, Bushby, The Shadow could picture Jack, Thaddeus and Gordon. They were the ones who had been sporting around New York, occupying a sample room at the Hotel Grantham, driving a florist's truck that had been painted over to look like a dead wagon, and doing some pretty neat shooting in the vicinity of a certain West Side garage.

Old Roswell was master of the double cross, for he must have talked Terry Lorven into doing the window dive, and suggested that Roy Belder try a swallow of poison.

Roswell had probably convinced the dupes that such things wouldn't hurt, but the nephews must have added to the illusion, by pretending that they had a net across the Grantham courtyard and having the fake dead wagon on hand as a suitable exhibit.

However, the man to reach was Roswell Arlingame himself, so The Shadow left the sanctum with such purpose. Though the sanctum was pitch-black, it was still daylight outdoors, no later than mid-afternoon, when The Shadow arrived at Roswell's office and introduced himself as Lamont Cranston.

The visitor was well received by Roswell Arlingame, though at first sight, The Shadow recognized the conniving gleam behind the gray-haired man's smiling eyes. He knew that old Roswell was pleased to meet so prosperous a man as Cranston, yet at the same time wondering why he was favored by a visit from a friend of the police commissioner.

In Cranston's quiet way, The Shadow put Arlingame at ease. Business, alone, had brought him, and it happened to be the legitimate type that Arlingame liked to use as a cover-up.

Cranston, it seemed, had learned that Arlingame was something of a business broker. Having certain properties to dispose of, Cranston thought that Arlingame might handle them on a commission basis.

Arlingame was doubtful. He had found such work unprofitable, as he happened to be proving—so far as the general public knew—in the case of Dreeland Hotels, Inc. But if these businesses of Cranston's could be reorganized, Arlingame might be the man to help. Behind that offer, The Shadow caught an inkling of old Roswell's proxy methods.

Only by actually knowing that Roswell Arlingame was crooked, could these things have been suspected. Likewise, The Shadow gained a further lead, through inside knowledge, when Roswell arose and said:

"Suppose we get together again, Mr. Cranston. I must leave early today, to attend a family party at my country estate, which I call Stony Lodge. I expect some of my nephews"—he was beaming, benignly—"all fine boys. Often, they drop in here. You must meet them, Mr. Cranston."

The reference to "some" of the nephews, indicated that Roswell hadn't learned of Bushby's return to Stony Lodge. To Bushby had been delegated the task of keeping Professor Murlock out of circulation, but The Shadow doubted that Roswell would mind because Bushby had temporarily left Murlock alone with Ling.

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

Bringing in a man of Harry Vincent's caliber and possibilities, as a new recruit for Roswell's string of murderers, was something that Bushby could hardly forgo.

Going down to the street with Roswell, The Shadow saw the Arlingame limousine and its poker-faced chauffeur. A look at Bradwood tagged him as one of the sharpshooters on the West Side. It was not surprising that Roswell Arlingame should have acquired a chauffeur like Bradwood. The beaming murder master was probably on the constant lookout for such suitable characters.

Alone, The Shadow went to his own limousine. He had checked on Stony Lodge, while going over the Arlingame data, and was quite sure that it was where Bushby had taken Harry. From the distance to the place, the trip there would bring arrival at dusk, a time that suited The Shadow.

Giving the directions to Stanley, The Shadow settled back for the ride. He was still Cranston as he began the journey, but when he reached his destination, he would be The Shadow. At Stony Lodge, the black garb would prove very useful. Not merely for looking around the grounds.

The Shadow expected his sable-hued cloak and hat to carry him still farther. Tonight, his chosen regalia would be the admission ticket that would make him an uninvited guest at the family party which Roswell Arlingame was holding for his nephews!

### CHAPTER XV. MURDER TO COME.

THE SHADOW was wrong in his supposition that Roswell Arlingame did not know of Bushby's return. Wrong, only because he had not yet learned that Roswell seldom entertained his nephews at Stony Lodge. It was actually on Bushby's account that their present meeting was being held there.

Bushby had many friends in Manhattan and might have had to discuss his return, had he shown himself in the city. He was supposed to be on a hunting trip in Canada, in regions so remote that he couldn't get back for a while to come.

Harry Vincent witnessed the gathering of the Arlingame clan, for Bushby brought them out to the Italian garden and introduced them as they arrived.

Each of the nephews had friends among the dozen men who were being groomed for murder, because they, themselves, had gathered in the various recruits. But they all had to be introduced to Steve Osden, the lone member of the death league who had been acquired by Muriel.

From her bed, which she had drawn closer to the window, Muriel saw her cousins and knew that a family party was planned. Obviously, she was to be out of it, which increased her anger toward Steve. Muriel liked her cousins, and had no idea that they were banded in crime.

She wanted to raise the window and call to them, but couldn't with so many others about, unless she could find more apparel than her nightgown. As for wrapping herself in blankets, that would only make her look ridiculous.

So Muriel waited, while dusk was settling, only to have her opportunity fade. Men began to go indoors, and first among them were the Arlingames. Muriel guessed that her uncle must have arrived home, so she decided that she would leave the light off and pretend she was really resting, in case he came up to talk to her.

But Uncle Roswell did not come up, and Muriel, no longer looking from the window, did not see what

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

happened next in the garden, though it was doubtful that she could have observed anything in the thickening gloom.

One man had remained outdoors: Harry Vincent. Usually, members of the murder colony kept tabs on each other, but Harry, a self-avowed criminal, with clippings that proved it, was one man who couldn't find it expedient to leave Stony Lodge.

Nevertheless, Harry was wondering how he might manage that very thing, and thus report to The Shadow, when he discovered that he had racked his brain unnecessarily.

Blackness obscured a white marble pillar near the bench where Harry was seated. A sibilant whisper brought Harry to his feet. It was The Shadow!

Rapidly, Harry poured out what details he knew of Stony Lodge, not excluding mention of the disciplinary tactics that Steve had used to keep Muriel from going to New York.

From the report, The Shadow formed the correct conclusions that Muriel was not included in the Arlingame conferences and that Steve was working for her welfare, which, in turn, made Steve a loose link in the chain of murder mongers.

Of immediate importance was the Arlingame conference, and Harry knew that it was being held in Roswell's study. At The Shadow's suggestion, Harry strolled into the house, and The Shadow himself took up the trail.

The thing totally amazed Harry. The Shadow had told him to show the way to the study, and Harry did, but it meant passing people like Tresher along the way. At times, Harry actually rubbed shoulders with them, and so did The Shadow, though they did not know it.

The great house was gloomy, and The Shadow took advantage of it. Pressed into doorways, half behind opened doors, sometimes merely flattened against a darkish wall, he seemed to render himself invisible. His chief ability was that of becoming absolutely motionless, the fundamental way of escaping notice.

Harry threw a shadow as he crossed the living room at an angle. The lights did throw large shadows, but this shadow was oversized and solid, had anyone encountered it.

Harry's shadow, prolonged against the wall, was actually obscured by The Shadow's own form. Timing every step to Harry's, The Shadow kept the illusion perfect, though at least three persons glanced toward Harry as he passed.

Stopping at the doorway of a hall that led to Roswell's study, Harry was halted by Bradwood. Seeing that Harry was a newcomer, the chauffeur drew him to one side to explain that Mr. Arlingame wanted no one to disturb the conference.

Bradwood didn't notice the black shape that merged with a hanging doorway curtain. Others saw the curtain move, but thought that either Harry or Bradwood had joggled it. Actually, The Shadow was worming through, to continue along the hall.

The study doorway was deep. In its shelter, The Shadow inched the door open. Roswell had left it unlocked, because his watchdog, Bradwood, was guarding the passage. Through the crack The Shadow saw the large, paneled room, heard the conversation between Roswell and the nephews. The Shadow had arrived at the most important moment.

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

"KEMBERLY'S death is imperative," Roswell was saying. "He has arrived back in New York, and we must strike at once. I told Kemberly's associates that he intended to lend me a quarter million, and they believe it. But Kemberly will balk at the directors meeting tomorrow. He will not consider our assets the sort on which his bank would lend so large a sum.

"Therefore, Kemberly must be eliminated tonight. Whoever takes his place will lend the money. Once we have those funds, we can buy up securities that will wreck half a dozen businesses, after we kill off certain key men. Then we shall have merely to let the millions roll in, on long-range propositions as good as Dreeland's hotels and Caythorn's ships."

The nephews concurred with their uncle's opinion. They waited to hear which murderer he would pick. With a chuckle, Roswell suggested:

"I think we might use Stephen Osden."

Immediately, there was a protest. Practically all the nephews were opposed. Kemberly's death was the most important of all, as Roswell himself had said, and Steve couldn't be trusted. They wanted to get rid of him, true enough, but it would be preferable to keep such a balky person for a minor job.

Listening indulgently, Roswell showed that he had merely been sounding his nephews for their opinions; however, he learned something else. Steve was Muriel's pet, but it happened that the nephews, who thought of murder, not of love, had favorites also among the men they had supplied.

Only Bushby kept silent. While the others wrangled, he caught a nod from Roswell.

"I propose my candidate," said Bushby, when a lull came. "Harry Vincent is the dark horse in this race, and the best. He tried to make crime pay, and still believes he can. Since he is the one man in the lot who is wanted by the law, it is unwise to keep him here longer than is necessary.

"Well spoken, Bushby," acknowledged Roswell. "I propose the vote be unanimous, so we can adjourn, and you will be able to return to Sylvan Lake to humor Professor Murlock."

Like true Arlingames, the others forgot their preferences and rallied to the common weal. From a desk drawer, Roswell brought a copy of Murlock's pamphlet and tossed it to Jack.

"Since Vincent is an out-of-towner," said Roswell, "you had better plant this at a hotel. A cheap place like the Wenmar will do. Thaddeus can register as Vincent, and let you in with Gordon. Make the set-up look bona fide."

The group came from the study, Roswell with them, to see them off. The Shadow let the door come shut. He swung to a dark corner of the hallway; a statue of absolute black, he was unobserved when they went past. The fact that Roswell was with them gave The Shadow a new opportunity.

When the group reached the living room, he slid into the study and found a perfect hiding spot in a corner beyond a cloak rack, upon which Roswell's overcoat was spread on a hanger.

WHEN Roswell returned, he brought companions with him, all the members of his murder squad, including Tresher, Steve and Harry. They seated themselves about the room, and Arlingame addressed them from behind his big desk. He was very tactful.

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

"This evening," he said, "we have a very simple task. We must dispose of George Kemberly, a New York banker. Kemberly is just back from a trip, but will be receiving visitors. I suppose that most of you have heard of George Kemberly."

Most of the listeners nodded. One spoke.

"I've met Kemberly," said Tresher. "He's a big stuffed shirt. It would be a privilege to croak him!"

"I am reserving you for more delicate tasks," stated Roswell. "Your skill as a surgeon, Tresher, may come in very useful on some later occasion."

Steve's face tightened, as Harry noted. Steve was wondering if Roswell might be thinking of eliminating his own niece, Muriel. At least, it wasn't the present danger. As for Kemberly, it was plain that Steve had reconciled himself to the fact that he would have to let certain victims die in order to save the girl he loved.

It was fair-enough logic, from Harry's view. If Steve tried any form of protest, he would simply seal his own fate with this band of cutthroats, and therewith lose all chance of protecting Muriel.

"Let me demonstrate the simple method," said Roswell. "Please draw well away from that corner. No, no! Let us use another corner. I do not care to ruin my new overcoat. The opposite corner will do."

While the throng was moving back, The Shadow congratulated himself on choice of corners. Whatever could ruin the overcoat might prove ruinous to The Shadow, too. As matters now stood, Roswell's change of mind had given The Shadow a vantage place, instead of a danger spot.

Unlocking a cabinet behind his desk, Roswell showed two racks of bombs, arranged like pool balls and about the same size. Those on the top shelf were marked with small green labels; those on the bottom with red. Arlingame took one of each. He stepped to the center of the room and tossed the red-labeled ball to the corner that he had picked.

The ball exploded with a blinding flash and a great cloud of smoke. When the latter cleared away, the viewers saw that it had totally demolished a table and the corner panels.

With a shrug, Roswell stated that the damage could be repaired, but he added that if the bomb scored a direct hit, it would blow a human being into atoms. Roswell was juggling the green-marked ball as he spoke. It slipped from his hand and struck the floor.

Again, a burst of light, this time with chunks of cloth flying from the mass of smoke. Startled men thought that they had seen the last of Roswell Arlingame, but when the cloud faded, he was standing uninjured and unruffled, giving them his famous smile.

"A fake bomb," he said. "All smoke, but wadded with odds and ends of cloth to look like particles of clothing. The system should be obvious to all. The killer will carry two bombs, a red-labeled one for Kemberly, a green-labeled one for himself. He will toss one, and drop the other, as I did. Under cover of the smoke, escape will be quite simple. Almost too simple."

The last words had a purpose. Roswell wanted the veterans of his colony to admire the scheme, which they did, but to deride the man who would be appointed to so trivial a deed, which couldn't compare to a window leap or the drinking of a knock-out fluid. Bowing the group from the study, the smiling man ordered:

"Wait for me in the living room. I shall choose the man I want when I come there."

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

ALONE, Roswell went to the cabinet and took two red-marked balls from the lower shelf. From the desk, he brought a package of green stickers and very carefully affixed one over the red label of one of the genuine bombs. That done, he went out to the living room, carrying the two bombs very carefully.

As soon as Arlingame had gone, The Shadow came from his corner, approached the cabinet and took out two of the green balls. He went to the desk, opened the drawer and found, as he expected, a box of red labels along with the green. The Shadow put a red spot over the green mark that was on one ball.

Moving toward the living room, he saw Roswell talking to the group. The master mind had already chosen Harry Vincent for tonight's crime, and no one seemed to care. In fact, they were congratulating Harry. Roswell exhibited the bombs that he had with him.

"One dangerous, the other harmless," he lied. "I shall keep them in my study, Vincent, and give them to you later."

Roswell went back to the study, passing the curtain which The Shadow had chosen as convenient shelter. With him, the master of death was taking two real bombs, though one was labeled as harmless.

The men in the living room went their various ways, and Harry's happened to lead to the Italian garden.

It was there that The Shadow joined him later, and explained the latest Arlingame double cross. But, as an antidote, The Shadow handed Harry two bombs, both of which were harmless, though one was marked with a danger tag.

"Get rid of the ones that Arlingame gives you," said The Shadow, "and use these instead. Go through with the plan as he wants it, and when you leave Kemberly's, look for Moe's cab."

The cryptic order was followed by a whispered laugh, which faded as The Shadow merged with darkness, bound on a mission that would fully nullify the murder scheme of Roswell Arlingame, even to the point where that master of crime would not know that his plan of double death had failed!

## CHAPTER XVI. The NEW CHOICE.

THERE was only one George Kemberly, and being a banker, he knew Lamont Cranston; hence it was easy for The Shadow to contact him after reaching New York. But in this case, The Shadow intended to use a more impressive system, which he felt would work with Kemberly.

Kemberly wasn't just receiving friends; he was holding a full-fledged party, when a worried secretary called him to the telephone. When Kemberly heard the voice across the wire, he knew why the secretary was disturbed.

It was more than a commanding voice; it was ominous. Its tone came in a strange, sinister whisper that carried a chill with its vibration. Music, the chatter of guests faded from Kemberly's ken, as he listened to the words of The Shadow.

This was no crank call. Each statement rang home, bringing echoes through Kemberly's brain. The Shadow was telling him that there was a plot against his life, but that it would fail, provided Kemberly followed all instructions.

"Seclusion cannot save you," came the sibilant voice. "Dreeland was secluded when he lost his life. Police

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

protection will not avail. Caythorn had it when he died. If you believe that I can prevent this thrust—"

"I could believe it," interposed Kemberly, "if I knew who you were."

"I am The Shadow," the voice told him. "My plan is this. You will be trapped by a man who will threaten you with a bomb. Let him throw it. The bomb will prove harmless. But be sure you are where you can leave through the rear of your house. The smoke screen from the bomb will hide your departure."

"And then?"

"A car will be waiting for you. It belongs to your friend Cranston. Phone him, at the Cobalt Club, and ask him. You will find that he believes in me, though he is mystified."

There was a whispery laugh, as though The Shadow recalled a recent conversation and its surprising effect upon Lamont Cranston. Though duly impressed, Kemberly put a last question.

"But why should I disappear?"

"So that enemies will believe you dead," returned The Shadow. "You will then be beyond their reach. Only by tricking them, as they have tricked others, can you bring them to justice and render your future secure."

The Shadow was calling from the Cobalt Club. He went out to the lobby; guised as Cranston, and waited until an attendant informed him that someone was on the telephone. It wasn't a long wait, and the caller proved to be Kemberly. In Cranston's tone, The Shadow spoke quite seriously.

"Yes. I heard from The Shadow," he said. "He's a very mysterious chap. This isn't the first time I've done what he wanted... You're asking my advice? Don't take mine, old man. Take The Shadow's, whatever it was all about... Yes, he told me to have the car ready for you—that was all; so it will be—"

"Where will it take you? Probably over to my place in New Jersey. The Shadow said to have Stanley pick you up, and Stanley comes home unless he has instructions to the contrary... You're going through with it? Good enough, Kemberly. I would—"

His call finished, The Shadow started for the Hotel Wenmar, donning his black guise on the way. If the opportunity was right, he intended to bag three nephews tonight, and let them call their uncle later, under The Shadow's own surveillance. Crooks so guided invariably talked as commanded.

UNFORTUNATELY, the nephews weren't coming to the Wenmar. Out at Stony Lodge, Harry Vincent had just learned the reason. Roswell Arlingame had called him to the study, where Harry found Tresher, also.

"Gordon just called," informed Roswell. "There's a party on at Kemberly's. Too many people are likely to stay late. I'm afraid, Vincent, that you might mistake someone else for Kemberly."

Harry argued that it wasn't likely, and Roswell seemed reasonably convinced but still insisted that the possibility would remain. He picked up two round bombs: one marked red, the other green, that he had put on ash trays so they would not roll from his desk. He gave them to Tresher.

"You know Kemberly by sight," said Roswell. "So I shall have to send you, Tresher. By the way, what was the address of that place where you lived?"

Tresher gave the address, inquiringly.

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

"We have it right," nodded Roswell. "I'll have the boys stop by there and remove any evidence that might lead to you. Before I give you instructions, Tresher, you had better put those bombs in your overcoat. The red one is dangerous."

Roswell waved both men from the room. Tresher's coat was hanging near the front door, and after the fellow put the bombs in it and went back to the study, Harry had an inspiration.

Naturally, Kemberly's life had to be saved, and The Shadow, twice previously, had tried to capture Arlingame's men of murder while they were on the loose. The hallway entry was quite dark, and Harry's own overcoat was deep in a corner.

Carefully, Harry switched Tresher's bombs for his own. He handled the first two carefully, for he was sure that both were deadly. As he finished the exchange, he heard footsteps coming; but by then, Harry was handling the harmless bombs and could let them drop quickly into Tresher's pockets.

Fortunately, Roswell and Tresher were engaged in conversation. Roswell was asking about Muriel, and he chuckled when he learned how neatly Steve had indefinitely prolonged the girl's stay in her own room. Learning that Steve still had the keys, Roswell was even more pleased.

"I happen to be going into town with you," he told Tresher. "I intend to stay over night at the town house. Tomorrow, you will be well on your way, and I shall be very late coming here, which will keep Stephen in a quandary. He will have to let Muriel stay where she is.

"By then, she will be so out of patience that she will blame him for everything. I shall release her and state that it was Stephen's idea, not yours, to have her spend another idle day. Muriel is spirited, and will forget the infatuation that she thinks is love. Stephen's dejection will force him to accept the task that I assign him."

Tresher laughed. He knew that Steve's task would be the next murder, following Kemberly's. After the two had driven away in the limousine, with Bradwood at the wheel, Harry pondered over Tresher's luck. The fool was going to what should be his own doom, but Harry had given him a break.

The only trouble was that The Shadow did not know it. There was no way to reach The Shadow, because the telephone was in the study and Roswell had locked the room. However, Harry was quite sure that The Shadow would be at Kemberly's, and would therefore handle the changed situation in his usual style.

Harry decided that he could best spend his time by making friends with Steve. But when he found Steve with some of the others, he discovered that Steve did not want to talk.

It dawned on Harry that, of all the group, he was the one that Steve mistrusted most, because he had admitted previous experience in crime.

Steve, however, didn't wonder why Harry was around, nor did the others, because they didn't know that Roswell had already left with Tresher, as Harry's substitute. Harry decided that it would be a good idea to turn in before they began to wonder; so he did.

LONG in The Shadow's service, Harry Vincent held the full confidence of his chief, and tonight, though Harry did not guess it, The Shadow had decided to leave the Kemberly matter in his agent's hands. Hence, on watch at the Hotel Wenmar, The Shadow waited much longer than he would have normally.

The time approached for Harry to be at Kemberly's, but the Arlingame nephews did not arrive at the Wenmar. Convinced, then, that some change had occurred, The Shadow started for the banker's home. He had neither



## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

his limousine, nor Moe's cab. One was waiting for Kemberly, the other for Harry, both near the house where sham murder was to strike.

So The Shadow had to take an ordinary cab, which he did, entering it unnoticed and giving an address in a tone like Cranston's. Having been half asleep, the driver wasn't surprised to find that he had a passenger. He drove to the address, which was very close to Kemberly's.

Almost at Kemberly's, The Shadow saw the Arlingame limousine, coming the other way. Bradwood was driving it, and The Shadow saw Roswell as the only passenger. Presumably, the car had dropped Harry near the scene of the coming crime. But The Shadow decided not to follow the limousine.

First, he was in an ordinary cab; again, he was still looking for the reason why the nephews had not come to the Wenmar.

As his cab stopped, The Shadow let a bill flutter through the window and did not wait for change. This time, the driver was really astonished when he looked in back, to find his passenger vanished!

Making for the back of Kemberly's apartment house, The Shadow spared no time. Reaching Kemberly's apartment was easy, for it occupied the ground floor. But any delay might prove costly, for The Shadow had suddenly remembered Tresher's comment about having once met Kemberly.

Like a flash, The Shadow divined that Roswell must have brought Tresher instead of Harry. Tresher, with real bombs, unless Harry had managed to exchange them.

Though Harry had done so, The Shadow was accepting the opposite, and recognizing that he might be confronted by a case of double death, instead of harmless byplay. It called for action on The Shadow's part—action as swift as if the menace should be real.

It was singular to find The Shadow speeding to a cause where actual danger was absent. But there was no alternative, and even if death should fail, it could produce problems almost as great as those that murder would. The entire plan whereby The Shadow hoped to counteract the schemes of Roswell Arlingame was suddenly at stake, whether murder should win or lose.

The Shadow knew!

## CHAPTER XVII. STRANGE FLIGHT.

GEORGE KEMBERLY was greeting his would-be murder rather blandly, but not without some effort to preserve his calm. Kemberly was wise-faced and self-assured on almost all occasions, but he didn't like the looks of Tresher.

The former medico had come upon him very suddenly in the hallway of the large apartment, and the man's fists, clutched close against his coat, gave the reason for his ugly leer.

Music had stopped in the living room. Tresher gave a quick glance, to make sure that witnesses were about to arrive. They had heard Tresher's snarling greeting to Kemberly, had caught the words that followed.

"I'm going to kill you, Kemberly!" Tresher gloated. "Right where you stand! You haven't a chance to live—not when this comes your way!"

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

He raised his right hand, to display the first bomb. Tresher's thumb was over the spot that marked it; he raised the thumb slightly, for his own benefit, to make sure that the tab was red. It was.

"This is a bomb, Kemberly!" Tresher shouted. "It's going to blow you into so many pieces that they'll never find you, even with a microscope!"

The threat was too strong for Kemberly. The assurance that The Shadow had given him suddenly dwindled from his mind. Instead of preserving his coolness and waiting for the bomb to come, the banker was seized by panic. He could think only of escape.

It happened that escape was close by; not through chance, but because of The Shadow's admonition. Kemberly had chosen the hallway at the place to receive his killer, because there was a doorway at the rear. He decided not to wait for the smoke screen that The Shadow had promised. Turning, Kemberly made a quick dart for the door.

In so doing, he hurried Tresher's action, which was unfortunate, and at a moment when The Shadow was almost due. In addition, Kemberly's dart caused a shift by Tresher, which also produced unexpected consequences.

Tresher had picked his own spot, with a lighted but empty room to his left, the way through which he intended to flee later. In order to make sure of bombing Kemberly, Tresher sprang away from that door, out to the center of the hall.

As Tresher moved, his shadow seemed to follow him. But it was a living shadow, the solid form of an invader cloaked in black. Through the very way that Tresher intended to go, The Shadow had come, to prevent a possible murder. Tresher's quick spring to the right carried him away from The Shadow's approaching clutch!

Even then, The Shadow could have spoiled Tresher's throw by a quick grab for the assassin's hand, if it hadn't been for intervention of an unwanted sort.

Tresher had swung in the direction of the living room, and a couple of Kemberly's guests, their wits returning, made a surge for him. They struck Tresher from in back, plunging him forward ahead of The Shadow's reach. All that the cloaked intervener could do was add an impetus against Tresher's shoulder.

It was just about enough. The bomb, slipping from Tresher's fingers, landed short of Kemberly, and from the demonstration that he had witnessed at Stony Lodge, The Shadow had hopes that the banker would still be alive, even if the bomb proved real.

For the moment, The Shadow couldn't tell which type it was, but as the smoke cleared, he knew that Kemberly was safe.

The hallway wasn't marred, as it would have been had the bomb been deadly. In the interval, however, Kemberly had disappeared—through the rear door, of course, which he had shown presence of mind enough to close behind him. However, to other witnesses, the disappearance of Kemberly was proof that the bomb must have been deadly.

Tresher took it to prove the same. Hands were no longer on him, for his assailants had dropped back the moment that he actually tossed the bomb.

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

The Shadow, too, had swung away; he was shoving the others into the living room. Knowing that Tresher had brought the harmless bombs, The Shadow wanted the fellow to complete the game.

Kemberly's death, Tresher's suicide—both were vital elements in The Shadow's scheme to trick Roswell Arlingame. The Shadow had counted upon Harry to supply the fakery; it happened that Tresher was doing it instead, unwittingly. The thing to do was blend one plan into the other, the only added point being the necessity of capturing Tresher after he took to flight.

That part seemed easy to The Shadow. There were factors, though, that were to render it impossible.

THE first came when Tresher saw The Shadow. He had heard of crime's arch-foe, and he almost made the mistake of winging his second bomb at the target in black.

Then, remembering that his present bomb was harmless, Tresher dived for the room which offered him an outlet. Luckily, he had an added thought—the need of deceiving The Shadow. The fake bomb could do it.

Recalling Lorven's window dive and Belder's poison dose, Tresher paused in dramatic fashion and gestured as if to throw the bomb; then he banged it on the floor at his own feet.

There was a hollow puff; loud, but light-powered explosives blew chunks of cloth from a great cloud of smoke. As the smoke cleared, another factor entered.

The Shadow had halted in the living-room door. Tresher was gone, of course, through a far window, and The Shadow wanted to be after him. It was important, however, not to confuse the witnesses. The Shadow wanted them to see that Tresher was really gone, so they would take it for granted that the assassin had been blown to smithereens, as they supposed Kemberly to be.

The Shadow waited for that point to strike home; then, rapidly, he leaped through the clearing smoke, to take up the chase.

Some people saw The Shadow go, as others had seen him arrive, but none had any doubt as to his part, though his identity puzzled them. Whoever he was, the being in black had certainly tried to prevent Kemberly's death; but, being an intruder, he had evidently decided not to stay around and reap the criticism of failure.

Thus, things stood largely as The Shadow wanted them. Witnesses would testify both to Kemberly's death and Tresher's suicide. They would say that The Shadow had played the proper part. The only thing remaining was the matter of capturing Tresher, somewhere in back of Kemberly's.

In flight, though, Tresher wasn't as cool as he should have been. He hadn't bargained to meet The Shadow at Kemberly's, and, as he ran, the fellow was gripped by the horrendous fear that The Shadow might have guessed that the suicide was faked. Tresher had long legs, and he made good use of them.

Another thing spurred him. As he neared the rear street, Tresher saw a limousine start away. The car was Cranston's, but he mistook it for Arlingame's. Tresher didn't see the chauffeur, Stanley, nor did he sight Kemberly, in the rear seat, as a passenger.

Tresher spied only the limousine itself, and made great strides to overtake it; but, by then, the big car was swinging the corner.

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

It occurred to Tresher that he had been abandoned by Bradwood, who was supposed to meet him. Like a rat looking for a hole, Tresher saw a taxicab just across the street, its door half open. He made such a quick dive into the cab, that the driver didn't have a chance to see his face.

Instantly, the cab shot away, tumbling Tresher into the rear seat so suddenly, that he couldn't find breath to hoarse an order.

The Shadow was just in time to witness the cab's spurt. He paused, lowering his drawn gun, to issue a grim laugh at his own expense. This was one time—perhaps the only time—that The Shadow regretted Moe's quickness with the gas pedal.

Moe had been expecting Harry Vincent, and The Shadow hadn't found time to inform him that Tresher was coming instead. The Shadow's own cab was taking Tresher, the criminal, off to safety!

MOE learned the mistake quite soon. His knowledge came when a cold gun muzzle pressed the back of his neck and he heard Tresher's voice, instead of Harry's.

"Keep right on going," Tresher ordered. "Maybe you don't like back-seat drivers, but you've got one."

Moe's wits were quick.

"Suits me, boss," he said. "That's what I was told to do. You saw the way I hopped to it, didn't you?"

Remembering, Tresher was puzzled, but he didn't take the gun from Moe's neck. Instead, he demanded:

"Say—who are you?"

"Just call me Shrevvy," suggested Moe. "That's what your friend Bradwood does. Him and me are pals. He had a date tonight, so he got me to pinch-hit for him."

Tresher leaned back, looked at the cab license which had Moe's name and photograph. The nickname fitting, he decided that Shrevvy was all right.

"I'll keep cruising," suggested Moe. "while you're making up your mind where you want me to take you, boss."

It seemed a good idea to Tresher. Moe skirted around various blocks, actually swinging part way back to Kemberly's, knowing that by this time, The Shadow must have found another cab and would be trying to pick up the trail.

They had passed several cabs, when Tresher poked his gun again.

"Enough of that stuff," he said. "What about the dope sheet? Have you got it?"

"The dope sheet?"

"Yes. Didn't Bradwood hand you an envelope for me? He was supposed to."

"He had an envelope," countered Moe. "Something I thought he was going to mail for that old gink he works for—"

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

The stall couldn't work with Tresher any longer. The fellow interrupted by new pressure with the gun, the sort that chilled Moe thoroughly. Tresher's snarl was pointed.

"So its a double cross!" he voiced. "A shakedown gag! Bradwood pulling a runout, so I'd be on the spot. Figuring maybe I'd make a deal with you to help me lam, with you paying him a cut afterward. It don't go, Shrevvy! You know where Bradwood is, so take me there. I'm having it out with him."

Moe knew that Bradwood kept Arlingame's limousine in a garage not far from the town residence. It was only policy to take Tresher there, on hope that Bradwood might be around. With luck, Moe could keep himself out of the argument, for he knew that Bradwood would be properly surprised to see Tresher show up.

Letting his eyes dart glances in the rear-view mirror as he kept along, Moe noted that another cab was trailing. He did a few maneuvers with the brake pedal at crossings, to wigwag distress signals from the stop-light, which The Shadow might see. The other cab was still close when Moe stopped outside the garage.

"Stay here," Tresher told him. "I'm keeping an eye on you, and I may need you. I'm not blaming you for this. Bradwood is the double-crosser."

It went further than Bradwood, though Tresher did not know it. It hadn't yet occurred to the latest dupe that Roswell Arlingame, master of the league of death, was a specialist in dirty work, where his own tools were concerned. Huddled behind the wheel of the cab, Moe remembered that point.

TRESHER went into the garage, leaving the sliding door partly open. Bradwood was there, polishing the limousine. The poker-faced chauffeur suddenly felt Tresher's gun at his neck. He shook himself and turned about, to stare as at a ghost. Tresher didn't catch the full reason for Bradwood's pallor.

"Where's the dope sheet?"

Bradwood tried to stammer an answer, put failed.

"So you chucked it," sneered Tresher, "It suits me. I know where I'm going—back to Stony Lodge. It's a good spot for a hide-away. You're driving me there, Bradwood, so I can tell the boys what you tried to pull. They'll hang on to you, until old Arlingame shows up and decides what to do with you."

There was blackness at the end space of the sliding door. Dismissing the cab that he had used, The Shadow had arrived on foot, to overhear the one-sided conversation between Tresher and Bradwood.

Tresher was gesturing toward the door, telling Bradwood to slide it wide, so The Shadow retired to the darkness across the street.

He saw Tresher force Bradwood to the wheel of the limousine. The big car eased out of the garage. From his lurking spot, The Shadow was wheeling forward, to spring in upon the pair before Bradwood turned on the lights. As he started, intervention came.

The glare of lights swung in from the corner, focusing their beam squarely upon The Shadow. From the arriving machine, a new factor in the case, came shouts that The Shadow recognized. They were the voices of Arlingame's quick-triggered nephews, smoothies who were better marksmen than the toughest of gunmen.

Triumphant shouts, as they were whipping revolvers into play, while the car itself lurched forward to crush down crime's superfoe, The Shadow!

## CHAPTER XVIII. SCENES OF STRIFE.

TRAPPED as he was, The Shadow had two choices, both equally bad. To dive one way would mean that the lunging car would pin him against a building wall; to whirl out into the street would make him an immediate target for a pair of guns.

The nephews were riding in a coupe, and one, who handled the wheel, was turning the car into an actual weapon as sizable as a Juggernaut, while the others were equally anxious to get busy with their revolvers.

The car was too close for The Shadow to cripple it; a leap from its path would not give him time to spin and meet the fire.

Nevertheless, The Shadow leaped. He didn't stop to twirl and fire. He went like a man in terror for his life—or so the nephews thought, as they aimed gleefully, to clip their foe. The Shadow was so good a target, that they made sure of their aim before they fired.

The Shadow had hoped they would. He was depending upon Moe, and the cabby came through.

Moe had the cab in gear and he showed his usual skill with the accelerator, the moment that he saw The Shadow's fling. It was Moe's way of redeeming himself for an earlier mistake, and he couldn't have chosen a better method. The cab, too, became a missile, as Moe shot it at the side of the coupe.

Instinctively, the man at the wheel of the other car veered off at an angle. Moe veered, too, slicing the cab in between The Shadow and the aiming guns.

Their aim ruined, the marksmen fired their first shots wide; then, as they caught a last glimpse of The Shadow, the cab wheeled in to take the next bullets in its steel body.

Moe showed that he could use the brakes, too. He wanted to keep the cab as a barrier. His stop gave the coupe a chance to do a squeeze beyond him. Climbing the sidewalk, it skimmed between Moe's radiator and the building wall. By then, the black-cloaked target was gone.

Diving low, The Shadow had grabbed the door of the cab and was rolling inside. He came up at the window, to stab replies at the wildly talking revolvers.

Bradwood hadn't lost time while the fight was on. He couldn't lose it, not while Tresher was pressing him with a gun. He wheeled the limousine off in the other direction, so fast that the nephews merely glimpsed the car, not its occupant. They took it that The Shadow had somehow trailed Bradwood, and that the chauffeur was trying to make a getaway.

Their trip to the garage had merely been a routine one, to tell Bradwood that they had placed the proper evidence in Tresher's former room. Routine, however, had turned into something requiring emergency measures. Wheeling the corner in their car, the Arlingames looked back to see The Shadow's car going after the limousine.

Speedily, the coupe circled the block, and its driver saw the limousine speed over a crossing. Without hesitation, he slashed for the corner, cutting in to meet the pursuer, who would certainly come next. Moe, at the wheel of the cab, saw the coupe as The Shadow voiced a warning.

Again, the two cars slued about, guns blazing from their windows as from the turrets of two fighting tanks.

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

Shots couldn't take effect amid such skids, not even The Shadow's. First to straighten out, the coupe darted down another street. The Shadow ordered Moe to pursue it.

The limousine had profited too well by the fresh encounter between the other cars. Knowing that its destination was Stony Lodge, The Shadow decided to chase the coupe instead.

A settlement with Arlingame's nephews would not ruin his other plans, and the opportunity to overtake them while they were shooting away like crooks, offered a chance to brand them for what they were.

FOR once, Moe found his equal when it came to tricky driving. Whichever Arlingame had the wheel, he was using it to perfection. Only at intervals did The Shadow come close enough to peg at the spurting guns which spoke back in his direction.

Finally, among the twisted streets of the Greenwich Village section, the coupe wriggled clear. There was no sight of it as Moe cruised in search.

Commending Moe upon an excellent effort, The Shadow had him swing back to the neighborhood of the Cobalt Club. Arriving as Cranston, The Shadow put in a call to Cranston's New Jersey estate and talked to Kemberly, who had arrived there.

"So it all worked well!" exclaimed the supposed Cranston, after hearing Kemberly's tale. "Good enough! I'll see you in the morning, Kemberly... Tonight? Why, the night's half over. Stanley would have to come in here to get me... Yes, I'll be staying at the club... Do you know, Kemberly, I just might happen to hear from The Shadow, if I remain here... Of course, it's important! We shall have to find out what he wants you to do next—"

Returning to the cab, The Shadow became himself, as he told Moe to take him to the airport. The night was well along, for it had been after midnight when Tresher came to Kemberly's, and considerable time had passed since then. Having fresh matters to handle before morning, The Shadow decided to use swifter transportation than Moe's cab.

DURING those hours before dawn, Harry Vincent was sleeping only at intervals. Time and again, he found himself listening for the return of the limousine, only to realize that it couldn't yet be back.

A trip from New York to Stony Lodge required a few hours, or longer, because of the side roads that had to be traversed.

Some of the others were downstairs, holding an all-night poker session, and Harry could occasionally hear their voices. Then, snapping suddenly from a drowse, Harry was sure he heard a distant motor—only to have the drone fade suddenly as though a thing of a dream. Next, the voices, but this time there was no mistake. They were louder, argumentative.

Harry hadn't actually gone to bed, for he felt that this was a night of emergency. Putting on his shoes and coat, he started downstairs.

The poker players had been drinking, and Steve was among them. He'd remembered his promise to Muriel well enough to go light on the drinks, but it had only taken two to throw Steve into an argumentative state.

His theme was Tresher. Foreseeing a new clash between himself and the medico, Steve was trying to put himself in right with his present companions, but he put himself in wrong, instead.

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

Led by a burly, leery-eyed fellow named Calgan, the others were upholding Tresher, and criticizing Steve instead.

They were telling him off properly. He wasn't a full-fledged member of their tribe, they said, and they were playing cards with him not because they liked him, but to keep an eye on him. They were reminding Steve that he was a newcomer to the ring. Steve answered that one:

"What about Vincent?"

"He joined up the same as we did," snapped Calgan. "He didn't have to let a girl talk him into coming here."

Steve came up from his chair, fists clenched, in case Calgan slurred Muriel. But Calgan preferred to discuss Harry.

"What's more," he said, "Vincent has a rep already. That's why he was given a job so quick. Those clippings he showed us—"

The fellow stopped short. Harry had stepped down from the stairs, deciding to take a hand in a game that looked more interesting than poker. What amazed Calgan, and the others, too, was the fact that Harry was still around.

"How come, Vincent?" queried Calgan. "You were supposed to croak a banker named Kemberly tonight."

"I let Tresher have the job instead," informed Harry. "He wanted it. I didn't."

The listeners stared coldly, thinking that Harry had gone yellow—all except Steve. Somewhat on the spot, that young man was studying Harry's possibilities as an ally.

"Those clipping's of mine weren't much." remarked Harry. "I brought some better ones along. This would be a good time for you fellows to see them."

From a pocket of his vest, Harry brought out clippings that The Shadow had given him for emergency. He shoved the playing cards from the table, spread the slips of newspaper instead.

Calgan and the others stared goggle-eyed when they saw them. These were bona fide clippings, telling the true facts in two murders: those of Dreeland and Caythorn.

With them were two other names: Lorven and Belder. Names that Calgan and the other cutthroats knew, but thought were unknown to the public.

To their astonishment, they saw that Lorven and Belder were listed as actual suicides, and the facts struck home. Looking from face to face, Harry saw enlightenment dawn, and with it, savagery, that he knew was meant for Roswell Arlingame and the murder master's precious nephews.

Harry felt triumphant. Single-handed, he was winning over this batch of dupes. He felt that he could make them drop their murderous intentions and agree that crime was not worth-while. They'd listen to Harry, after this.

A perfect stroke on Harry's part, in the service of The Shadow. But Harry was to learn, too soon, that his methods lacked The Shadow's own finesse. Things were to happen that would turn this stroke into a boomerang.



Then would Harry wish that he had held off until receiving The Shadow's final word!

## CHAPTER XIX. THE SHROUD OF SILENCE.

THE conviction that swept the band of murderers was shared by Steve Osden, though in a different way. His face did not go ugly when he saw the evidence of a wholesale double cross; instead, Steve registered eagerness. Here was the proof that could convince Muriel of the evil that her uncle had maneuvered.

Watching Steve, Harry saw his expression, and gave him a side nudge that ended in a gesture toward the stairs.

Understanding, Steve started up, unnoticed by the rest. He was drawing a key from his pocket as he went.

At Muriel's door, Steve knocked, expecting to hear a sulky reply; but he caught a happy one, instead. It was like a query, in Muriel's voice:

"Steve?"

Steve acknowledged who he was, and unlocked the door. Muriel was seated at the window, wrapped in blankets, but she sprang up to greet Steve breathlessly.

"What's happened, Steve?" she asked. "I saw the lights, and I wondered—"

Steve interrupted by unlocking the closet door. He gestured toward Muriel's clothes.

"Get into some of those as fast as you can," he said. "Don't ask questions; there isn't time. I'll be downstairs watching for you, but don't come down until I give the word. You must trust me, Muriel."

"I trust you, Steve. But—"

Steve didn't hear the rest. He had left, closing the door behind him. Downstairs, he saw more men gathering. The whole of the murder tribe was being summoned, to learn the truth of treachery. So interested were they in the clippings, that Harry easily drew Steve aside.

"You've got to get away with Muriel," undertoned Harry. "The life of an Arlingame won't be worth a nickel when this crowd gets really mad. They'll listen to me long enough for you to get started."

Steve nodded. Harry stepped back to join the others. Calgan saw Harry and gave a knowing leer.

"I guess Tresher has gotten his by this time," Calgan said. "You're smart, Vincent. Tell us what comes next."

Harry could hear a motor in the driveway. This time, he was sure of the sound. It was opportune.

"Bradwood comes next," he said. "He's an Arlingame stooge. Get ready to gang him when he comes in, and we'll see what he has to tell us."

Bradwood usually came in by the front door. The members of the murder group drew guns, mostly, though a few had preference for knives, having learned to toss them from Belder. They spread in a semicircle, leering at the thought of the surprise that was coming to Bradwood.

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

The front door opened. Footfalls approached.

With murderous men straining at imaginary leashes, the returning man stepped into the living room. Instantly, the whole surprise was reversed; thrown back upon Harry. It wasn't Bradwood who entered.

It was Tresher!

Tresher, who by Harry's own declaration must be dead! Though Harry himself knew otherwise, he felt sure that The Shadow had taken care of Tresher's case; that it was safe, therefore to claim that Tresher must have died.

GLARING eyes swung to Harry, but some were belated. Tresher saw them, wondered at the divided challenge. He thought that jealousy on Harry's part might be the cause of this thing.

It was logical that Harry, envious because the murder opportunity had been taken from him, should have spread false rumors which some of the crowd believed.

Considering his own case sound, Tresher stepped in boldly to meet the challenge.

Calgan, a particular friend of Tresher, became the immediate spokesman, after noting that others were keeping an eye on Harry. He gestured Tresher to the table, pointed to the clipping's, and suggested:

"Have a look at these."

Tresher studied the clippings. There was a long pause while he weighed them, an interval that held Harry frozen, and Steve as well. At last, Tresher summed the opinion in brief, harsh words, which he flung straight at Harry.

"They're faked!"

"I'd like to know why," returned Harry, bluntly. "The ones that Arlingame showed you fellows are the phonies."

He turned about the group and saw that some still had traces of doubt upon their faces. Harry queried:

"Can any of you prove that Lorven and Belder are still alive?"

"I can!" retorted Tresher. "You want the proof? I'm it! Old Arlingame didn't double-cross me, otherwise I wouldn't be back here. Those two bombs he gave me did just what he said they would. The first wiped out Kemberly; the other covered my getaway.

"But you're right on one thing, Vincent. There's been a double cross going on, only in a small-time way. The fellow who tried it was Bradwood; that's why I came back here. He's out in the car, groggy, because I gave him a nice tap on the konk just before I came in."

Chuckling, Tresher turned to the others and coolly showed that he intended to take charge.

"We'll bring Bradwood in," he said, "and when he blabs, we'll find out a lot of things. We'll find he wasn't the only guy muscling in on the racket. He was too smart to be working it alone. It's a cinch he talked to Vincent—"

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

Unthinkingly, Tresher nudged his thumb Harry's way, and some eyes followed the gesture. They were just in time to see Harry making a dart for the door.

Calgan, the first to notice, came up with his gun, but Steve made a lunge that bowled the fellow forward.

Harry, his own gun drawn, was wheeling to help Steve, and Muriel, suddenly appearing at the stair top, dressed in her traveling clothes, came shrieking downward, hoping that she could aid.

It was all so futile. Three-way murder was in the making. With a dozen armed men ready to follow Calgan's lead and chop down three victims, one a helpless girl, only something in the nature of a cataclysm could have prevented triple death.

Something came: The Shadow's laugh!

In itself, that mockery was not a cataclysm, but there were times when it could produce the equivalent effect.

Most people would have required an earthquake to make their feet spin under them like tops. Not so with Tresher, Calgan and their breed. They were the sort to whom The Shadow's challenge was a factor that outweighed all else. They heard it from the rear of the hall, and spun to answer.

BIG automatics blasted ahead of revolver spurts and a rain of knives. With the recoils of his weapons, The Shadow wheeled back through the doorway that he had entered. His sudden sortie was a time break for the threatened three, and they took advantage of it.

Harry dived to the front entry, while Steve, flinging about, grabbed Muriel and thrust her toward the nearest corner. Even in the excitement, Steve had a flashed recollection of something that Muriel had said about seeing lights.

Steve connected The Shadow with those lights, but that was all. Had he listened longer, he would have learned that the girl had seen the lights hovering down from the air. The Shadow had landed on the lawn at Stony Lodge in his autogiro.

His purpose had been to head off Tresher and Bradwood; but on arrival, The Shadow had decided to let the murder crowd hear Tresher's story and see how Harry handled it. That would have been the time for Harry to produce the clippings. He had made a mistake in showing them too soon.

To rectify the error, The Shadow was drawing the murderous tribe his way. As the first batch reached the rear doorway he wheeled into sight again, full upon them.

He became a whirl of blackness, slugging from the midst of a milling throng, using such close-range tactics to protect himself from more distant fire. If any of the murderers remembered the victims whose lives The Shadow had saved, it would be Harry's job to handle them.

Some did remember. They drove for the front entry to get at Harry, and two others turned to look for Steve and Muriel in their corner.

Desperately, Harry tried to beat the latter pair to the shot, not caring what happened to himself. He was almost at the front door, which Tresher had left open, when someone hurtled upon him from behind.

It was Bradwood. Whether the chauffeur was still a trifle woozy, or merely trying to redeem himself, was inconsequential. At least, he was in the fray, and putting Harry out of it, for his grab for Harry's gun was a

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

successful one.

Hearing shots, Harry knew that The Shadow was clipping the killers who were after Steve and Muriel, but Harry was beyond his chief's range of aid.

Bradwood had twisted him to a corner of the entry; two foemen were piling in to slug Harry down when his hand struck the pocket of his overcoat.

Wildly, Harry grabbed the coat, his hand deep in a pocket as he wrenched through the front door. Ugly laughs were peeling from behind him as a prelude to gunfire, when Harry let his hand fly back over his shoulder, sending the thing that he had brought from the overcoat pocket.

It was one of the bombs that Roswell had given to Tresher. Red or green did not matter. Both were deadly, as Harry knew.

The bomb struck the step of the front door and exploded. Its blast drowned the snarling laughs, and no shots followed. Yanking the second bomb from his other pocket, Harry dropped the overcoat and turned to see the havoc that he had supplied.

The front step was gone, and two foemen with it. Smoke was pouring from the entry, but Harry heard shooting from beyond, back into the house.

He dashed back into the house.

THINGS had changed in the living room. The Shadow had broken free from his cluster of attackers to wheel across the room, shooting as he went. Hasty shots, that had taken very little toll, because The Shadow's only purpose was to draw further attack away from Steve and Muriel.

Half a dozen killers, Tresher and Calgan with them, were following the lead of Bradwood, who had stumbled in from the entry just before Harry scaled the bomb at the front door.

In battling The Shadow, they were willing to accept Bradwood not only as a fellow fighter, but as a temporary leader. He was making for the passage to Arlingame's study, to which he had a key.

Harry threw the second bomb. It was too late to catch any of the fleeing throng, but it saved The Shadow from wasting his few remaining bullets. For the crooks dived deeper into the passage when they heard the explosion at the curtains, and they didn't turn to fire.

Though weaponless, Harry hurried after them, but The Shadow reached the wrecked archway first and brushed his agent aside. From where he halted, Harry saw the strange and totally unexpected finish to the battle, a thing which he was to remember as paramount among The Shadow's exploits.

For, if the black-cloaked master had ever staved off disaster and made catastrophe itself serve a just purpose, it was upon this occasion.

The Shadow was starting through the passage to the study. The door at the end was open, and crooks were safely inside. Bradwood had yanked the door of the cabinet open and the killers were grabbing bombs, all marked with genuine red spots.

Bradwood was actually starting to throw one, and the others were letting their hands go back, all intent upon blasting The Shadow into oblivion, when the cloaked fighter fired a single shot.

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

The bullet clipped Bradwood's wrist. The bomb scaled only a few feet forward and exploded, wiping out Bradwood. Others dived frantically away just in time, but Tresher, trying to complete his throw, was close enough to be jarred. His fingers lost their grip on the bomb, genuinely this time, and not in the fake way that he had used at Kemberly's.

Another blast and Tresher was gone. Calgan, staggering back, struck his hand against the wall before The Shadow could fire at him. Calgan's bomb went, and he vanished with it.

The crash at the wall did more. It knocked loose the cabinet containing the remaining bombs. From then on it didn't matter how tightly the remaining killers clutched the missiles that they held.

Blasting in rapid succession, the falling bombs rocked the study, flinging men helter-skelter. Landing against walls and floor, their bombs struck with them and added echoes to the cannonade. Green bombs were puffing with the rest; the entire study was filled with smoke, making a whitish shroud.

It was a shroud of silence and of death that marked the final resting place of killers, in the very room where their master, Roswell Arlingame, had initiated them into ways of murder!

Dawn was breaking over Stony Lodge before that smoke had cleared. Dawn that was greeting a rising autogiro that carried The Shadow to another mission!

## CHAPTER XX. THE LAW OF DEATH.

ROSWELL ARLINGAME looked kindlier than ever when he greeted his nephews outside of Kemberly's bank. He hadn't come there in his limousine, for he had told Bradwood to take the car to Stony Lodge the night before.

However, all was well at Stony Lodge. Roswell had called the house an hour ago and had talked with Harry Vincent. After a brief but pleasant chat, he had agreed that Harry should rejoin Bushby on Sylvan Lake. It might be that Bushby would enjoy companionship other than that of Professor Murlock, and the cabin was as good a hide-away as Stony Lodge.

Of course, Arlingame did not know that The Shadow wanted Harry to go to the lake to wait for Bushby's first trip from the island. Old Roswell hadn't figured that any of his nephews could be trapped by The Shadow, or persons who served the cloaked fighter.

Jack, Thaddeus and Gordon had given The Shadow the run-around the night before, and in so doing had made everything safe for Bradwood. According to Harry, the chauffeur was asleep and couldn't be disturbed, when Roswell called. Indeed, Bradwood was very much asleep, like so many others at Stony Lodge.

With his nephews, Roswell entered the bank and was conducted to the president's office. His face lost its smile and saddened when he shook hands with the directors. They had been forced to take over the president's duties.

Last night George Kemberly had been murdered, done to death by a crazed medical student named Tresher, who had committed suicide immediately afterward. A sad thing--another of the fanatical murders inspired by the teachings of Professor Philo Murlock.

There was no question about the matter, because one of Murlock's pamphlets on the "Philosophy of Achievement" had been found in a room where Tresher had lived.

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

Naturally, Roswell apologized to the bankers for disturbing them at so important a time. But he felt that he was keeping an appointment of honor. He had told George Kemberly that he would be at the bank at precisely nine o'clock this morning. Of course, he was quite willing to let business matters wait—

As he reached that point, Roswell noticed a friend who was present. The friend was Lamont Cranston, who was obviously here on business, too. So, with his smile returning, Roswell decided that he might stay a while.

The chairman of the directors, a man named Martindale, decided to go ahead with business. He and his fellow directors knew that Arlingame and his nephews wanted loans covering a quarter of a million dollars, and had securities to give as collateral.

Usually the question of collateral was left to the president, and since that office was vacant, the directors would consider it. They had heard much from Arlingame regarding the loan, and were quite sure that Kemberly would have granted it.

In fact, Arlingame had letters from Kemberly, personal ones, referring to the loans. He showed them, and the directors recognized the signatures of their late president.

Martindale fussed around in a desk drawer, found promissory notes for Arlingame and his nephews to sign.

Those notes had blank spaces just above the signatures, and the inked names were drying when the door of the office opened.

The directors began to rise, and when Arlingame did the same, he was surprised to see that his niece, Muriel, had arrived. With her was Steve Osden, who sauntered into the office, his hands in his pockets.

Arlingame's eyes narrowed as his niece greeted him. He thought that she was at Stony Lodge, and couldn't understand why Vincent hadn't told him that she had left for New York with Steve. Then, as a matter of policy, Arlingame let his smile return.

"What brings you here, Muriel?"

"I have business, too," said the girl with a smile of her own. "But I brought my promissory note along."

She drew the paper from her purse, but it didn't look like a promissory note to Arlingame. He reached to receive it.

"No, Uncle Roswell," spoke Muriel. Her lips had tightened; there was a flash in her eyes. "This is for the bank directors." She handed it to Martindale. "It is a signed statement regarding matters at Stony Lodge."

Before Roswell could counter that one, a door clattered open behind him. He turned, his nephews with him, and all were too utterly startled to do anything but stare. The door was the president's own private entrance, and the bank president himself had used it.

Within the door, quite alive, stood George Kemberly!

IN his hand, Kemberly had a revolver, and at that moment Steve, shoving forward, displayed one, too.

From across the table, Cranston rose and calmly brought an automatic from his pocket. The size of the weapon was disheartening, particularly to Roswell's nephews. The gun was of .45 caliber, the size that The Shadow favored.

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

Covered by three guns, Roswell and his nephews stood helpless. Kemberly gestured his free hand toward the letters that Roswell had brought.

"Those are forgeries!" boomed Kemberly. "I never wrote Arlingame any private letters. He is using those simply to bolster his false claim that I intended to lend him money on securities which I regarded as doubtful, but now believe may be fraudulent."

As he finished that speech, Kemberly looked toward Cranston, who gave him a calm nod.

"There is a rubber stamp in the drawer," Kemberly told Martindale. "Bring it out and use it to stamp those promissory notes in the blank space above the signatures."

Martindale found the rubber stamp. It was a large one, and when he had applied it to all four of the notes, Kemberly told him to read Roswell's aloud; that it would suffice, because the others were identical.

Rather amazed, Martindale read the stamped statement. It said, in simple terms, that the undersigned was responsible for the murders of James Dreeland, William Caythorn, and for the attempted murder of George Kemberly!

Roswell Arlingame tried to show defiance. Kemberly left it to Cranston to answer him. In even tones, the hawk-faced visitor summed up the matter.

"A trick, Arlingame," he said, "which you and your nephews should admire, because it is better than any that you demonstrated. But this trick will stand, for it has been done openly. We shall have these signatures witnessed, in your presence, to render the statements valid."

"Witnessed under threat," sneered Arlingame. "As such they will never stand."

Cranston put away his gun, as did Kemberly and Steve. Martindale and other directors witnessed the signature, while Roswell, actually fuming, offered no protest. But his eyes, their twinkle gone, were watching for an opportunity up to the final moment.

Then, rapidly, Roswell pulled a gun of his own and shouted for his nephews to do the same. They were too slow. Kemberly, keyed for the action, brought his gun out to cover Jack. Steve was swift enough to handle Thaddeus, while Cranston did more than merely cover Gordon.

With a deft twist, The Shadow pinned the nephew's hand in back of him, gun and all, to gain an aim at Roswell, who was springing for the door.

The Shadow's call, though in Cranston's tone, was sharp and commanding and might have halted Roswell, for its note told that escape was impossible. But before Roswell had done more than yank open the door, a gun blasted.

It wasn't one of the guns within the room; it came from the banking floor outside.

Roswell Arlingame staggered, then pitched to the floor, dying. Through the doorway stepped Professor Philo Murlock, a smoking revolver in his hand. He looked toward Roswell and spoke, as if to the dying man alone. Behind Murlock appeared the face of Ling, the Chinese cook, who listened solemnly.

"Ling heard my name over the radio," said Murlock, "and had me listen. I learned that I was being hunted as an instigator of murder. I learned of strange suicides that made me wonder. When your nephew, Bushby,

## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

returned, I was prepared for him. I forced a full confession from him, and Ling gave him what he deserved—death!"

To illustrate how Bushby had died, Ling unbundled his hands from against his cloak and displayed the meat cleaver with which he had once threatened Harry.

"I have finished my new book," added Murlock. "Others have discussed the philosophy of life. My theme is the philosophy of death. The manuscript is at your office. Did you hear me, Arlingame? It deals with the philosophy of death, in which Ling and I believe—"

Roswell Arlingame wasn't interested in the philosophy of death. He had discovered the thing itself. A last, convulsive shudder had shaken his prone frame. The master of murder, the double-crosser whose reward was doom, was lying stone dead before Murlock's eyes.

TURNING, the professor pushed Ling through the door and closed it. The hush was broken by shots out on the banking floor.

Wildly, the Arlingame nephews fled before either Steve or Kemberly could halt them. Even Gordon followed Jack and Thaddeus, because The Shadow had released him. He was stepping forward, however, ready to drop the fugitives without losing Cranston's pose.

It wasn't necessary. A group of incoming bank guards met the frantic nephews with a rapid fire before any of the Arlingames could do damage. Stumbling, the three sprawled dead, joining their evil uncle in the fate that was their proper reward. Their chance of offering fight was partly spoiled by their own blunders.

They had stumbled over the bodies of Murlock and Ling. The shots that had given the nephews hope had been fired by the professor. He had dispatched the first slug into Ling's brain, the next into his own, to prove the philosophy which both accepted: that death was worth while after the accomplishment of so great a deed as the destruction of Roswell Arlingame.

Later, together in the president's office, Muriel was sadly listening to Steve's insistence that he loved her. The girl sighed as she shook her head.

"I can never marry you, Steve," she said. "I am an Arlingame. I realize now that crime is my only heritage."

"It can't be," declared Steve. "When the test came, you took the right side, Muriel."

There was a knock at the door. Glumly, Steve answered it. He saw Cranston talking to Kemberly outside, but neither appeared to see the messenger who was delivering an envelope. Steve stared at the name on the message. It was addressed to Muriel Forster.

The riddle was explained when Steve and Muriel opened the envelope. Inside was evidence, cabled from Australia, to prove that Frank Forster, former partner of Elredge Arlingame, had a daughter, christened Muriel, who had been adopted by Elredge after her father's death. That adoption had been the bid whereby Elredge Arlingame had hoped to acquire his father-in-law's fortune—through a child who was in no way related to Elredge or the man she supposed to be her grandfather!

The girl who had never been an Arlingame was smiling as she met the eyes of Steve Osden, the man she loved. It was strange, yet true, that at so happy a moment both Steve and Muriel should fancy that they heard a whispered sound from beyond the closed door.



## THE LEAGUE OF DEATH

Actually, that tone was real. More than a fancy, it was to linger long in the memories of the two who heard it.

The laugh of The Shadow!

THE END.