

MURDER FOR SALE

by Maxwell Grant

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CHAPTER I. OVER THE BRIDGE

THE four o'clock express from New York was rolling into Philadelphia. Hauled by one of the Pennsylvania's huge electric locomotives, it had reached the North Philadelphia station on the dot of 5:28.

At this precise minute, 5:32, the train was covering the five intervening miles that lay between North Philadelphia and the main station at Thirtieth Street.

Harry Vincent pocketed his watch and gazed from the window of the lounge car. Despite the gathering of wintry dusk, his eyes took in a remarkable panorama.

At this moment, the express had just reached the high, many-arched bridge crossing the Schuylkill River. Beyond the curving stretches of Fairmount Park, Harry could see the Philadelphia skyline, where massed buildings glittered with office lights and the city hall tower rose above, topped by its statue of William Penn, that seemed a pygmy at this distance.

Harry's eyes were attracted by the moving lights of automobiles on the park drives that lined the river banks.

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As his gaze lowered, he saw a long, bulky bridge that crossed both driveways and the river.

It was the Girard Avenue Bridge, so well-known to Philadelphians that they no longer regard it with the curiosity that attracts the eye of strangers. Built of iron, bulky in shape, the bridge reminded Harry of many cantilever structures that he had viewed, but with one exception that made it seem odd.

The top of the bridge formed the actual roadway; the spaces beneath the cumbersome girders were nothing more than foot bridges. As a result, the crossing automobiles seemed to be traveling over a long, wide roof.

They were safe enough, it seemed, for the bridge had curbs and sidewalks, with iron rails along the outer fringes but just as Harry gained that impression of security, the fact was disproven.

A coupé crossing the bridge took a sudden skid upon an icy patch near the center. Swinging half about, the car climbed the curb, leaped the sidewalk and rammed its radiator straight through the iron railing.

Chance had made Harry Vincent an eyewitness to that sudden scene. The same coincidence enabled him to take in the rapid events that followed.

With the coupé's jounce, the door beside the driver's seat swung open. A man's figure lurched forth, to strike the sidewalk and recover balance with a skill that told that the fellow had made a well-calculated spring.

The man was clear of the car as it poised there, half through the rail, teetering. Harry caught a flash of spinning rear wheels, proof that the driver had pulled the throttle wide. The rear of the car flopped downward; those wheels took hold upon the sidewalk. They gave the car a terrific forward lurch.

Like a living creature, the coupé precipitated itself through the crumpled rail and disappeared in a long plunge into the waters of the Schuylkill.

Instinctively, Harry looked for the driver who had escaped that disaster. He saw another car, a taxicab, stopping a few dozen feet away. The door of the cab was open; the man from the coupé was making a quick dive into the taxi.

With that, Harry's view was ended. The express was across the higher bridge, and was speeding downward into a tunnel. So far as Harry was concerned, the sequel to the scene was a matter for imagination.

BACK at the bridge, other cars were stopping in the dusk. Their drivers had seen nothing more than the swing of the doomed car's lights. The cars formed a cluster, while people hurried from them to gaze over the ripped rail.

It was then the driver of the taxi supplied a loud-voiced suggestion.

"Stick here," he shouted to the men from the other cars. "I'll go and tell the parkies what's happened!"

Speeding eastward across the bridge, the taxi reached a traffic signal tended by a park guard in blue-gray uniform. Leaning from the wheel, the taxi driver announced that a car had gone through the bridge. From then on, the park guard was too busy to wonder what became of the taxicab.

That vehicle followed a descending drive that led to the Parkway. Within a few hundred yards, the driver leaned back and grunted an "O. K.", which brought his passenger up from the rear floor.

From then on, that cab which the park guard had taken for an empty was just one of many other taxis carrying

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passengers to the center section of Philadelphia.

Meanwhile, park guards were using rowboats to reach the car that lay in the shallows of the river. It wasn't an uncommon occurrence for automobiles to skid into the Schuylkill, and the efficient park guards were always ready and equipped for rescue.

In this instance, they were too late.

Guided by persons upon the bridge, who could see the car's lights still glimmering from the water, the guards reached the coupé. The door on the left was almost ripped away, but the car had tilted to the right.

That accounted for the fact that a man who occupied it was buried deep in the body of the car. The park guards dragged him out and rowed ashore. While one man plied the oars, another tried to resuscitate the victim.

As he worked over the prone man, the park guard noted that the victim's head flopped loosely from side to side.

"No use," gruffed the park guard. "This guy's neck is broke! He took a whack, too, right on the back of the head. Look!"

Plainly visible beneath the victim's right ear was the mark. The park guards decided that he had battered his head against some portion of the car when the fall came to its sudden finish.

The only step that remained was to identify the dead man. It proved a simple task. The victim's water-soaked wallet contained identification cards, including a car owner's license that tallied with the coupé's plates, as noted by other investigating park guards. The dead man's name was Louis Rulland.

That stirred the recollections of the park guards.

"Say!" exclaimed one. "This is the young fellow that came into a couple of million dollars, only a few months ago, from all those mills his grandfather owned over in Kensington!"

Yeah," agreed another. "The same bird that would have been jailed on a drunken driver charge last week, if they hadn't given him a chance to sober up before the magistrate got there."

Mutually, the park guards agreed that this was one jam from which Louis Rulland could neither talk nor buy his way out of. In their opinion, he would have been luckier had he been sentenced the week before on the drunken driving charge.

An added statement, however, was more ominous than the man who uttered it supposed.

"Funny thing," said a park guard, the way these accidents happen in a bunch. There was that fellow Warling, who was killed when his horse threw him up on the Wissahickon Drive; and that sporting chap, Landrew, out in Media, whose gun went off when he was cleaning it. Both of them were worth a pile of dough, like Rulland. Then there was—"

The park guard cited no further cases. The grim work of removing Rulland's body from the turf on the river bank caused him to interrupt himself.

THERE were others, however, who saw Rulland's death as another in a chain of startling accidents. They

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were the city editors of the Philadelphia morning newspapers. Later that evening, big presses were grinding out front–page headlines announcing the society man's death plunge from the Girard Avenue Bridge.

None of the accounts beneath those headlines carried any inkling of the real story.

That had escaped the observation of all so–called “witnesses”, for no one driving across the bridge had guessed that there was a second man in the coupé, one who had been the actual driver; that is; no observer except the taxi driver who had been on hand to spirit the man away.

Nor had any riders on the express from New York glimpsed the essential details of the car crash, with the sole exception of Harry Vincent. However, of all the passengers on that train, none could have been a better or more important witness.

For Harry Vincent had come to Philadelphia for the specified purpose of investigating the accidental deaths that had stirred so much comment in the Quaker City. Having gotten first–hand evidence as to how those “accidents” happened, Harry had sent the news along to his chief, in New York.

That chief was a mysterious personage known as The Shadow, master investigator who hunted down men of crime. Whenever The Shadow gained evidence of evil, he trailed it to its source.

Whoever the man might be who had managed these murders in Philadelphia, he would soon hear from The Shadow!

CHAPTER II. FACTS OF CRIME

IT was morning, but pitch–black gloom filled a windowless room in Manhattan. That hidden spot was The Shadow's sanctum, where crime's master–foe prepared his campaigns against crookdom. A click sounded. A bluish light flooded the surface of a polished table. Into that glow came hands, with long fingers that moved like detached creatures. From one finger of the left hand sparkled a strange fire opal. That rare stone, called a girasol, was the symbol of The Shadow.

The hands produced clippings; eyes studied them from above the light. Next came a report sheet from Harry Vincent, coded in ink of vivid blue. That writing faded after The Shadow had read it. He laid the blank sheet aside, along with the clippings. The report had been written in the special ink used by The Shadow's agents to contact their chief. Once exposed to air, it disappeared rapidly.

Into the light, The Shadow drew a folder that was stamped with the symbol of a life–size human hand, with extended thumb and fingers.

This case–book dealt with a group of racketeers who had cleared New York before the clean–up. Referring to new reports from the folder, The Shadow studied a list of names:

“Thumb” Gaudrey

“Pointer” Trame

“Long Steve” Bydle

“Ring” Brescott

There had been a fifth name on that list, but it was crossed off. The Shadow remembered that name quite

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well. It was “Pinkey” Findlen, final “finger” of the crooked group that had once styled itself “The Hand”. They had fled New York.

Those crooks had become lone wolves. Pinkey Findlen had returned to New York to head a blackmail racket. That had been his finish, for The Shadow had crossed Pinkey's trail. (Note: See “The Hand” Vol. XXV No. 6)

Ever since, The Shadow had been expecting moves from the other four. He had managed to keep close track of three, who had presumably retired from crime, and were accounted for at present. But the fourth had staged a vanishing act in California, and reports indicated that he might have headed east through Old Mexico.

That fourth man was “Ring” Brescott. It was significant that Ring had been the murder specialist in the group that called itself The Hand. That offered a definite link to the crimes in Philadelphia. Unquestionably, the man behind them was skilled in ways of murder, for he had completely covered all his kills, until Harry Vincent had caught that lucky inkling of how one was produced.

No one in all crimedom was more likely to be the master murderer than Ring Brescott.

Reaching Ring would be no easy task, even for The Shadow. The mobster was a human chameleon, who had often demonstrated his ability to slip from sight.

One thing upon which Ring prided himself was his ability to pick up any language. That had enabled him to recruit his murder squads from all races. It told, too, how Ring had so easily managed that fade-out in Mexico. He could have passed himself beyond the border as a genuine Latin-blooded gentleman from Mexico City.

The Shadow checked the name of Ring Brescott. Then his hands reached for a pair of earphones. A tiny signal light glowed on the sanctum wall. A voice came over the wire, quiet-toned:

“Burbank speaking.”

“Instructions to Vincent,” voiced The Shadow, in whispered tone. “Call on close friends of Louis Rulland, posing as an acquaintance from New York. Learn facts concerning Rulland. Prepare report at nine o'clock tonight.”

The bluish light vanished, along with the spot of glow upon the wall. A laugh filled the sanctum, bringing strange shudders that faded into nothingness. That mirth boded ill for men of evil.

SOON afterward, Harry Vincent received a long-distance call from Burbank. Burbank was the contact man between The Shadow and his agent. Finishing his conversation, Harry promptly left his suite at the Hotel Penn-Delphia and began a tour, in accordance with Burbank's relayed orders.

Harry wasn't familiar with Philadelphia, but the checkerboard pattern of the streets made it easy to reach the required destination. Moreover, he found it quite a simple matter to talk to the persons whom he met.

Rulland's death was the talk of the city, particularly among the dead man's friends. Rulland hadn't been entirely a playboy; he had actually managed some of the business of his grandfather's mills.

Hence, Harry found several business men who had known Rulland quite well. They accepted Harry's statement that he had known the dead man, and took time out to voice their knowledge of Rulland's affairs.

By mid-afternoon, Harry was convinced of one important fact: Louis Rulland had been the favored grandson

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among a dozen possible heirs to his grandfather's wealth. With Rulland dead, the estate would be equally divided among the rest. As nearly as Harry could calculate it, each recipient would gain approximately a quarter of a million dollars.

Such a sum would be sufficient for a treacherous relative to have brought about Rulland's death. But after that discovery, Harry struck an obstacle.

According to his various informants, Harry learned that all of Rulland's cousins were either "fine people" or "no good", depending upon the personal view of the men who described them. Furthermore, it developed that all of them either lived away from Philadelphia, or were out of town. To find the actual betrayer would be like picking a bad egg from a basket of newly laid ones.

Hoping for a more helpful opinion, Harry made his last call of the afternoon. He entered an office building in South Penn Square, rode to the tenth floor, and reached the office of George Thelden, an insurance broker.

Thelden was a long-faced, dark-haired man of deliberate tone and expression, as somber as the old-fashioned private office that he occupied. His business was one that had been started by his uncle, and Thelden had many of the social contacts that counted heavily in Philadelphia.

Rulland had been one of Thelden's regular clients. The insurance man stated that in a drawling tone, then came to a fact that interested Harry.

"I saw Lou only an hour before he died," declared Thelden. "He was just leaving the Lotus Club, on Camac Street. He was going to a parking lot, to get his car and drive out to Bala.

"I'm afraid"—Thelden shook his head—"that Lou had taken too many drinks. He must have, or he wouldn't have gone east over the Girard Avenue Bridge. He should have driven out through the park, toward Belmont Avenue."

Harry questioned Thelden casually regarding Rulland's relatives. Thelden was apparently unacquainted with any of them. That ended the interview. Thelden saw Harry to the door of the outer office, and shook hands.

THERE wasn't a change of expression on Thelden's drab face as he turned about and walked toward the inner office. He stopped long enough, however, to speak to a dull-eyed stenographer, who sat at a typewriter in the corner erasing mistakes that she had made in an insurance report.

"I expect another caller, Miss Deems," declared Thelden, dryly. "His name is Howard Dembrick. Usher him into my office, when he gives his name." Then, gesturing to a daily calendar, Thelden added: "You had better make a note of it, Miss Deems. The name is Howard Dembrick."

Reaching the inner office, Thelden closed the door in his slow-mannered style. From then on, his attitude changed. His long lips spread in an ugly grin; his teeth gave a choppy, vicious bite, as he chewed off the tip of a cigar.

Flicking his cigar lighter, Thelden stood by the window gazing contemptuously toward the tiny human figures that trod the broad sidewalks surrounding Philadelphia's massive, graystone city hall. He watched them going in and out through the arched portals that offered passage to an inner courtyard, the convenient short-cut that many persons used.

Those pedestrians reminded Thelden of ants, in and out of their hill. In his opinion, their courses were as haphazard as those of insects. He didn't care what purposes inspired them. Thelden was callused in that

regard.

His gloating brain was obsessed by the desire to reach out a hand and crush masses of those pygmy figures. That, of course, was impossible; and Thelden was sane enough to recognize it. But his smile told that he at least knew ways in which human beings could be eliminated one by one.

It was unfortunate that Harry Vincent was no longer present to observe that leer. From it, The Shadow's agent might have learned the truth.

George Thelden, though not the big-shot who manipulated crime, was the actual murderer of Louis Rulland!

CHAPTER III. THE NEXT VISITOR

IT was after five o'clock when Howard Dembrick arrived at Thelden's office. The visitor was a portly man, whose wide face bulged outward from beneath a derby hat. At Thelden's invitation, Dembrick hung his hat on a rack. Seating himself, he planked his fattish hands upon the insurance broker's desk.

"I'm a real estate operator, Mr. Thelden," announced Dembrick in a rumble voice, loud enough to be heard in the outside office. "I've got an option on a couple of blocks of homes, and I want fire insurance for all of them."

Thelden pressed a buzzer, summoning Miss Deems. The next fifteen minutes were spent in fixing the insurance rates on the houses mentioned. The whole amount totaled twenty-five hundred dollars.

Dembrick wrote out a check for that amount. Thelden added it to a batch of others, gave them all to the stenographer, telling her to deposit them in bank. Thelden's bank evidently had night hours, for Miss Deems left the office a short while later.

When the outer door had closed, Dembrick shoved a big hand along the desk, straightened his thumb and fingers, so that Thelden would notice them. The insurance broker placed his own hand beside Dembrick's, spreading it in similar fashion.

Each hand crawled forward, doubling its little finger from sight. Perhaps that was a tribute to the notorious Pinkey Findlen, no longer a member of The Hand. It might also have been done to call attention to the ring finger of each hand, for both Thelden and Dembrick sported a diamond solitaire.

At any rate, the signal was sufficient. It brought smiles to the lips of both participants.

"A good job you did yesterday," commended Dembrick, his rumble lowered to an undertone. "Ring Brescott liked it. He wanted me to ask you about the alibi, though. How did it work?"

"Perfectly!" assured Thelden. "Rulland left the Lotus Club at four-thirty. I met him, and started out to Bala with him. When we were on a secluded drive, I told him I thought we had a flat. He stopped. That's when I gave it."

"And afterward?"

"I met the cab that trailed us, and was back here by five-ten. I'd set the office clock a half hour slow. I told Miss Deems to note the time when I made an important call. She did."

Dembrick gave a broad-jawed grin. He didn't have to ask if Thelden had later set the clock ahead to its right

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time. He could guess that the insurance broker had done so.

Through Miss Deems, Thelden would have a perfect alibi for his story that he had seen Rulland at half past four but that he had come immediately to his own office. The set-back clock would show but little past that time.

Dembrick had information that he knew would interest Thelden.

“WHIZ Birsch did a slick job,” stated the pretended real estate man. “Ring knew he would, because Whiz used to be a stunt driver. He dumped that car through the bridge in A-1 style. Nobody spotted his getaway.”

Thelden nodded. The news pleased him. It fitted with the accounts in the newspapers; but Thelden had worried a bit, fearing that the police had held something back.

So you get your twenty-five hundred bucks,” complimented Dembrick. A nice price for croaking a guy. Ring always says it's worth while to pay high. Only, what was the idea of banking the dough?”

“That's the best part of it,” returned Thelden. “Those houses you talked about are real, aren't they?”

“Sure, they are,” returned Dembrick. “But I'm not going to close the option I have on them. That's through, inside of thirty days.”

“The same with the insurance policies,” declared Thelden. “They'll be issued by the company, but I don't have to settle, until the end of the month. When that time comes, I'll have the policies canceled, saying you didn't pay up.

“Meanwhile, if anything goes wrong, I can cover the emergency by actually letting the policies stand. In that case, you'll have to close the options. I'll pay the insurance company, you'll have the houses. Your check will stand as proof that the transaction was legitimate, rather than my payoff for bumping Rulland.”

There was confidence in Thelden's tone; and the set-up pleased Dembrick. Behind both of them stood a hidden power in the person of Ring Brescott.

The murder manipulator was fat with wealth that he had gained through crime. Such matters as buying blocks of residences and paying insurance on them were all within Ring's ability. He was always ready to cover for “fronts” like Dembrick, or actual killers like Thelden.

Those two, however, were but part of Ring's organization. There were others, like “Whiz” Birsch, who drew regular salaries for cover-up work. Jobs went through smoothly with this out-fit, and that made it worth while for Thelden and others to do murder for twenty-five hundred dollars, although they knew that Ring Brescott grossed many times that amount.

Thelden was ready to close the office.

He was rising from his desk, when the telephone bell rang. Thelden held a brief conversation; his eyes narrowed when he hung up.

“Funny thing, that call,” Thelden told Dembrick. “It was from a young lawyer named Lee, who used to know Rulland.”

“Yeah? What did he want?”

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“He asked if a chap named Vincent had dropped in to see me. So I told him that he had.”

“Who's Vincent?”

Dembrick's question brought a shrug from Thelden.

“I don't just know,” admitted Thelden, reverting to his drawling tone. “He comes from New York, and claims he was a friend of Rulland. It looks like he's been making the rounds.”

“That's bad,” growled Dembrick. “Maybe he's a dick.”

“I don't think so,” returned Thelden, his eyes fixed in a murderous gaze. “I'd like to meet him again, though!”

A few seconds later, Thelden's expression had changed. He clapped Dembrick on the back and suggested that they ought to have a drink together, since Dembrick had become one of Thelden's customers.

IT was dusk when the pair came from the building. They crossed Fifteenth Street, entered one of the narrow alleys that lie between Market and Chestnut. Their destination was a rathskeller, half a block ahead.

They hadn't gone that far before Thelden gripped Dembrick's arm. Quickly, the murderer shoved the portly man into a doorway and whispered:

“Take a quick look through! See if there's a way out on the other side.”

Dembrick took a look. He was back in ten seconds to say that there was an outlet. The news pleased Thelden.

“Good stuff!” he whispered. “See that fellow coming along the side alley? I thought I recognized him, and I was right. It's Vincent!”

At that moment, Harry crossed the alley directly in front of the doorway where the pair lurked. Harry was heading for a little chophouse that had been recommended as a good place for dinner. Thelden saw where The Shadow's agent was going.

“So he likes chops, huh?” gritted Thelden. “That's great! Here's where I chop him down!”

With a snakish whip, Thelden hauled a revolver from his hip and aimed it straight for Harry. His finger paused upon the trigger, to give it an expert squeeze. Another second would have meant death for Harry, if intervention hadn't come. It was Dembrick who supplied that interference.

Thelden's momentary pause gave Dembrick a chance to clamp his big hand on the gun. Not only did Dembrick divert the aim; his fist covered the revolver muzzle. As Thelden snarled, Dembrick hauled him back into the doorway.

By the time Thelden had wrested free, Harry had entered the chophouse.

“I ought to drill you, Dembrick!” grated Thelden. “What was the idea, stopping me? Are you yellow?”

“If I was,” retorted Dembrick, “I wouldn't have put my mitt over the muzzle. I didn't want to see you act the sap, that was all.”

“How was I a sap?”

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“You were going to spoil a good job for somebody,” reminded Dembrick. “Maybe for yourself. Ring don't pay for a croak unless he orders it. Why throw twenty–five hundred bucks into the gutter?”

The logic appeased Thelden. He pocketed his gun, followed Dembrick from the doorway. When they reached the rathskeller, they resumed their discussion in undertone, at a table secluded in a corner.

“I'll tell Ring about this fellow Vincent,” promised Dembrick. “If he wants the guy rubbed out, the job will probably be yours. There's a chance, however”—Dembrick sidelonged a wary glance as he spoke—“that Ring won't want Vincent croaked.”

Thelden seemed disinterested. His murderous spasm had passed. With Thelden, killing was a matter of impulse that he had long restrained. Working for Ring had given him the enjoyable privilege of cutting loose on occasion. Nevertheless, the cash counted.

“Of course,” added Dembrick, “if Vincent knows too much, Ring will grab him. But a job like that belongs to Whiz and those salaried boys of his.”

“That's right enough,” agreed Thelden, “but they do a little trigger work, now and then.

“Not if they can help it,” reminded Dembrick; “Ring don't like it, unless there's no other out. Sometimes he docks their pay, when they get too flip. Only, you know how things happen, sometimes.

“Anyway, leave Vincent to Ring. If the guy's harmless, it would be foolish to croak him. If he's the other way and Ring grabs him, he won't want to let him go, and he can't keep him forever. That'll mean a soft job for you, later, and you know how the rule goes. Full price for every croak!”

The anticipation pleased George Thelden. He and Howard Dembrick bumped glasses in a silent toast to death that both regarded as a future certainty. Later, when they were having their fourth drink, Dembrick asked, casually:

“Where is this fellow Vincent stopping? Did he tell you?”

“He did,” returned Thelden. “He's at the Penn–Delphia.”

From the looks that the pair exchanged, it was plain that Harry Vincent would find plenty of excitement in Philadelphia, before this evening ended.

CHAPTER IV. HARRY TALKS FAST

AT half past eight, Harry Vincent returned to the Hotel Penn–Delphia, intending to write out his report for The Shadow. He found the lobby crowded with men and women dressed in evening clothes, and learned that a fashionable ball was scheduled for the evening.

All seemed very quiet when Harry reached the eighth floor. He followed the carpeted corridor to his small suite and unlocked the door.

There had been no single rooms when Harry checked into the hotel. He had been given the suite at a reduced rate, partly because of its poor location. The windows of both the living room and bedroom opened into a narrow space, with the wall of an older hotel on the opposite side.

During the day, the rooms were anything but cheery, but at night, it didn't matter. That, at least, was Harry's

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opinion.

Stopping in the living room, Harry pulled a fountain pen from his pocket and sat down at a writing desk. The pen was provided with the special ink that Harry used in writing messages to The Shadow. Though he intended to write in code, inscribing a message that would fade on exposure to air, Harry was cautious, nevertheless.

He had hardly placed his pen to paper, before he decided that a look into the bedroom would be advisable. Rising from the desk, he opened the connecting door and turned on the lights. Seeing no one, Harry decided it would be unnecessary to look into the clothes closet.

As Harry turned off the lights and stepped back into the living room, there was a slight sound from the closet door. Harry didn't hear it, for he had closed the door between. By the time he reached the writing desk, the connecting door gave a click; but that, too, escaped Harry's attention.

Coding messages to The Shadow wasn't an easy task. They had to be thought out carefully, for there was no chance to read back over them, and rapid writing was essential. Unless folded and tucked in an envelope by the time the ink was dry, the messages would obliterate themselves before being dispatched.

That was why Harry paused and raised his head in momentary thought. The action fixed his eyes upon the wall in front of him. A small mirror happened to be directly before his gaze. It gave him the reflection of the door from the bedroom.

For a moment, Harry thought his imagination was at work. The reflected door gave a tremble. It stopped, as he stared more steadily; but this time, Harry wasn't fooled.

The door had opened, to the space of about an inch.

THOUGH he saw nothing through that crack of reflected darkness, Harry felt a distinct impression that an eye was watching him. The situation called for cool headwork, and Harry provided it. Concentrating upon the paper before him, he slid his left hand across the front of his body and beneath his coat.

Expecting possible trouble, Harry had packed an automatic in his right hip pocket. The cold touch of the weapon gave him reassurance. He was gripping it left-handed, but that did not matter. Harry could handle a gun reasonably well with his left hand.

All the while, he was pretending to write a note; a ruse which he felt sure would deceive the hidden observer.

Then came action.

Shifting forward, Harry sped to his feet, giving his chair a backward kick. He spun around to the right, drawing his gun as he made the twist. It wasn't until he was full about that he realized his one mistake.

He should either have wheeled to his left, to bring his gun ahead of him; or, in turning to the right, he should have shifted his body, holding the gun almost stationary.

Instead, Harry tried a long draw. It was not only belated; his automatic hooked his vest. The tug he gave it sent his arm wide. Instead of covering the connecting door, Harry's aim was thirty degrees off.

There was no time to correct that error.

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A glimmering revolver had poked through the space at the door. Its muzzle was straight for Harry's heart. A slim, white finger was tightening on the gun trigger!

Something—Harry didn't know what—caused The Shadow's agent to let his fingers loosen. Harry's gun flipped from his grasp; by the time it thudded the floor, his arms were half raised. That sudden surrender halted the trigger finger at the doorway. By the briefest of margins, Harry had stayed his own execution.

The door swung open. It was then that Harry realized why he had acted as he did. His glimpse of the gun, of the hand with it, had instinctively told him that he was not menaced by a murderous adversary. The revolver was small; so was the hand.

Harry's foe was a girl.

SHE stepped into the living room, and Harry forgot his predicament when he saw her. Seldom had he seen a young woman of such exquisite appearance.

A brunette, her hair seemed ebony against the ivory hue of her face. Her features were perfect in their oval mold; her eyes, sparkling in their blackness, had long, droopy lashes that gave her a languid gaze more suited to romance than hostility.

Those eyes, however, showed no love for Harry.

Calmly, Harry waited. He didn't have to guess where the girl had come from. She was beautifully gowned in a golden lamé frock, which was unquestionably the latest of Parisian creations. Her sandals were adorned with sequins, to match her gown; and from his recollection of the throng in the lobby, Harry knew that she was one of the many guests who had come to the ball.

Bare-armed, her shoulders visible above the low-necked gown, the girl appeared slender, almost frail, as she approached. Again, the snap of her dark eyes reminded Harry that it would be dangerous to underestimate her determination. The girl had questions to ask, and she expected rapid answers.

The first question came in a low, tense alto, that lacked any semblance of a quaver:

“What do you know about Louis Rulland?”

“Nothing,” replied Harry, promptly, “except that he was killed yesterday.”

“You claimed to be a friend of his,” declared the girl. “Were you?”

“No,” returned Harry. “But I told persons that I was.”

“Why?”

“To learn something about him.”

“Because?”

The single-worded question was sharp. In that moment, Harry made an instant decision in favor of the truth.

“Because I believe,” he declared, “that Louis Rulland was murdered!”

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It was a long chance, that answer, and Harry knew it. Some one of social standing had paid for Rulland's death, and it was possible that even so beautiful a girl could have been concerned in the case. But Harry was following the same hunch that he had used when he flung away his gun.

The sparkle of the dark eyes was what guided him. Somehow, they carried a flash of vengeance, with indignation. It wasn't the sort of look that would come with thoughts of crime. The girl, Harry was sure, had chosen the same quest as himself. She was in search of Rulland's murderer.

Harry's own eyes must have registered the sincerity of his answer. His clean-cut features carried a frank expression, and Harry Vincent seldom had to convince people when he spoke the truth. For the first time, the girl's nerve broke. She lowered her gun, as she gave a choky sob.

A few minutes later she was seated in an armchair near the writing desk, forcing back her tears as she told her story to Harry.

"My name is Isabel Rendolf," she declared. Then, frankly: "I loved Louis Rulland!"

Harry nodded sympathetically. He had expected that statement, after he heard Isabel's first sob.

"Lou had his faults," the girl continued, "but he kept his promises. He told me he would stop drinking, and I knew he had. That crash of his couldn't have been an accident.

"Today, I talked with two of his friends. That's how I learned that you had called on them. One of them telephoned some others for me and learned that you had seen them, also.

"It made me suspicious, coming so soon after Lou's death. That's why I came here, instead of going to the ballroom. I had learned where you were—through the friends I mentioned—and I wanted to make you talk."

Harry felt urged to tell Isabel why he had been investigating Rulland's death. He knew that she would be overjoyed to learn that so powerful an ally as The Shadow was engaged in a search for the murderer. But Harry had to retain that information for the present.

"Be assured, Miss Rendolf," he declared, "that if I were in any way concerned with the cause of Rulland's death, I would not be in Philadelphia at present. As a matter of fact, I was coming into town at the exact time of the accident on the bridge. That is how I happened to see it."

Dark eyes widened. From beautiful, expressive lips came the breathless question:

"You saw the accident, and you believe—"

"I believe that you are right," interposed Harry. "Louis Rulland was murdered. If I have your confidence, I am willing to investigate further, and later tell you all that I have learned."

The declaration satisfied Isabel. She subdued her curiosity, not even asking the details that Harry had witnessed. She started to place her revolver in Harry's hand, remarking that she could not very well carry it to the ball, and would therefore appreciate it if he would keep the gun for her.

At that moment, some one rapped at the other side of the door to the hallway.

Hastily, Harry pointed Isabel to the inner room, whispering for her to keep the revolver for the present. Picking up his own gun, Harry stepped to the outer door just as the rapped summons came again.

Whoever the new caller might be, this time, Harry Vincent was ready in advance.

CHAPTER V. CRIME'S THRUST

HARRY kept his gun from sight when he opened the door. In the hallway stood a bellboy, who handed him a slip which stated that a package had arrived downstairs.

“Want me to bring it up, sir?”

The bellhop's question was earnest enough. He was simply looking forward to a tip. Slipping his gun into his pocket behind the door, Harry stepped farther into view and told the bellboy to get the package. To hurry the delivery, he handed him a quarter tip in advance.

There was nothing phony about the bellboy's visit. Harry had ordered a special smoking mixture at a tobacconist's shop, with the request that it be sent to the hotel. After shifting his gun to his hip, he drew his pipe from his side pocket, in anticipation of the coming smoke.

It was nearly nine o'clock, the time when Harry's report was due. Harry hadn't forgotten it, but he also remembered Isabel. That was why he stepped to the partly opened bedroom door and whispered:

“Just a bellboy at the door, but he's bringing up a package of tobacco. You'd better wait where you are, until after he's gone.”

Isabel already trusted Harry; and she had heard enough of the conversation between him and the bellboy to know he was telling the truth. She remained in the inner room, which gave Harry a chance to get back to the writing desk and code his message to The Shadow.

In that note, Harry included mention of Isabel Rendolf. To prevent the writing from fading, he carefully folded over the upper portions of the paper. He had an envelope at hand, ready to enclose the message as soon as he completed it.

Concentrated on that duty, Harry failed to hear a stir that took place in the outside corridor.

There, three men had slid in from an inside fire-tower. The center member of their group was a chunky man, whose block-shaped face had a jaw that looked like iron. Harry wouldn't have recognized the fellow, although he had seen him before.

The leader of the invading trio was Whiz Birsch, the daredevil who had wrecked Rulland's car on the bridge.

“That was a good break, the bellhop stopping here,” undertoned Whiz. “You saw him, Keezer, so beat it up to the elevator and flag him before he gets back.”

As Keezer left, Whiz gestured toward the fire-tower. Another thug came into sight, to take Keezer's place. Again, Whiz was speaking to two pals, when he said:

“A couple of minutes more and I'll knock, like the bellhop did. Vincent will think the kid is back with the package.”

WHIZ BIRSCH was right. When two minutes had passed, Harry heard a rap at the door, and was sure that the bellboy had returned.

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Harry had just folded the edges of the note that he had written. He didn't even wait to tuck it into the envelope. Instead, he took a couple of long steps and yanked the door open.

Again, Harry faced a gun muzzle, but it was more ominous than the revolver that Isabel carried. This .38, poked from the hard fist of Whiz Birsch, seemed to gape in front of Harry's eyes.

It wasn't only the gun that told Whiz to be dangerous. The chunky man had donned a handkerchief mask, and so had the two who accompanied him. They, also, had guns in readiness.

“Hello, Vincent!” rasped Whiz, in a forced tone that was not his own. “Get inside. We want to talk to you!”

Harry backed into the living room. Whiz closed the outer door; he and his outspread pals formed a loose cordon that had Harry covered from three sides. But Whiz promptly postponed the talk that he had promised.

The reason was that Whiz saw something that interested him: the tightly tucked note that lay beside the envelope on the writing desk.

Letting the others keep Harry covered, Whiz stepped over to examine the message. Harry's raised hands clenched tight. Once Whiz saw that coded note and watched the letters vanish, he would know that Harry was linked to some one as crafty as The Shadow.

Whiz wasn't to see the writing at all. It happened that Harry had an ally whose grit was equal to the emergency.

A voice spoke from the doorway of the inner room, a low, firm alto, that meant business. Whiz spun about; so did his pals. They saw Isabel's gun hand projecting through the doorway. The tiny revolver was wangling back and forth, keeping the invaders covered.

“Stand where you are!” spoke Isabel. “One move, and I fire!”

THE thugs didn't raise their hands. Isabel's threat was too potent. They still gripped their guns, but held them lowered. The flanking men looked to Whiz; they saw him squinting over his mask. He was trying to see Isabel's face past the doorway, but he failed.

Meanwhile, Harry was on the move. He shifted to the writing desk, made a quick grab for the message. Yanking it open, writing side away, he began to crumple it with his left hand. With his right, he attempted to pull his gun.

At that instant, Whiz gave a sudden elbow nudge toward the man on his right. The fellow understood. He made a dive for the floor. Isabel swung her gun toward the diving thug and fired. Her first shot went wide; she had no chance for a second one.

With his dive, the thug made a long reach for the half-opened door and slammed it shut. The swinging barrier struck Isabel's shoulder and floored her in the other room. Simultaneously, Whiz and the other gunmen sprang about, to grapple with Harry before his gun was drawn.

Within brief seconds, the scene was completely changed. Whiz and his pal had Harry under control, although he was struggling hard. Moreover, Whiz had opportunity to snap an order to the mobster who had slammed the door.

As the door opened again, with Isabel thrusting her gun into sight, the thug fell upon the girl. Smothering her

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cry, he shoved her gun hand upward, gripping it so tightly that Isabel couldn't fire. Grinning, the thug looked about, awaiting Whiz's next command.

Whiz had scooped up the crumpled paper that Harry dropped. But by the time he managed to open it, the writing was gone. Whiz gave an ugly snort in Harry's ear.

“Horsed me, huh?” demanded Whiz.

“Faked it that the paper was something important, when it was only blank? So you don't know nothin' after all? Well, you've found out too much, anyway, so we're takin' you along with us!”

They were shoving Harry toward the outside door. Whiz had his hand on the knob, when Harry made a sudden break. Isabel saw it; she wrested free from the man who gripped her. She couldn't get her gun hand clear, but she did manage a hearty scream for help.

At that moment, aid wasn't needed. Harry was free beside the door, his gun drawn, aiming straight for Whiz. Capable in a pinch, Harry would have turned the tide completely if the door hadn't banged inward, thanks to Whiz's twist of the knob.

With the swing of the door came Keezer, back from the elevator. He had flagged the bellboy, as Whiz had ordered, and Keezer supplied another bit of needed work.

He had a gun; instead of aiming, he gave a cross blow with the weapon. That terrific sledge hooked the side of Harry's head. The Shadow's agent flopped in loggish fashion.

WHIZ wanted Harry as a prisoner, but he hadn't time to bother with another captive. That was why he shouted to the thug at the inner doorway:

“Croak the moll!”

Isabel's opponent bowled her into the darkened bedroom. Whiz and the others saw his revolver jabbing downward, its muzzle pressing the flesh above her low-cut gown. In their estimation, Isabel was as good as dead; but they counted upon that result too soon.

A window slashed upward in the inner room. A swinging form hurtled through, coming from a window of the old hotel across the narrow passage that divided the two hotels. That shape took a long, rolling dive upon the floor, merging with blackness.

All during that move, the arrival never once lost sight of his objective. He could see Isabel and her adversary plainly, for they were against the light from the connecting doorway.

In his fist, the intruder held an automatic. He was aiming as he came, and he seemed to use the gun as a fixed pivot, never once letting it touch the floor.

Despite the darkness, his eyes had a burn above the gun barrel. His unseen finger pressed the trigger. The big .45 blazed a bullet for a momentary target—the skull of the murderous crook whose own gun was about to spell Isabel's doom.

Shot through the brain, the crook was jolted by the impact of the bullet. His hand went nerveless; even the reflex motion of his trigger finger had been halted by that timely shot. Isabel was completely free, amazed by her sudden rescue.

To the girl, that shot seemed to come from nowhere, for she could not see the form that had arrived in blackness. That was not surprising. Her rescuer was cloaked in black, his head topped by a slouch hat.

Arriving to contact Harry Vincent, The Shadow had come in time to frustrate murder.

CHAPTER VI. CROSSED BATTLE

TO Whiz and the two men with him, the shot from the bedroom meant the end of Isabel Rendolf. At no moment had they gotten a close look at the girl, and since she was out of sight beyond the doorway, they regarded her simply as an unknown meddler who had been properly taken care of.

Two more thugs had arrived from the fire-tower. Keezer was telling them what had happened, while the group waited for their pal to join them. Whiz was the front man for the cluster. Standing above Harry's unconscious form, Whiz squinted toward the inner room.

His eyes made out something just beyond the doorway. Whiz voiced a savage oath.

“Luke didn't get the moll!” he added, “She finished him! Go in and get her, two of you guys!”

A pair of thugs sprang forward. Halfway across the living room, they blocked all sight of the connecting doorway. At that closer range, they observed something that Whiz and the others couldn't spy.

The driving crooks saw the Shadow.

Often, when he battled men and crime, The Shadow announced himself with a strident, mocking laugh. He had not done so on this occasion. His object was to lure foemen into an attack. It was best to let them think that Isabel had fired the shot that dropped their pal.

Who the girl was, The Shadow had no idea, except that she was allied with Harry Vincent; and that was sufficient.

By forcing himself into the hazy light within the bedroom doorway, the Shadow had apparently taken on a desperate risk. That thought occurred to Isabel, the moment that she saw her rescuer and realized that the incoming thugs had also spotted him.

For a moment, she was dumbfounded; then, she raised her tiny revolver to aim. By that time, her cooperation was unneeded.

The thugs had jabbed their guns toward The Shadow; revolvers barked as triggers were tugged. But, with that hurried aim from his adversaries, The Shadow had sidestepped, away from Isabel's direction. The outguessed crooks tried to swing their guns as they fired. They were too late.

Bullets whimpered wide, thudded the inner wall of the bedroom. With the echoes came two staccato shots from The Shadow's gun. His .45 delivered lead that found its mark. The thugs went thumping headlong on the floor, rolling wounded above the body of their dead pal.

All that The Shadow had to do was swing out of his corner, reach the door and announce himself, as he drove upon Whiz and the remaining mobsters. Confident that the unknown girl had been eliminated; they were lifting Harry in the hallway, and would have been easy prey for The Shadow.

IT was Isabel who provided the sincere, but ill-timed, intervention that ruined The Shadow's final thrust. She

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was closer to the door than he was, and she had the same idea of rescuing Harry. Before The Shadow could stop her, Isabel bolted through to the living room.

Only Keezer saw her, for he was lifting Harry's feet outside the hallway door. Hoarsely, Keezer shouted to Whiz:

“It's the dame! I'll get her!”

Piling into the living room, Keezer met Isabel in a quick grapple. Whiz took a look; though he couldn't see the girl's face, he noted her attire. She was helpless in Keezer's clutch, and his gun hand was raised to deliver a downward swing.

Whiz didn't wait. Hearing the clatter of a distant elevator, he told his one remaining helper to make for the fire-tower. They headed there, lugging Harry with them. Meanwhile, Keezer was looking downward at Isabel's tense face. He had no qualms about marring such beauty with a devastating gun blow. Isabel, however, wasn't anxious for a facial treatment of the sort that Keezer offered.

The girl bobbed her head; she managed to fire her puny gun. A bullet whined past Keezer's ear; although the shot was ineffective, it helped. Keezer shifted instinctively, and put himself into a position that another marksman had awaited.

From the doorway of the bedroom, The Shadow had kept Keezer covered during that brief grapple. Since Isabel blocked his aim, The Shadow had withheld his fire until the final instant, hoping for better opportunity. He had it at present, with plenty of space to spare.

A big gun spoke. Keezer dropped Isabel, let his own gun fall. Howling, the crook staggered for the hallway, voicing that the dame had clipped him in the arm. Keezer hadn't even guessed where the shot had actually come from.

The Shadow let Keezer go, knowing that he would overtake Whiz and thereby delay progress on the fire-tower. Reaching Isabel, The Shadow whispered for the girl to follow him.

Wonderingly, Isabel nodded that she would. But the moment that The Shadow stepped out into the hallway, he was met by unexpected opposition.

Keezer had reached the fire-tower. From the other direction came a trio of hotel employees, accompanied by a pair of uniformed policemen. The cops had guns; they aimed for The Shadow. He bobbed back into the room before they arrived.

Slamming the door, The Shadow sprang across to the bedroom and turned on the light. Coming back through the living room, he extinguished its lights and drew Isabel to a corner beside the outer door.

Isabel felt sudden confidence as The Shadow's hand pressed her shoulder. She obeyed his low whisper for silence.

A pass-key rattled in the door. The barrier flung open; bringing dim light from the hall. Then, for the first time, Isabel realized The Shadow's ruse.

THE first thing that the officers saw was the lighted bedroom. There, two crippled thugs were rising from the floor, bringing up their guns. Their savage snarls greeted the officers. The police made for them, with a pair of Hotel employees at their heels.

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Guns talked fast, and the officers had the edge. This was battle to death, and both sides knew it. But the crippled crooks were slowed by the wounds that The Shadow had given them. In the quick barrage, the thugs were flattened to the floor, dead, while the officers remained unscathed.

As the invaders reached the bedroom, The Shadow quickly swept Isabel from the darkened living room, out into the corridor.

There was one outside watcher. He was the elevator operator. He didn't have a chance to see or remember what followed. The Shadow shoved one hand against the fellow's chin, gave it an expert, upward thrust. The elevator man settled to the floor, half dazed.

The Shadow reached the elevator with Isabel. It was a quicker route than the fire-tower, and afforded the only chance to overtake Harry's captors.

Instead of dropping to the ground-floor, The Shadow chose the mezzanine. He and Isabel hurried along a little balcony, to a stairway that led to a rear exit from the lobby.

Guns roared suddenly from below. Two policemen had started through the lobby, to investigate the bottom of the fire-tower. They had run into battle with outside reserves, posted by Whiz Birsch. The police had dropped back to cover.

Chaos swept the lobby. People dashed everywhere; some, not realizing where the shots had come from, poured past the police, to take the exit to the rear street.

The Shadow drew back upon the stairs, tried to keep Isabel with him. Before he could grip her arm, she was past the bottom step. The stampede swept her outside, along with a dozen other gowned women who were guests at the ball.

Taking the steps upward three at a stride, The Shadow ripped open a mezzanine window. He juttied two guns toward the alley below, ready to pour devastating shots at any gunmen who attacked the helpless throng from the hotel. That intervention was not needed.

Whiz and his pals were in two cars, roaring away to safety. The first automobile was rounding the corner, out of range, and it was the one wherein Harry was a prisoner, for The Shadow could see the interior of the second car.

The Shadow did not fire at the trailing band; stopping them would not help Harry. Moreover, the halting of that car would force its crooked underworld crew to desperation. Deprived of their getaway, they would have opened fire upon the fugitives from the hotel.

THE fleeing cars were bucking traffic on the one-way street. Along that narrow thoroughfare were parked taxis, with their drivers gaping through open windows. They had come here early, to await passengers from the ball. They were due for fares sooner than they expected.

Though both carloads of crooks had gone from sight, nobody wanted to stay around the hotel. Men and women piled for the taxis, entering them in clusters.

Isabel Rendolf was with one group; The Shadow saw her give a hopeless glance up toward the mezzanine window. She wanted to stay to talk with her rescuer, but that was impossible.

A moment later, Isabel was pushed aboard the cab, and it was wheeling away as part of the caravan.

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The Shadow stayed at the window watching the confusion die. He was analyzing the events that had passed. It was a serious matter, that capture of Harry Vincent, yet The Shadow could divine its purpose.

He had seen enough, including the crumpled paper on the floor of Harry's suite, to know that his agent would be safe, no matter how unenjoyable the predicament might be.

Crooks had been out to capture Harry, otherwise they wouldn't have carried him away. Isabel—whose name The Shadow did not know—was an interloper who had marred the plans of Harry's captors. Not wanting her as a prisoner, they had tried to kill her.

Obviously, crooks would try to make Harry talk, but they would be convinced, at the start, that he knew very little. Like all The Shadow's agents, Harry could be cool in such a situation. He could tell his captors enough to satisfy them, without revealing vital facts.

If crooks persisted in asking too much, the supposed leads that Harry would give them would later supply a trail for The Shadow.

But, in his analysis of the subject, The Shadow formed the correct conclusion that crooks would scarcely question Harry at all. Instead, they would probably keep him helpless, until they had finished the run of crime that Ring Brescott had begun in Philadelphia. Until then, Harry would be safe.

Meanwhile, it behooved The Shadow to cut into Ring's schemes, forcing the big—shot into conflict that would produce trails that The Shadow needed—not only to Harry Vincent, but to Ring Brescott himself.

Unfortunately, The Shadow had suffered a setback in this plan. He had lost all trace of the mysterious girl who had played a part in tonight's fray.

Like The Shadow, mobsters would be anxious to meet that girl again. The forced departure of Isabel Rendolf had deprived The Shadow of the one person who could have helped him lure men of crime into new trouble.

For the present, The Shadow's process would have to be a matter of lone investigation.

CHAPTER VII. CRIME CREEPS ANEW

Two days had passed. It was late afternoon, and The Shadow sat in his suite at the Bellevue—Stratford reading the latest editions of the Philadelphia evening newspapers. He had registered here in his right name, Kent Allard—famous explorer and aviator.

Allard, after an airplane wreck in Guatemala, had to all outward appearances, lived for years with the Xinka Indians.

No one had ever linked Allard with The Shadow. True, Allard's long, hawkish features bore some semblance to The Shadow's profile; but, presumably, Allard had been absent from the country during some of The Shadow's most famous campaigns.

However, with but a few months exception, Allard had been in the United States all the while. That was a piece of misinformation that enabled Kent Allard to use his own guise of The Shadow.

So far, The Shadow had made very little progress in Philadelphia. He had an advantage over the police, who were still wondering who Harry Vincent was and where he had gone. But, like the law, The Shadow had been unable to trace anything from the three dead thugs, who had not been identified with any local mob.

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Moreover, The Shadow was handicapped by lack of the report that he had ordered from Harry. He knew that his agent had visited friends of Louis Rulland, but he had no clue to which ones. To go over the same route would be a bad mistake, for by this time all persons concerned with the murder racket would be wary.

Nor was there a single clue to the mystery girl of two nights ago. That, in a sense, was helpful. It meant that she had confidence in The Shadow and preferred to leave matters in his hands.

Today, with possible clues fading one by one, The Shadow had struck upon an advertisement in the newspaper, that promised some result. It was an ad of Yovell & Company, auctioneers. At one time in New York, Ring Brescott had used an auction gallery with a similar name as a background for one of his nefarious schemes. This The Shadow remembered.

Soon, he would be on his way to investigate the local galleries. Meanwhile, he had another thought regarding Isabel.

Whoever she was, crooks were probably having equal trouble in finding her.

PROOF of that very fact was taking place at the present moment. Whiz Birsch, strolling up Chestnut Street, turned from his course and entered the Wanamaker store. Halfway through the block-square building, he stopped in the central concourse, near a huge bronze eagle that was mounted on a large stone base.

At least two dozen people were grouped beneath the fringes of the massive statue. This was a common meeting place where Philadelphia shoppers awaited their friends.

Looking about, Whiz saw a man standing near the glove counter. It was Keezer, with his right wrist bandaged. Whiz caught the fellow's eye; both strolled away. They met up in a corner of the book department.

"Any luck?" whispered Keezer.

"No, growled Whiz. "I've seen a dozen dames that might be her, from the bum slant I got the other night."

"Maybe I ought to take a walk on Chestnut Street."

"Not a chance! There's too many femmes, you wouldn't keep your mind on the job. Stick by the eagle, it's a better bet. Remember, Keezer, you're the one guy who could spot her."

While Keezer was returning to his lookout post, Whiz continued to the Market Street entrance of the store. He took a stairway to the subway, rode a few stations east. When he came to the surface again, he was on lower Market Street.

Whiz crossed the broad thoroughfare and entered a doorway that was topped with the sign: "RIGHTWAY CLOTHING COMPANY".

There were other announcements, stating that the concern sold men's suits at every price, and that a considerable percentage could be saved by walking one flight up; but Whiz didn't stop to read them. He had been here before.

The upstairs clothing store occupied half a floor, with long racks of suits that made the place a maze of narrow aisles. There were two drab-faced salesmen lounging about, but Whiz passed both of them. On the far side of the store, he reached the doorway of an office, where a rangy man stood on duty.

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Whiz spread his hand, with the little finger doubled beneath. The watcher saw the ring that Whiz sported, with its chunk of quartz that the crook had purchased as a “Mexican” diamond. The signal was sufficient, although scarcely necessary. The guard knew Whiz quite well.

Ushered into the office, Whiz found a bulky man seated behind a desk.

Shrewd eyes surveyed him from beside a flattish nose. Lips formed a straight, hard line, as the eyes saw that Whiz had brought no news.

The man behind the desk was Ring Brescott, big-shot of the murder racket.

“WHAT about the girl?” demanded Ring, harshly. “Why hasn't any one spotted her?”

“It's no dice,” returned Whiz. “I guess she does her shoppin' by telephone. Keezer's been casin' the eagle up at Wannys, with nothin' to show for it.”

“Why didn't you put him out on Chestnut Street?”

“That's where he wanted to go. I know that all the swell dames parade there; but there's a lot of others, too, that are more in Keezer's class. He's better off lampin' the kind that listen to the pipe organ in the store. Keezer won't get the glad eye from any of them.

Ring nodded agreement. He swung to another subject; one, however, that partly concerned Isabel Rendolf.

“Vincent has talked some,” declared Ring, “and his story is just screwy enough to sound O. K. I've been waiting though to check it with you. He says he saw you hop from Rulland's coupé, when you ditched it off the bridge.”

Whiz stared, puzzled, then asked: “Where was Vincent when he saw all that?”

“Riding a Pennsy express coming in from New York.”

Whiz whistled through his teeth.

“There was a rattler comin' onto the big bridge,” he recalled. “The guy would have had to be in a front car, though.”

“That's where he was,” assured Ring—“in the lounge car. Seeing the thing happen got him interested in Rulland's death, so he says, and I believe him.”

“And the moll?”

“Vincent claims he doesn't know who she is. Says he was as surprised as you guys, when she mooched into the picture. Since his first story sounds like the real McCoy, I'll take the rest of it, too.

“Particularly because the girl was at the ball, and all the people there came from Philly. With Vincent being a stranger in town, how should he have known her?”

Whiz didn't answer the question. It was one that needed no answer, since both he and Ring agreed that it proved Harry's statement to be logical.

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That news would have pleased The Shadow. It fitted with his confident belief that Harry was safe, although un-located. Ring's next statements proved, furthermore, that The Shadow was right in supposing that his agent would remain unharmed.

RING ordered Whiz to an address in South Philadelphia, the place where Harry was being held prisoner. He told him to see to it that the captive was made comfortable, and kept under proper guard.

Whiz muttered something about being put to a lot of unnecessary trouble; that, in his opinion, it would be better to croak the guy and get it over. For the first time, Ring's straight-lined lips curled into the shape of a grin.

"You're forgetting what it costs to croak a guy," reminded the big-shot. "Why should I pay two and a half G's, when it's cheaper to keep Vincent where he is? That's the price with this outfit, regardless of the reason."

"It won't be," inserted Whiz, "if Vincent makes a break for it. The crew will load him full of lead, if he does."

"All the better," chuckled Ring; "The job will be theirs, not mine. I'll save the dough. Don't worry, though, Whiz. I think I can afford to get rid of Vincent, a little later on."

Whiz showed new interest as he asked: "You mean you've sold another job?"

"That's right," returned Ring. "Listen—he paused—"hear that knock at the door? That's the guy now."

"The customer?"

"No. The fellow that sold the bill of goods. He's the 'feller' that brought us the Warling job. You remember him. His name is Monte Wendon. He's out after another two and a half grand."

A scowl crossed Whiz's face.

"You're payin' them guys too high," he growled. "Sellin' a job ain't worth as much as a rub-out."

"You can't have one without the other," snapped Ring. "And remember one thing. Whiz: I'm running this racket, not you! Go on down to South Philly and see about Vincent. I'll phone you when I need you."

Ring opened a rear door of the office, and Whiz shouldered through. Having sent the mobleader on his way, Ring closed that door and stepped across to the other. A few moments later, the big-shot was shaking hands with his new visitor, Monte Wendon.

Insidious crime was creeping anew. While The Shadow still sought a trail in Philadelphia, Ring Brescott, the hidden master of murder, was getting an opportunity for another kill.

CHAPTER VIII. MURDERER'S PRICE

MONTE WENDON was a sallow, rat-faced individual, who looked the part he played. It was difficult for even Ring Brescott to realize that his visitor came from a family of good repute, but such was the case.

Wendon had good social connections, which explained why he was useful to the murder racket. As for his mode of operation, Wendon made up for his ratty appearance by an ingratiating manner that worked with people who were used to him.

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Whatever his faults, he had one virtue that went well in higher circles. Wendon never borrowed money—and that enabled him to rate above many other young men, who had more pleasant personalities.

“All right, Monte,” spoke Ring, as they sat down at the desk. “Spill it.” “I have talked to a man named Harlingsworth,” announced Wendon, in a smooth, purry tone. “David Harlingsworth. Perhaps you have heard of him?”

Ring shook his head.

“It does not matter,” added Wendon, idly, as he inserted a cigarette in a long holder. “Harlingsworth has plenty of money, but would like more, and is willing to pay for it. That is the important fact.”

Ring waited in hard-faced silence while Wendon flicked a fancy cigarette lighter. The big-shot didn't care to hurry the visitor's story. He knew the fellow from the past. Wendon always liked to put on a show, before he came to the point.

“Harlingsworth is an administrator of the Rendolf estate,” purred Wendon, leaning across the desk. “The heirs are anxious for him to put their money in some investments that will bring a high return. Harlingsworth is quite willing to do so.”

“So he can gyp them?” put in Ring, shrewdly.

“That appears to be his purpose,” returned Wendon, his sallow lips spreading in a grin. “Harlingsworth could work it, too, if it were not for old Nathan Crue, who is also an administrator.”

The murder ring leader didn't wait for further details. He could picture Wendon's interview with Harlingsworth. The sallow young man was clever when it came to prying people loose from their secrets over a bottle of liquor.

Ring came right to the final point, when he questioned: “You told Harlingsworth the price?”

Wendon nodded. From his pocket, he drew a folded sheet of paper, spread it in front of Ring.

“And here,” added Wendon, “is Harlingsworth's own idea of how it could be done. Only, he doesn't have the nerve.”

RING read the paper. He was smiling, when he tossed it into a desk drawer. Then, suddenly:

“What about this Rendolf bunch?” he asked. “Are they all for Harlingsworth?”

“All of them,” replied Wendon, “except, perhaps, the girl.”

“What girl?”

“Isabel Rendolf. One of the family. But she won't interfere. She's too strong on good looks to have any brains.”

The big-shot was on the point of asking more about Isabel. The thought had come to him that she might be the girl who had figured in the fight two nights ago. He decided to drop that question as a useless one.

Wendon hadn't said anything about Isabel being at the Penn-Delphia ball, and even if she had, she would

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have been but one of a few hundred girls there. Since Wendon was sure that Isabel was unimportant, Ring took his word for it.

“What about David Harlingsworth?” quizzed Ring. “When will he be here?”

“In a very few minutes,” returned Wendon, consulting his wrist watch. “Do you want me to stay?”

“Only until he gets here,” replied Ring. “Stick outside to steer him in. Then scam.”

TEN minutes later, David Harlingsworth arrived in Ring's office. Harlingsworth was a tall, full-faced man, of dignified appearance. He seemed somewhat nervous, but that did not bother Ring. He knew how to treat such customers, particularly when their looks suited him.

Harlingsworth came up to specifications. Despite his pose of dignity, he couldn't suppress the avaricious gleam that was in his eyes.

“Have a cigar, Mr. Harlingsworth,” offered Ring, with a polite bow. “Glad to see you. I hear”—the big-shot's raspy tone had lowered—“that you're out to buy something besides a suit of clothes.”

“Why, yes”—Harlingsworth caught himself with a stammer—“yes—I—”

“Made to order?” Ring's tone loudened, then quieted. “That's how it will be, Mr. Harlingsworth. Only”—he was lighting the visitor's cigar for him; and Ring's tone had become a whisper—“it's cash in advance. Fifty G's!”

Harlingsworth nodded. He understood the gangland term of fifty thousand dollars. That was Ring's price for murder, and it netted him plenty of profit, with only ten per cent to split between the man who brought the job and the one that Ring later appointed as killer.

The administrator's nerves had steadied. His smile was a disdainful one. He was regarding Nathan Crue as good as dead. Taking his chair, the dignified man questioned, smilingly:

“How would you like the money? Check or cash?”

“Either way,” returned Ring, smoothly. Then, noting Harlingsworth's astonishment: “You thought a check wouldn't do? You guessed wrong. This job you're buying comes under the head of a legitimate transaction.”

“Excellent!” declared Harlingsworth. He was drawing a checkbook from his pocket. “I'll make out a check right now; provided that you can assure me that it will create no suspicion;”

“Hold the check for a while.” With that admonition, Ring drew his visitor to the window. He pointed across Market Street, to the doorway of an auction gallery. Harlingsworth saw the place was lighted, with occasional persons moving in and out. Above the doorway was a painted sign: YOVELL & COMPANY Auctioneers

“An old, reliable concern,” stated Ring. “That is, they used to be, until their license was bought up a few months ago. Right now, some friends of mine are running the joint. They sell some swell stuff in there, Mr. Harlingsworth.”

“For instance?”

“One item is a painting, supposed to be done by a Frenchman named Fragonard. It's worth about”—Ring shot

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a wise glance at his companion—"well, just about fifty grand. That is, it would be if it wasn't a phony. As it stands, it only cost a couple of hundred bucks."

"I am to bid for it?"

"That's the idea. Nobody can pin anything on you, can they, if you were stuck for a picture that isn't the real McCoy?"

THE arrangement pleased Harlingsworth, particularly since he had no intention of ever admitting that his purchase was not the genuine article. Nevertheless, there were certain factors that troubled him.

"Suppose," he asked, "that no one raises my bids?"

"Don't worry," returned Ring. "There'll be boys there who will see to that."

"But do I have to appear in person? I should return to my office, because I am leaving the city this evening."

"Send somebody else, if you want. Only make it snappy. The joint closes up in about half an hour."

Harlingsworth picked up the telephone. He called his office, spoke to a man named Luben, who was evidently his secretary. He instructed Luben to go to the Yovell galleries and bid for a Fragonard that would be offered for sale there.

"Acquire it at as low a price as possible," ordered Harlingsworth, with a wink at Ring. "If the bidding is raised, you can go as high as fifty thousand dollars. That is the absolute limit. Give my name. It will be sufficient to complete the purchase."

When Harlingsworth had gone, Ring remained at the window, watching the auction house. Within a dozen minutes, he saw a frail-built man come along the street, stop outside the door, then enter the auction gallery.

The fellow was plainly attired in dark coat and derby hat. From his manner, Ring was sure that he was the sort who would suit Harlingsworth as a secretary.

Ring returned to his desk, correct in his assumption that the arrival was Luben. The big-shot was confident that fifty thousand dollars was in the bag, another tidy lump to go along with the sums that he had received through selling murder.

Ring Brescott had good reason for that advance opinion. He had sent previous customers into the auction house across the way. So far, the formula had always worked. Ring was quite satisfied that it would repeat, on this occasion.

CHAPTER IX. VANQUISHED BIDDERS

THE crowd was small in the old auction gallery, and there was little interest in the items that were offered for sale. When Luben entered, the beefy-faced auctioneer had just disposed of a threadbare Oriental rug for the small price of thirty-five dollars. The vase that an assistant was bringing to the block didn't appear to be worth much more.

Luben removed his derby hat, as a smile appeared upon his molish face. Completely innocent of any complicity in Harlingsworth's present scheme, Luben thought that his employer was crazy to suppose that anything high-priced could be offered at such an auction.

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True, there was a large picture hanging behind the auctioneer, and it portrayed a French garden scene. But whether or not it was Fragonard, Luben couldn't guess. The secretary knew very little about old paintings. He had to refer to a paper in his vest pocket, to remember the name of the thing for which he was supposed to bid.

Noting the faces near him, Luben saw none that impressed him. Most of the gallery's patrons looked like the usual strollers who frequented Market Street below Eighth. Whatever this place had to sell could probably be bought for fifty dollars, rather than fifty thousand.

It happened that Luben wasn't familiar with the ways of fake auction houses. If he had been, he would have recognized that some of the loungers near him were "shills," who served as pretended bidders, whenever required. Nor had Luben read the advertisement that the Yovell galleries carried in the Philadelphia newspapers.

Those ads stated that Yovell & Company auctioned expensive items, along with cheaper ones. That might have impressed Luben as odd, since this district was one of low-priced stores seldom patronized by wealthy persons.

The auctioneer was droning the merits of the cheap-looking vase, when a man approached and handed him a slip of paper. The beefy-faced fellow made a quick disposal of the vase, getting rid of it for twelve dollars. Then, puffing himself in pompous fashion, he gestured toward the painting behind him.

"A genuine imported painting!" he announced. "Done by a Frenchman named Frog"—he leaned closer to the painting, corrected himself—"named Fragonard. Comes right from a big gallery in Europe, this piece does!

"No low bidding on this one." The auctioneer leaned forward to shake the hammer that he held. "If it don't start at my figger, it don't go to-day. Who's ready to offer a thousand dollars?"

SMILES were exchanged among those present, except the tobacco-chewing shills. They kept looking stolidly at the auctioneer. Shrugging, he seemed ready to withdraw the painting, when Luben suddenly piped:

"I'll give one thousand!"

A shill shifted his tobacco cud to his cheek, ready for a signal from the auctioneer. It came, a motion of the beefy man's hand. The shill spoke up:

"Two thousand!"

Luben made it twenty-five hundred. Contemptuously, another shill added a thousand to that offer. A few minutes later, they were forcing Luben up from right and left, until the price had reached twenty-five thousand dollars.

Harlingsworth's secretary made that bid, and with it, he glared about like a bantam rooster. He was beginning to suspect that this bunch was leagued with the auctioneer.

Twenty-six thousand dollars was offered. Luben sat quiet. Despite orders, he feared that he would be betraying Harlingsworth if he made further bids under such circumstances. The auctioneer pounded the hammer:

"Going-going—"

The hammer remained up, with the beefy man staring straight toward Luben. Shakily, Luben was about to

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raise the bid five hundred dollars, when a calm voice spoke a higher offer:

“Thirty thousand dollars.”

LUBEN stared. For the first time, he saw a tall, hawk-faced stranger standing near a side door of the gallery. The sight gave Luben confidence, for the hawkish bidder looked like a man of wealth. With such a patron bidding for the Fragonard, Luben no longer had doubts of Harlingsworth's sanity.

The secretary made it thirty-one thousand.

After that, the cud-chewing skills were out of it. Every time they started to open their mouths, Luben or the other bidder happened to be ahead of them.

As the bids approached fifty thousand dollars, the auctioneer showed nervousness, particularly when he looked toward the tall stranger near the doorway.

The auctioneer's message had come straight from Ring Brescott. It had stated that the painting was to go for fifty thousand dollars to the little guy with the derby hat.

That meant Luben, and Ring hadn't mentioned any other bidder.

At forty-five thousand, offered by the hawk-faced intruder, the auctioneer flashed another signal. A couple of husky skills sidled over to the doorway where the stranger stood; waited close behind him. They didn't suspect that he knew that they were there. These toughs had never previously met The Shadow. They didn't realize the task they faced.

The bids raised at a thousand-dollar rate. The Shadow offered forty-nine thousand. Luben took a long breath, and piped, with a final note:

“Fifty thousand!”

Downward started the auctioneer's hammer.

“Going—”

He had no time for a second word.

The Shadow's tone came loud, despite its calmness:

“Sixty thousand dollars!”

That raise wilted the auctioneer. Juggling his hammer, he looked helplessly at Luben, as though admitting that he had favored the frail man's cause. The only response that Luben could give was a wide wave of his hands. He couldn't top that final bid.

The auctioneer tightened his grip on the hammer. He swung it against the block, and bluffly announced:

“Gone—for fifty thousand dollars!”

IN Luben's direction, the hammer waved. Completely surprised, Luben came forward to claim his purchase, but The Shadow was there ahead of him. He showed no haste, however, in reaching the auctioneer, nor did he

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appear to notice the two huskies who crowded close behind him.

“I said sixty thousand,” remarked The Shadow, to the auctioneer.

“I heard you,” was the reply. “But we can't go that high with strangers who don't show credentials. Unless you can show them—”

“Here they are. The best!”

From his pocket, The Shadow drew a thick wallet, spreading its contents for the auctioneer's view. The beefy man's eyes bulged. He was looking at a fan of crisp currency which he roughly estimated at a hundred bills, each of a thousand dollar denomination!

The shills were peering over The Shadow's shoulders. They exchanged looks; their hands slid to their hips. Others among the phony bidders began to crowd up toward the auction block. Calmly, The Shadow showed the cash to Luben.

“How about it?” he asked. “Can you match these?”

“No, no!” stammered Luben. “I—well, I'm not here on my own account. I—I'm representing—”

Luben caught a quick glance from the auctioneer. Schooled in crooked ways, the beefy man had guessed that the situation was getting worse. Maybe the tall stranger was here to find out whom Luben did represent.

Though Luben couldn't guess why the auctioneer was interrupting him, he at least understood the beefy man's glance. Stifling himself into silence, Luben looked at the husky throng about him. Seized by sudden alarm, he turned about and scrambled for the front door of the auction house.

The Shadow made a move as if to follow. The auctioneer bellowed a loud interruption, to restrain him.

“Sold for sixty thousand!”

The bluff was intended to make The Shadow think that he had bought the picture. That was a good enough game, for a sale at sixty thousand would turn the laugh on him, with the Luben matter reserved for a later occasion.

But the auctioneer was out for more than that sum. He wanted the full hundred grand that The Shadow carried.

As he swung the hammer, the beefy man made a long forward stretch over the block, aiming the stroke for The Shadow's skull. What the auctioneer didn't count on were the quick thoughts in the head that he tried to bludgeon. Nor did he calculate upon the remarkable speed that this leisurely mannered stranger could display.

WHILE the hammer was sweeping downward, The Shadow performed an amazing roundabout twist. He came up in front of the auction block. Shooting his hands upward, he gripped the overbalanced auctioneer before the man could recover from his swing.

The auctioneer's own effort, plus The Shadow's steel-muscled strength, provided an amazing sequel.

The Shadow whipped the bulky man clear across the block, to scale him, like a human battering-ram, straight into the midst of the gun-drawing shills. There was a hard twist behind that catapulting action, that sent the

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big man whirling on his way. His flying legs, coming sideways, clipped a third thug, along with the other two.

While that bunch was rolling on the floor, two others sprang for The Shadow. He cleared the auction block with a bound, turned suddenly to fling the block itself against the foemen. One man took the missile squarely, while the other, last of the attackers, sidestepped to draw a revolver.

He failed to use the weapon. The Shadow had reached the fake Fragonard. With a twisting sweep, he carried the painting from the wall, lunged for the last thug and downed him with a swing of the heavy frame.

Clearing the men who were in his path, The Shadow reached the side door just as the beefy auctioneer came to his feet.

Staring from among three slowly rising shills, the auctioneer saw another lying cold beside the overturned auction block, with the last man's face poking through the canvas of the pretended masterpiece.

The Shadow was gone, on a mission more important than continuing battle with these mobsters. He was on the trail of Luben, the man who offered a link to the murder ring's latest customer.

In that swift fray, however, The Shadow had left no doubt regarding his identity. That was why he delivered a parting token, declaring himself to the crew that he had floored.

It came, a chilling tone of laughter: mocking mirth that quelled the halfhearted desire of any who had a mind to follow.

They recognized The Shadow's taunt, those cowered foemen, as the laugh, like its author, faded into the outside dusk.

CHAPTER X. CROOKS COUNTER

WITH a wake of sprawled foemen left behind him, The Shadow had made an excellent start along Luben's trail. The gunless fray had created no outside disturbance, hence there was no one to block The Shadow's progress

Despite the dusk, he spied Luben crossing Market Street. Had a subway entrance been close at hand, the fellow would probably have dived into it, hoping to lose himself in a crowd. But no such opportunity was at hand, so Luben grabbed a cab, instead.

That suited The Shadow perfectly. He entered another taxi that was parked near the auction house, with its motor running. It was the cab in which The Shadow had come here. He saw the direction that Luben's cab took, and told his own driver to follow.

Meanwhile, the occupants of the auction house had regained something of their former nerve. Tough-faced "shills" were poking their noses out toward the street. They were too late to spot either Luben or The Shadow; worst of all, from their viewpoint, they couldn't remember much about the hawk-faced fighter's appearance.

As for Luben, they had no idea who he was; but the beefy-faced auctioneer knew of some one who could tell.

He hurried into a little office, snatched up a telephone, and called Ring Brescott.

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The second floor clothing store was just about to close. Ring heard the telephone bell while leaving by the back door of his office. Once he received the news, he hung up in a hurry and dialed a number in South Philadelphia.

Whiz Birsch answered that call.

“Get going!” ordered Ring. “In a hurry!... Where to? I'll tell you. Up to the Midtown Building, on Seventeenth Street, to flag a boob named Luben before he can get inside the place...”

“What's he look like? Luben's a little runt with a small-size derby... Sure, you can tell him by the kelly. There's not many guys sporting them, nowadays. And listen, Whiz, tell the crew to keep on their toes. There's a guy tailing Luben that may be The Shadow...”

Some objection must have reached Ring, for he showed a scowl. His left fist clenched upon the desk; upon his third finger was a huge, sparkling diamond, larger than the Mexican imitation that Whiz wore.

That gem was the one that Ring's followers all envied. Its many-rayed glint was as hard as the ugly glitter in the big-shot's eyes. At present, Ring was showing the toughness for which he was famed.

“So you think the crew won't want to meet up with The Shadow!” he told Whiz. “No wonder, after the way that dame mopped up half of them the other night! Well, tell them this: The guy's got a hundred grand on him, and if they get him, half of it will be theirs!”

Whiz gave a hoarse but enthusiastic response. Ring clanked the receiver, then dug into desk drawers in an industrious fashion.

Despite his advice for others to go after The Shadow, Ring was taking pains to protect himself. The trail was getting too close. He was abandoning this headquarters, and taking along all evidence that might link him with the place.

After his departure, Ring remembered another important telephone call. He made it from a pay booth in an Arch Street cigar store. The man that Ring called was Harlingsworth.

“The auction flivved,” the big-shot told his customer. “You'd better leave your office... Luben? Don't worry about him. If anybody asks you, tell them he's going to meet you later... The deal? Sure, we'll go through with it! I'll tell you who to see, and when... Yeah, write it down, while I give it.”

AT another hour, Whiz and his outfit would have had no chance to reach the Midtown Building before Luben arrived there; but this was the time when traffic was heavy on westbound Philadelphia streets, and that was the direction in which Luben's cab was headed.

Moreover, the cabby had picked Walnut Street, most crowded of all the thoroughfares because he saw a chance to pick up extra fare through the slowness or traffic.

The driver of The Shadow's cab was more obliging. When his passenger told him to turn up Walnut Street, he offered a suggestion:

“I'd do better over on Locust, mister. If you'll tell me where you're going—”

“Up Walnut Street. Stay on it.”

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That settled the matter. The cab continued at a snail's speed, with Luben's only a few cars ahead.

The two cabs passed Broad Street, and were halted for the next three minutes. In his cab, The Shadow was opening a bundle that he had left there. It contained his garments of black.

Looking from the window, he saw the side entrance of the Bellevue–Stratford Hotel and smiled to himself. With this constant delay, he could have left his special garb in the hotel room, and stopped off to get it on the way.

Luben's cabby made some extra change by driving up to Eighteenth Street, rounding the block and coming south on Seventeenth. He dropped Luben in front of the small building where Harlingsworth's offices were located.

The Shadow's cab trailed past that spot, stopped near the entrance of an alley. That was where The Shadow alighted, garbed in black.

He had merged with darkness by the time the cab had rolled away, but he did not remain in the confines of the alley. The front of the Midtown Building was gloomy; it offered opportunity to draw close to Luben, who was looking upward, puzzled by the sight of unlighted windows in his office.

An elevator operator noted Luben, from the lobby. He stepped out to ask:

“Looking for Mr. Harlingsworth, Mr. Luben?”

Luben nodded.

“He's gone,” added the informant. “Said that if you came here, you were to call him later, at his home.”

The secretary turned away, still wondering why Harlingsworth hadn't stayed. The elevator man went back into the building, hence he wasn't a witness to what followed. Only The Shadow was on hand to see that episode.

A sedan whisked in from Chestnut Street. Its occupants spotted Luben as he was moving in The Shadow's direction. As brakes screeched, two men pounced to the curb, shoved revolvers against the frail man's ribs.

“Come on, guy. You're goin' with us!”

While the thug was making that announcement, Luben disappeared.

THE man with the derby didn't actually vanish into the atmosphere, though from the bewilderment on the faces of the two hoodlums, they almost thought he did.

What happened was, The Shadowed whipped Luben from the gun points, took him in a long whirl along the darkened building wall, toward the alley. Luben's coat and hat were dark; the added blackness of The Shadow's cloak helped the sudden illusion.

The Shadow didn't travel as far as Luben. He let the secretary skid farther ahead, past the building edge. Over the curb, Luben sprawled out of sight in the alley, his derby bouncing the cobblestones. The Shadow, halting, wheeled about to meet the attackers with bullets, if they wanted battle.

But the thugs were still too stupefied to realize what had happened. They hadn't gotten a single glimpse of

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The Shadow. Their car was past the alley; its driver, Whiz Birsch, was looking back, wondering why the trigger-men stood in such dumfoundedness.

At that moment a second car arrived, coming from an unexpected direction. It was rolling through the narrow alley, from Eighteenth Street. The car was a coupé, manned by a couple of cover-up men. They had chosen this short-cut to their destination.

The pair spotted Luben, rising bewilderedly. They wouldn't have guessed who he was, if he hadn't spied his derby in the glow from the coupé headlights. Scrambling toward the curb, Luben snatched up his precious hat. A moment later, a thug was out of the car, prodding him with a revolver.

Backing toward the alley, The Shadow became suddenly conscious of the lights. He wheeled, to see Luben's plight. With a long leap, The Shadow crossed the alley, looming upon the gunman who had Luben covered. The thug sprang about, hearing a cry from the driver of the coupé.

At the same moment, the men on Seventeenth Street saw The Shadow for the first time and shouted, as they aimed their guns. Like their pal in the alleyway, they were out to get The Shadow and thought they had the chance.

They were counting on too much, those crooks, for even when The Shadow sprang to seemingly desperate measures, he calculated the results and was prepared for what might come.

In this fight, however, The Shadow was making one miscalculation that was to nullify whatever else he accomplished.

CHAPTER XI. BELATED TRAILS

THE one crook who had a chance to bead The Shadow was the fellow who had Luben covered. What he lacked was the ability to use that opportunity. Perhaps but one crook in a hundred would be quick enough with his trigger to beat The Shadow to a shot in the short time allowed. The Shadow had correctly assumed that such a sharpshooter would not be in Philadelphia, working merely on a cover-up assignment.

That was why The Shadow took the chance.

He veered long enough to give Luben a shoulder shove that sent the frail man headlong to the safety of a doorway. Twisting from that heave, The Shadow drilled a shot at the gunman whose aim had followed him.

Therewith, the thug's opportunity was gone. The Shadow dropped him while he was tugging at his trigger. The crook's shot went wide.

The men from the street were opening fire, but they no longer had a target. The Shadow faded from view as effectively as did their falling pal. As for Luben, he was where The Shadow had put him, buried in a doorway where bullets couldn't reach him.

Though out of sight, The Shadow promptly made his presence known. His automatic spoke again, and brought a yowl from the foremost thug. One arm dangling, the wounded crook made for Whiz's car. His companion went with him, keeping in front of his crippled pal. That wise procedure saved the second crook from a dose of lead.

The Shadow let the pair go. He was concerned with another fighter: the driver of the coupé. That crook was canny. He was out of the car, had spotted where The Shadow's shot came from. Crawling toward the radiator,

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he intended to come around and spring a surprise.

It was The Shadow who made the unexpected move. He came over the hood of the car in a long sweeping dive, to reach the creeping thug.

There was a snarl as the foeman heard the clatter. Coming half to his feet, the crook poked his revolver toward The Shadow. A swishing arm brought a heavy gun downward. The blow clipped the side of the crook's head. He collapsed, toppling in a crazy fashion that would have suited a tailor's dummy.

The sudden sag delayed The Shadow, for he had expected the thug's sinking frame to take the weight of his, The Shadow's, dive. Rolling on the cobbles, The Shadow was shaken by the force of his own efforts. Fortunately, the car shielded him from any attack that might come from the street. That was why The Shadow took his time, in rising to look for the thugs who had fled.

Peering over the radiator, The Shadow suddenly realized his miscalculation. He had not made proper allowance for one factor; namely, Luben.

THE SHADOW had expected the frail man to stay in the doorway. Instead, Luben had been seized by alternate fits of boldness and fear. Though it didn't seem part of his make-up, Luben had bravely decided to come out and help. Once out, he had changed his mind, choosing flight instead.

Foolishly, he had run for Seventeenth Street, and he was turning in the wrong direction. He was going toward the sedan that held Whiz and his men.

Clutching his battered derby to his head, Luben was at the corner when The Shadow spied him. Reaching the street, he added to his folly. He saw a car with an opened door and dived aboard it, wanting to get out of sight. A moment later, a slugging gun dented the man's derby and thudded the head beneath.

Luben sank groaning into the arms of captors. The sedan door slammed. Whiz stepped on the gas.

The car was darting into another alley, across the street, when The Shadow arrived. The black-cloaked fighter didn't have time to take a shot at the taillight before it flickered from view. There was a way, though, to follow Luben's captors. The Shadow sprang back to the coupé, to begin a chase.

It wasn't long before he found the trail. The two cars were threading through narrow streets, darting in and out of traffic. Whiz headed north, crossing Market Street and speeding through one of the tunnels beneath the old "Chinese Wall," topped by the Pennsylvania Railroad tracks.

Whiz wanted to reach the Parkway, but soon gave up that plan. The captured coupé was trailing him too closely, and Whiz knew who was driving it. Furthermore, he had better chances for trick driving in traffic than he would have along the Parkway, where park guards might cause trouble for a speeder.

Southward sped the cars, along Nineteenth Street, until they neared Walnut. There, Whiz saw a traffic light about to change. Rittenhouse Square was straight ahead. Walnut Street crossed the north end of it. Whiz had to turn right and take a short stretch up one-way, west-bound, Walnut Street, to reach the next turn, where Nineteenth Street followed the west side of the square.

Whiz made the first turn as the light changed. The Shadow was close behind, but not close enough. Whiz had made the second turn; to the left, to go down the west side of the square.

The Shadow was about to follow, when a big green trolley car coming along Walnut Street loomed up on his

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rear. Not only that, but a sedan on the other side of the trolley was trying to cut across in front of it, evidently to get to the right side of the street.

The Shadow's one chance was to make an angled dart between. He stepped on the accelerator. The driver of the far car saw the coupé and dumbly tried to slacken speed. The Shadow's chase was therewith ended.

THE coupé took the rear bumper from the slowing automobile, and the trolley smashed into the back of the coupé. The light car was hurled clear across the sidewalk, into the open space of the square, where it landed on its side.

Traffic halted. Police arrived, along with pedestrians. Some one shouted that he saw a figure crawling from the coupé's upper door, but that sounded like imagination, until the car was reached.

Then it was discovered that the coupé had no driver.

The man was probably somewhere in Rittenhouse Square, and his disappearance seemed to prove that the crash was his fault. A hunt began for the missing driver, but it wasn't well managed. By the time that searchers had closed in from every side, they realized that they had left loopholes through which the fugitive could have slipped.

Most annoying was the news that a gunfray had occurred only a few blocks away; that it had been followed by a race of two cars through the streets. The police immediately connected the driver of the smashed coupé with the reported battle, but that didn't bring results.

Had they known that they were searching for so elusive a personage as The Shadow, the officers might have regarded their failure as excusable. There were circumstances, however, that changed that situation.

DOWN near Broad Street, a tall man was wandering along, stopping painfully after every dozen strides. He was carrying an object that looked like a folded cape, across his arm. His slouch hat was tilted over his left eye, to hide a gash upon his forehead.

Several passers-by thought that he was drunk; others decided that he might be a panhandler, for his clothes looked disheveled, and he stopped to gaze drearily at persons who passed him. None, however, hit the truth—that he was suffering from a mild concussion, received in an automobile crash.

Instinctively, The Shadow was trying to keep up an appearance, although the street revolved before him and his eyes saw spotty pictures in which people, even buildings, appeared as if in pieces. Half closing his eyes, he steadied, walking on a bit farther.

Then the bright lights of Broad Street dazzled him, but amid the glow, he recognized his hotel.

Mechanically, The Shadow brushed his clothes. He steadied a bit, reached the hotel at a slow pace. His feet almost stumbled on the steps, but managed to reach the lobby. He remembered his room number, knew that the key was in his pocket. His wallet, too, was there, his pressing elbow informed him.

But, for the moment, The Shadow found farther steps impossible. He dropped into a chair near the lobby door.

Five minutes passed, while The Shadow sat with half-closed eyes. Through his brain ran a medley of events that he couldn't clearly remember. Worst of all, he knew that they were slipping from him, that with the morrow, many facts would be blank, unless jogged back into place.

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Fighting crooks, running figures, speeding cars, a crash—those were the pictures in The Shadow's mind, without the slightest clue to where they had occurred or who had been involved. In fact, The Shadow couldn't even connect them with Philadelphia.

TWO men stopped near the lobby chair. One spoke pleasantly:

“Hello, Harlingsworth! I hear you're going on a trip.”

“Yes,” was the reply. “I leave this evening.”

“Going alone?”

“No, no. My secretary is going with me. You know the chap; his name is Luben.”

The speakers went away, but from his daze, The Shadow felt two names grow in his mind. Harlingsworth—Luben. Slowly rising, The Shadow blundered toward an elevator door that seemed tiny, at first, then enlarged suddenly as he reached it.

Half aloud, he muttered the second name: “Luben.”

Perhaps it was the upward jolt of the elevator that jarred back recollection. By the time the car stopped at The Shadow's floor, he had more memories fixed in mind.

Luben had worked for some one, a man named Harlingsworth. What The Shadow had heard in the lobby was connected with names and a statement that he had heard before. He remembered where: at the Midtown Building on Seventeenth Street.

Luben had bid for a picture at an auction gallery. It could only have been for Harlingsworth. Yet Harlingsworth was going out of town, when he was supposed to be at home. He had said that Luben was going with him, but it happened that Luben wasn't, for the secretary had been kidnapped by Whiz Birsch.

Did Harlingsworth know that? Yes, Harlingsworth knew it.

The Shadow answered his own question, as he sank on a bed in his room, a wet towel plastered over his eyes. Where Harlingsworth was going, didn't matter; He had left a job behind him for others to do, and it was evident that Ring Brescott would be the man in charge.

The Shadow readily realized that Harlingsworth must have some shady deal on with Ring, otherwise the secretary wouldn't have been bidding thousands of dollars for a phony picture in an auction gallery owned by Ring Brescott.

Crime would be directed at some helpless victim, a person whom Harlingsworth knew well, for he was obviously leaving town to sustain an alibi.

That thought brought a grim, whispered laugh from the muffling folds of the damp towel that spread across The Shadow's face.

Though The Shadow had lost track of Luben, and therefore had probably missed a chance to locate Harry Vincent, he felt sure those prisoners would be safe while the murder racket was still in active progress.

After that, their plight became serious, but The Shadow intended to intervene before that time arrived. He had

found the way to strike at crime.

He had gained, and retained, the thing he wanted most: a clue to coming murder!

CHAPTER XII. THE FINAL SALE

IT was half past eight, that evening, when David Harlingsworth arrived at an old building on Race Street, in a district which had once constituted Philadelphia's Chinatown. Years ago, Harlingsworth remembered; this section had impressed him as a dark and sinister neighborhood, where anything might happen.

He didn't feel that way at present. That wasn't because Harlingsworth had become somewhat sinister himself; the reason was that Race Street had changed. Since the building of the Delaware River Bridge, Race Street had become a feeder to that short route to New Jersey.

With traffic teeming east along the one-way thoroughfare late into the night, the Chinese shops that Harlingsworth saw looked like mere relics of a forgotten day, and their occupants appeared very mild and harmless.

Harlingsworth didn't guess that he was to be treated to a whiff of Chinese atmosphere that would enlarge his former opinion of Orientals and their mysterious ways.

The shop where the dignified man stopped bore the name of Ki Woong. It was very narrow, with space for only one show window beside the door. In that window, through a grimy pane, Harlingsworth saw stacks of Oriental goods, some of which impressed him as antiques.

He entered the store, to be met by a slight-built Chinese youth, who came from behind a counter. Harlingsworth asked to see Ki Woong. The Chinese youth went to a curtain at the rear of the store. He spoke some babbled words, then returned.

"You wait," he told Harlingsworth. "Ki Woong see you soon."

With that, the youth locked the front door and pocketed a big key. He pulled down blinds, covering the door as well as the window. When he turned about, he had a wise grin that Harlingsworth didn't like.

The place seemed curiously gloomy as Harlingsworth looked about again. He began to dislike the young Chinaman's looks. Then, as minutes passed, he noted a strange smoke filling the room. It was Oriental incense, perfumed, but of a stifling odor.

Harlingsworth had just located the source as coming from the curtains at the rear of the shop, when the draperies lifted. Through the doorway waddled a squatty Chinaman, whose crinkly face was bearded. His head was tilted forward, showing a roundish skullcap, while his eyes peered upward through large spectacles.

"I AM Ki Woong" announced the old Chinaman, in perfect English. "You have come to buy antiques?"

"I've come to buy—"

"Of course!" The Chinaman interrupted with a crackly chuckle, before Harlingsworth could complete the sentence. "Observe this vase, sir"—he lifted a heavy piece of pottery—"a bargain at fifteen hundred dollars.

"Harlingsworth doubted the value of the vase but did not say so. Ki Woong apparently took his silence for a sale, for he turned to the young Chinese and spoke words in their own tongue. The assistant began to make a

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list.

It was needed. Ki Woong offered Harlingsworth a set of ivory carvings for thirty–five hundred dollars. They looked like ivory, but the customer had his doubts. Again, Ki Woong chalked up a sale. He did the same with some Chinese tapestries and a golden screen, which he claimed had come from the imperial palace in old Peking.

He led Harlingsworth into the rear room. There, Chinese Buddhas were grouped about the walls, forming an array of all sorts of shapes and sizes. Ki Woong began to sell Buddhas, picking them out for his customer's benefit.

Though this was the address where Ring Brescott had told him to come, Harlingsworth began to have doubts about the place, particularly when he turned toward the curtained doorway. Unnoticed, a door had slid shut there, completely filling that opening. The Chinese youth was standing there, with folded arms.

For a moment, Harlingsworth was gripped with a desire to leave. He made a move toward the door.

Ki Woong cackled. As the Chinaman pressed a button, Harlingsworth heard a sliding sound. He turned about. A panel had opened in the far wall. Within the space stood a huge Chinese, who looked twice as large as the youth who barred the door. Harlingsworth subsided.

If, at that moment, he had been told that he was here to suffer for having entertained the thought of murdering Nathan Crue, he would have believed it.

That, however, was not the situation.

Ki Woong clapped his hands; the big Chinese guard stepped through the panel and moved to one side. Bowing, Ki Woong indicated a stairway beyond the panel.

“Let us go up to my office,” he suggested. “There, we may complete our transaction.”

Harlingsworth accepted the invitation, but all the way up the stairs, he shuddered at the thought of Ki Woong following so close behind him. At moments, Harlingsworth could almost feel a knife thrusting toward his ribs.

His qualms ended when they reached Ki Woong's office; but when the old merchant turned on the dim lights, the sight of paneled walls again made Harlingsworth feel jittery. The young Chinaman had followed them; he was adding up the list for Ki Woong. Harlingsworth kept looking at the panels all the while.

“Exactly fifty thousand dollars,” announced Ki Woong. “The sum is satisfactory?”

Harlingsworth began to stammer.

“Your check will suffice,” added Ki Woong, beaming through his spectacles. “Here are pen and ink.”

As he wrote out the check, Harlingsworth peered occasionally toward the door. It was partly opened, he could see the big guard outside. Ki Woong blotted the check, stepped over to the wall.

“The antiques will be delivered tomorrow,” he said, “at your home in Chestnut Hill. Good evening, Mr. Harlingsworth.”

Ki WOONG pressed a panel. It slid aside to show a wide, dark landing, with a flight of steep, gloomy stairs

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beyond. Ki Woong was showing the customer out by the back way, and Harlingsworth was glad to go. Stammering his thanks for the bargains that he had gotten, he hurried down the steps, almost tumbling on the way

Outside, he found himself in a rear alley, but he could see a lighted street ahead. He knew, well enough, that he had completed the deal that Ring Brescott wanted, and he was glad to be through with it. Whatever hesitancy Harlingsworth might have shown had been ended by the persuasive methods of Ki Woong.

Up in the second-floor office, Ki Woong had closed the panel. He placed the check beneath his tunic, drew out a roll of bills. He counted off five hundred dollars, gave the sum to the young Chinaman. The youth seemed quite gleeful at receiving that trivial amount. He left, taking the big Chinaman with him.

From beneath the tunic, Ki Woong brought a ring that sparkled with a large diamond. He slipped the gem on his finger, then opened the panel that had served Harlingsworth as an exit. In English, far more raspy than his cackled tone, Ki Woong called:

“All right, Whiz!”

By the time Whiz Birsch had entered the room, Ki Woong's spectacles were off. So was the skullcap, and he was tugging away his false beard, to reveal the features of Ring Brescott.

“You sure had him worried!” commented Whiz. “I was lookin’ through the peephole, like you told me to. Say, Ring, the way you handle that Chineese stunt, you even have the chinks fooled!”

Sure I do,” agreed Ring. “I told you I knew their lingo, along with a lot of others. When I came to Philly, I opened this joint as Ki Woong, and put that kid in charge.

“He thinks I'm leaving for China and that I took a rich American over the hurdles, selling him five hundred bucks worth of junk for fifty grand.”

“The kid won't squawk?”

“On another Chinese, his benefactor? Not a chance! This joint will still run under the name of Ki Woong, and nobody will ever trace me through it. I'm through with the place, tonight.”

Whiz shook his head. He figured the setup was too good to toss away, and said so. Ring showed him where he was wrong.

“It would be hard to do a duck out, as Ki Woong,” declared the big-shot. “I've got a better stunt than this one. When I pick hide-outs, Whiz, I take funny ones, and sometimes they're swell places. I'm safe, because I change my identity at the same time.

“The sale tonight was the last one. I've cleaned up close to a quarter million, here in Philly, and I've picked another town to start the same racket all over again. Philly will be too hot—for a while, now that The Shadow's here.

Whiz agreed. He had already told Ring of the episodes that had happened a few hours before. Whiz had a question, however, that he had forgotten to ask.

“This guy Vincent,” he quizzed, “do you think he could be in with The Shadow?”

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“Not a chance!” returned Ring. “The Shadow would have been in our hair before this, if Vincent was working with him. You keep Vincent and Luben where they are; and tell Keezer I’ll hand him half a grand when he spots that dame we’re after.”

WHILE he talked, Ring had disposed of his Chinese attire and was packing it in a suitcase that he brought from a secret panel. He was completely like himself again, when he told Whiz:

“Tomorrow night, we’re doing away with an old gink named Nathan Crue. It’s going to be a cinch, because Harlingsworth has told us how. You can believe it or not, Whiz, but the way we’ve fixed it, Crue will as good as bump himself off.

“I’m giving the job to Thelden, though, just so there’ll be no squawks. To clinch it, I’m sending Wendon along with him, so that they can alibi each other. Nobody’s going to be suspected, but, just the same, you cover with the outfit.

“That’s in case The Shadow shows up. I don’t expect he will, after the way you shook him tonight; but since we know he’s on deck, there’s no way of being sure. He’s poked that beak of his into too many places where he wasn’t wanted.”

Ring motioned Whiz out through the panel. When the mobleader had gone, the big-shot followed. The panel closed, marking the final departure of Ki Woong, for, in the suitcase, Ring carried all that remained of the mythical Chinaman.

Brescott was sure that he had closed his trail behind him; that he would never be located by The Shadow. The big-shot was also convinced that the murder of Nathan Crue would be a certainty tomorrow night.

Nothing could have shaken Ring’s first opinion, but he would have been less confident on the second score, had he realized how much The Shadow had heard tonight.

For The Shadow, after connecting Harlingsworth with Luben, had trailed Harlingsworth to the curio dealers and, unseen, had overheard much.

CHAPTER XIII. DEATH’S VERGE

AMONG the several reasons why Ring Brescott felt confident of success in coming crime, was the fact that David Harlingsworth had shown no open antagonism toward Nathan Crue.

Harlingsworth was simply paying for a future possibility, one that hadn’t even been his own suggestion. There wasn’t an ounce of evidence to prove that he later planned to swindle the Rendolf heirs, after he became sole administrator of their estate.

That, in Rings opinion, made it air-tight. The big-shot, however, was examining the matter from an outside viewpoint, and supposing that every one else would do the same.

The inside slant gave a different result.

Granting that Harlingsworth could have turned crooked, there was a string of circumstances to support that theory. Chief among these were the episode at the auction house, Luben’s disappearance, and, finally, the truckload of Chinese trash that was delivered at Harlingsworth’s home the next day.

The Shadow saw those alleged antiques when he paid a visit to Harlingsworth’s home in the guise of Lamont

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Cranston, a New Yorker reputed to be a millionaire.

There was a real Lamont Cranston, but he was usually traveling to the far corners of the world; thus, at those times, and if necessary, The Shadow adopted Cranston's identity.

Servants were carrying the spurious antiques into a room where Harlingsworth kept curios. Noting the items that went past, The Shadow knew at once that there was something behind Harlingsworth's purchase of that junk. He learned it had come from a curio dealer named Ki Woong.

In claiming to be an old friend, anxious to see Harlingsworth, The Shadow easily found leads to other persons upon whom he could call. By mid-afternoon, he had completed a route very much like the one that Harry Vincent followed in his first day in Philadelphia.

The difference was that Harry, in seeking data regarding Louis Rulland, had met up with Thelden, a man connected with the murder ring. The Shadow, in hunting up facts on Harlingsworth, encountered no one of Thelden's ilk.

The Shadow learned that Harlingsworth, a former bank director, was a man of high repute, who specialized in the administration of estates. The only estate of such importance that it required the services of others besides Harlingsworth, was the Rendolf estate.

Of equal importance in the administration of that estate was a retired attorney named Nathan Crue. Brokers, bankers, others interviewed by Cranston, all knew that Harlingsworth and Crue controlled the Rendolf affairs together, for the many checks on the estate were signed by both of them, and no one else.

Nathan Crue proved an easy man to reach by telephone. He no longer had an office, but lived at home. Since he had few visitors, he was quite willing to receive callers.

As Cranston, The Shadow called him, but found that an appointment would be impossible for tonight. Crue already expected visitors, who were to arrive at eight o'clock. They would probably occupy the entire evening, to a certain extent, for Crue always retired early.

It was nearly five o'clock when The Shadow made a brief visit to the Chinese curio shop on Race Street. He surprised the young Chinaman by speaking in a Cantonese dialect, and thereby learned quite a bit about Ki Woong, who had just gone home to China.

WALKING back to the Bellevue Stratford, The Shadow followed the Philadelphia custom of going through the Wanamaker store—a natural procedure, since a sleety drizzle had begun.

There was another reason, though, why many persons had entered the store to throng the central concourse. The giant pipe organ was welling forth with a late afternoon recital.

People were packed about the big eagle, and when The Shadow strolled along a side aisle to avoid the crowd, he decided to go out by the Juniper Street entrance and cut through an arcade to Chestnut Street. He hadn't taken a dozen steps before he stopped.

Across a counter, in another aisle, he saw a man shouldering in the same direction. It was Keezer; though The Shadow didn't know the fellow's name, he recognized him as the crook who had grappled with Isabel.

Just by way of check-up, The Shadow looked at Keezer's arm, saw that it was bandaged and that the fellow favored it.

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Moving along his own aisle, The Shadow saw Keezer meet up with a chunky man. That fellow was Whiz Birsch, who had so far escaped close observation from The Shadow. By the time the two were near the Juniper Street exit, The Shadow was jostling through the crowd beside them.

Whiz saw The Shadow but did not suspect his identity. In the guise of Cranston, The Shadow had a hawkish appearance that was slightly reminiscent of Kent Allard; but Whiz had never seen Kent Allard. In his present guise, The Shadow was calm-faced, almost listless, a fact that caused Whiz to disregard him as unimportant in present matters.

“No sign of the moll, huh?”

That question Whiz grated of Keezer, who grumbled that everybody else in Philly had been around the store today, but that she hadn't shown up.

“It don't matter,” decided Whiz, “not today, anyway. I'll need you tonight; we're startin' out at eight bells, so's to be somewhere by half past. You might as well stick along with me, until then.”

Whiz shoved Keezer through the vestibule, out to the automobile driveway. When the store had been built, thirty years before, that vehicle entrance had been a marvel. It formed a short, curved drive, flanked by mammoth pillars, and was actually large enough to accommodate half a dozen automobiles.

At present, there were about thirty cars trying to squeeze into the space, to pick up anxious-eyed shoppers who awaited them. As luck had it, a rakish sedan was already in the space, its tough-faced driver arguing with the doorman.

“Sure, I'm waitin for somebody,” growled the driver. “Keep your shirt on, monkey-face! I'm a shofer, ain't I? You don't have to wear no trick uniform to be one”

Before the doorman could put up further argument Whiz and Keezer arrived and piled into the sedan. The car whipped away, its driver leaning out to deliver a contemptuous parting gesture for the doorman's benefit.

THAT lucky departure put a finish to The Shadow's chance trail. There wasn't a taxi at hand to follow the sedan, as it took a skiddy course around the city hall. All that The Shadow could do was note the license number for future reference.

It was scarcely necessary, since, he knew the number already. The car was the one that he had chased the night before, that had escaped him because of the wreck in Rittenhouse Square. Nevertheless, The Shadow whispered a soft laugh, as he went through the arcade to Chestnut Street. Whiz's reference to eight o'clock had told him enough. It fitted with his forecast of his evening's events.

Moreover, The Shadow had learned something else that interested him highly.

Though concerned about Harry and Luben, he was confident that the odds favored them at present. Unless Ring Brescott had become spiteful, the prisoners would be safe enough, and comfortable; and Ring, according to The Shadow's records, wasn't the sort of crook who went in for spite-work.

He was all business, Ring Brescott was. He treated murder as an article of merchandise. That was why he had been in charge of the murder department when The Hand had functioned as a group.

In those days, various prisoners had been released after the racketeers had decided that they knew nothing. There had never been any evidence of killing without purpose.

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As before, The Shadow analyzed that danger to Harry and Luben would be a matter of the future. The real menace of the present had constantly been the matter of the mystery girl. The Shadow had conceded that she wouldn't have a chance to live, if crooks met up with her first.

So far, they hadn't, as The Shadow had just learned; and it was actually amusing, the way that he had gotten his information. Keezer, watching the promenade beside the bronze eagle, in hope of spying the brunette, had, on the contrary, been spotted by The Shadow!

There was another touch of irony, however, that The Shadow did not recognize, and this time, the laugh was reversed. In going away from South Penn Square, he was leaving the very district where he might have listened in on vital facts.

TWO men were in the tenth-floor office where Harry Vincent had visited during his first tour of Philadelphia. George Thelden was behind his desk; his visitor was Monte Wendon. They were speaking freely, because the stenographer had gone.

"It's all set, like I said it would be." stated Wendon, in his silky tone. "The old geezer will see us, and he won't suspect a thing."

Thelden smiled; noting that Wendon had dropped his precise style of speech. As a reminder that he must talk differently tonight, Thelden set the example, by responding in his affected drawl:

"We must be punctual. Nathan Crue admires that quality in enterprising young men. And, by the way, Monte, I have the bottle."

From his pocket, Thelden drew a bottle. It was small in size, with flat front and back. The bottle contained a quantity of brownish pills that looked like lozenges.

"Triple strength," drawled Thelden. "but the label does not specify it." Then, pocketing the bottle: "Come on, Monte, let's have dinner at the rathskeller."

Together, the tools of murder left the office, mutually confident that crime would succeed tonight, and with good reason. They had discussed the fact that The Shadow was in town, and they had minimized it.

Whatever The Shadow might have guessed, there was one thing that he had not learned. That was the subtle manner in which crooks had planned the actual death of Nathan Crue.

CHAPTER XIV. THE GIVE-AWAY

OLD Nathan Crue lived in West Philadelphia, in an old mansion that had survived the period when many such residences had been torn down or converted into apartment houses. Most persons who passed his residence supposed that it was either a fraternity house or an undertaking parlor, and were puzzled because it had no sign testifying to one or the other.

Crue's face was as withery as an ancient peanut shell, but his eyes, quick and sharp, were testimony of his active mentality. He was proud of the fact that on his seventy-fifth birthday, two years ago, he had roused interest in old Philadelphia customs by driving a tallyho from Valley Green to the automobile drive that skirted the Lower Wissahickon.

During the past six months, however, Crue had remained inactive, in accordance with a physician's advice. That was because he had developed a cardiac condition, which, while not serious, might easily be rendered so.

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A bachelor all his life, Crue depended a great deal upon a servant named Harkiss, but when it came to the matter of appointments, he took care of them himself. That was why his sharp eyes were watching the clock as he sat in the ground-floor living room, which was buried deep in the old mansion.

The timepiece was an old grandfather's clock, that was kept accurate to the minute. When it began to chime eight o'clock, Crue scowled, then turned his facial gesture into a smile when he heard the distant tinkle of the front door bell.

His visitors had arrived on time.

Harkiss, a stoopy, methodical man, conducted Thelden and Wendon into the living room. Crue shook hands with them, and told Harkiss to bring two glasses of wine. The servant returned, bearing a tray,

With the wine glasses was a goblet filled with water; beside it, a bottle containing brown pills. That bottle was almost identical with the one in Thelden's pocket.

Monte Wendon began a smooth buildup, regarding tonight's visit.

Wendon, it appeared, had decided to become an insurance broker, and had been offered a partnership opportunity by George Thelden. Before going through with it, he had decided to ask the advice of David Harlingsworth.

"A man whom I esteem highly," interposed Crue, with a nod. "Harlingsworth is capable, and understands the many ramifications of modern business. Often, I have discussed such matters with him over this very table.

"Of course"—Crue shook his head—"Harlingsworth might do well to be more conservative in his opinions regarding proper investments. He has a tendency to be too speculative. But that would not apply in this case. Why have you not talked with Harlingsworth, himself?"

Wendon explained that Harlingsworth had left Philadelphia the night before, which was news to Crue. Under the circumstances, the attorney was quite willing to give advice instead, since Wendon regarded the matter urgent.

FIVE minutes later, Wendon was showing Crue a sheaf of papers involving finances. In so doing, he shifted to a position that prevented Crue from observing Thelden.

That was when Thelden calmly placed his own bottle on the tray and immediately removed Crue's pills, dropping them into his pocket.

"You might invest two thousand dollars," Crue told Wendon, "without jeopardizing your present standard of living. But we must now learn"—Crue folded his hands beneath his chin—"just what Mr. Thelden has to offer."

Thelden started to discuss the insurance business. He was interrupted by Harkiss, who knocked at the door to state that Miss Rendolf had called. Crue decided that it was quite all right to admit her, since he had finished the portion of the consultation that involved Wendon.

The clock was chiming quarter past eight when Isabel entered. Wendon was staring hard at Thelden, and Monte's face showed worry. As they arose, Thelden buzzed in Wendon's ear:

"This will clinch the alibi. Leave it to me; I'll see that she doesn't get wise."

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Thelden had never met Isabel before. She was one of Rulland's friends who had been outside the insurance man's circle. Wendon was also introduced to her for the first time.

Isabel liked neither of them. Thelden's drawl made him appear smug." Wendon's rattish face went against him.

Of the two, however, Isabel considered Wendon the more dangerous. That was why she watched him, instead of Thelden, a fact that both crooks knew would be to their advantage. Harkiss brought another glass of wine, for Isabel. Glancing at the clock, the servant observed that it was approaching half past eight. Dryly, he said:

"Nearly time for your medicine, Mr. Crue. Shall I mix it?"

Crue nodded: Harkiss uncorked the bottle and dropped two pills into the glass of water. Replacing the cork, he stirred the water with a spoon until the pills dissolved. That done, he retired.

Wendon shot a quick glance at Thelden. Neither Crue nor Isabel had noticed how many pills Harkiss had put in the glass. When the old lawyer succumbed to the triple dose, the servant would be the man to take the blame.

All that remained was for Thelden to switch the bottles again. He managed it cleverly.

From his pocket, he brought a bundle of insurance reports and spread them on the table, some of them covering the tray. Under those papers, Thelden had Crue's bottle. He let it settle on the tray without a sound.

Deciding that some of the papers were not needed, he drew them from the others. With them, he picked up his own bottle and let it drop into his pocket with the papers. When he had sorted the papers on the table, the bottle with pills of ordinary dosage lay innocently in view.

DURING the next few minutes, Thelden's only worry was that Crue might forget to take the medicine. Once the old lawyer swallowed the stepped-up dose, its effect would be rapid. The normal dosage was harmless; but tripled in strength, it had killing power. Wendon had assured Thelden on that score, through information gotten from Harlingsworth. Crue had talked about the medicine to the other administrator of the Rendolf estate.

There was a chance that Crue might even stage his collapse before Thelden and Wendon had time to leave. That didn't matter; as witnesses, both could charge Harkiss with carelessness. This was one crime that would be covered one hundred percent, but it still depended upon Crue's own action.

Thelden gathered the papers, began to bundle them. Crue was still unmindful of the glass that stood on the tray, but when the big clock chimed the half hour, he reached for the goblet without even glancing toward it. Crue was acting from force of habit, and his hand almost tilted the goblet, by mistake.

While the conspirators were taking long breaths at sight of the near catastrophe, Crue's fingers tightened on the goblet stem. He raised the glass intact, without losing a single drop.

Murder's moment had almost arrived. Isabel was glancing at a magazine, while Crue lifted the glass toward his lips. Thelden stared straight toward the attorney, without betraying a single emotion. Only Wendon showed a facial flicker.

Wendon's emotion was neither worry nor regret. He was gripped by evil eagerness, that brought a devilish leer to his rattish face. Wendon liked murder as much as Thelden did, particularly when he remembered that

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he had not yet collected his informant's fee from Ring. In fact, Wendon realized the glee that he had registered. Rather than let Crue notice it, the young man turned to glance toward the side window. As he did, he felt a slight gust of air. He noted suddenly that the draperies had stirred.

Beyond those curtains, Wendon saw a gleam that came from burning eyes. He pictured a human shape that he did not see. To his mind sped recollections of The Shadow, whose presence in Philadelphia had been mentioned by Ring Brescott.

Those eyes saw Weldon's face, as the glee left it, to be replaced by frenzy. The curtains swept aside. Through came a long arm, shoving a big automatic ahead of it. Above the weapon, those brilliant eyes shone from beneath a slouch hat brim.

WENDON was on his feet, whipping a revolver from his hip pocket, frantically hoping to beat The Shadow to the shot. Under other circumstances, Wendon would have realized the futility of his step within another half-second, for The Shadow's finger was already moving on its gun trigger.

But Wendon wasn't The Shadow's target.

The black-cloaked marksman had chosen a different line of aim; beyond Wendon, he saw a moving object that required immediate attention. Wendon's leer had been the give-away that caused The Shadow to choose that traveling target.

With the sudden blast of The Shadow's .45 came the tinkle of shattered glass. Nathan Crue went rigid, holding the stem of a demolished goblet on a level with his chin.

The bowl of the goblet was gone, its liquid spattered upon Crue's coat and the rug below his chair.

Literally, The Shadow had wrested the death drink from the lips of Nathan Crue!

CHAPTER XV. SCATTERED KILLERS

IN the swift seconds that followed, Nathan Crue did not have time to realize that he had been saved from death. Along with astonishment, he felt anger, at the fact that his precious medicine had vanished before he had a chance even to taste it.

The men who actually sized the situation were Wendon and Thelden; of those two, the former was the one who had the chance to deliver reprisal. By losing precious instants, The Shadow had made himself a target for Wendon's aim.

With a snarl, the rat-faced crook pointed his revolver straight for The Shadow and gave the trigger a squeeze. It was the cool type of delivery that should have brought results. That shot would have clipped The Shadow, if there had been no intervention.

Fortunately, the intervention came, supplied by a person whose quick-thinking tactics had previously impressed The Shadow.

As Wendon squeezed the trigger, Isabel flung herself upon him, grabbing for his gun hand. The girl succeeded doubly. She jolted Wendon's arm, at the same time turning his wrist. The revolver was moving sideways when it barked.

With the echo of that report mingled the tone of The Shadow's laugh.

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Thelden was in it by that time, pulling a gun of his own. But he was in something of Wendon's former fix. Though he had a slight start, Thelden was trying to outmatch The Shadow.

The big automatic stabbed anew. Thelden was spilling to the floor, wounded, when he managed to fire his own gun. The crook's shot found no target other than a curtain.

Across the sill, The Shadow was springing to aid Isabel. Before he could reach the girl and Wendon, Crue was in the fray. The old lawyer still didn't understand the circumstances but his chivalry caused him to side with Isabel.

As the girl thrust Wendon's gun hand upward, Crue took the weapon by the barrel and plucked it away with a powerful grip. Wrenching from Isabel, Wendon thrust toward the lawyer, but, this time, The Shadow didn't have to act.

Crue took care of himself, by sledging the gun for Wendon's head. The strength that could crack a big whip over the horses of a tally-ho, was still present in the old man's wrist.

Wendon took that thwack on the side of the head and went into a sprawl as hopeless as Thelden's.

Crue's prompt action served The Shadow well. It enabled the cloaked fighter to wheel promptly toward the doorway, as cries came from Harkiss, in the hall. The servant was being hurled aside by masked gunners, who had come through the front door at sound of gunshots.

THE SHADOW dispatched a quick shot to spill the first invader, and others took to rapid flight. Their hurried departure told The Shadow that there might be invasion from another quarter. Giving quick commands to Isabel, The Shadow swung toward the window.

Isabel had picked up Thelden's gun. She aimed for the hallway, to repel any counterthrust, and Crue, armed with Wendon's weapon, promptly joined her. Meanwhile, The Shadow reached the window, just as a pair of faces thrust into sight.

One was Whiz, the other Keezer. Whiz saw The Shadow, but Keezer first spied Isabel. He started to tell the news:

“That's the moll!”

Whiz heard, but had no time to digest the news at the moment. He was aiming for The Shadow, who was almost upon him, and he snarled for Keezer to do the same.

Knowing that others must be behind this pair, The Shadow didn't fire. Instead, he slugged for Whiz's head, caught it as it was bobbing outward. Whiz dropped to the slushy turf outside the house.

Keezer grabbed for The Shadow. Half over the sill, The Shadow grappled, went rolling through with the thug. Keezer was underneath when they landed beside Whiz. Springing up, The Shadow aimed for huddly figures that he saw between himself and the street.

Revolvers talked; inserted among their barks were blasts from The Shadow's automatic. Again, his big guns had the edge. The Shadow was making the most of the darkness that enshrouded him, while thugs had a bad background.

Even then, the odds were bad, for Whiz had brought along half a dozen reserves and they were well spread.

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They lacked time, however, to use their numbers to advantage.

This portion of West Philadelphia was well patrolled by police. Sirens announced the law's arrival. Crooks scattered amid the staccato melody of The Shadow's guns.

As officers arrived, they found wobbly mobsters trying to stagger away. Rounding up the gorillas, they looked for the person who had battled the hoodlum horde. The only inkling they received of the Shadow's presence was a trailing laugh that came from some where in the gloom.

With battle won, The Shadow had vanished, to take a new trail through the night.

A PAIR of crooks were missing from those that the police subdued. Neither Whiz nor Keezer was near the side window when the officers arrived there. That was explained by events that occurred in the next block.

Two men were staggering through the darkness, side by side, but only one was groggy. The wobbly man was Whiz; his supporting pal was Keezer. Hand clapped to his aching head, Whiz let Keezer help him into a parked sedan.

Because of his injured arm, it would be awkward for Keezer to drive. But he had to do it; Whiz was still groggy from The Shadow's blow.

Beside the driver's seat, Whiz mumbled:

"You said somethin' back there about the moll—"

"Yeah," put in Keezer, as he took the wheel. "She was the dame there in the house!"

"I'll remember that," muttered Whiz. Then, with an effort: "Who else is with us?"

Keezer looked into the darkness of the back seat, in hopes that some of their gunman pals had—scrambled aboard.

"Nobody," he growled. "What's more, if we don't scam in a hurry, we'll be in the same mess that they are."

The prediction was a sound one.

The sedan hadn't gone three blocks, before a police car whined in pursuit. Swinging corners, Keezer stabbed back shots that were invariably wide because of his wounded gun wrist, which hardly allowed him to hold a revolver.

As he managed, at last, to swing a corner that offered escape, Keezer felt a sharp stab in his side. In terrible pain, he forced the car into a tiny alleyway, clicked off the lights and waited while a police car sped past.

"They—they got me!" puffed Keezer. "Back—back at that last—that last corner! I gotta put you somewhere, Whiz, then find—find a croaker!"

Gunshots had partly roused Whiz; he understood the words, although his head was still swimming dizzily.

"Keep goin', Keezer," he grunted. "You can make it. Keep goin'!"

Keezer shifted behind the driver's seat. After a few minutes, the car started, but the route didn't help Whiz

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back to consciousness. As they jounced over heavy bumps, Whiz took a whack against the inside of the car and subsided completely, almost on the floor. Keezer didn't try to haul him up.

Later, there was an exchange of shots that made a dim impression upon Whiz, although he didn't know what part of town they had reached. Those shots told that Keezer had been flushed by another police car, and had still had grit enough to open fire. The result, however, was that the sedan took to bumpier streets, leaving Whiz more groggy than before.

When the car came to a final stop, subdued voices buzzed, indicating that Keezer had met some pal. It was there that Whiz was hoisted bodily from the sedan, carried up a flight of stairs, and deposited in a room. Footsteps departed; from an alley below came the sound of the sedan pulling away.

Where the car went after that was something of a mystery, until midnight. That was when The Shadow, guised as Kent Allard, bought a bulldog edition of a morning newspaper from a newsboy on Broad Street.

THE newspaper carried a story of the fray at Crue's. It mentioned that Thelden and Wendon were in the hospital, their status undecided.

It was evident that Thelden must have somehow managed to throw away the incriminating bottle that was in his pocket, for it wasn't mentioned in the news account. Long since, The Shadow had decided that such a bottle must exist.

The finding of the sedan, however, was the important feature. It had been located in the old tenderloin district, with a dead man behind the wheel. From the description, he was Keezer; although The Shadow scanned every line of the story, he found no mention of any one who resembled Whiz Birsch.

The Shadow knew that Whiz must have been placed in a spot of safety; but Keezer, whether aided or not, had died before he could be taken to a physician.

Police bullets had thereby ended the trail to Whiz Birsch. Finding him would be a hopeless task, without Keezer as a witness to where the sedan had stopped.

There was another reference in the newspaper, that meant much to The Shadow. It gave the name of the girl who had so bravely helped Nathan Crue to fight off crooks who had supposedly come to burgle the old lawyer's home.

The girl's name was Isabel Rendolf, and The Shadow hadn't needed Keezer's testimony to know that she was the same girl who had previously aided Harry Vincent.

Entering a cigar store, The Shadow consulted a telephone directory. He found Isabel Rendolf listed; her address was an apartment house facing Rittenhouse Square. The Shadow called Isabel's number; the girl answered the telephone.

A few whispered words, spoken in The Shadow's inimitable style, convinced Isabel that she was talking to the mysterious stranger who had twice rescued her. Briefly The Shadow informed Isabel that danger confronted her, and advised her what to do.

The Shadow learned that the police had received answers to all the questions that they had asked; that Isabel might be needed later as a material witness, but that for the present she was free to go where she chose. He advised her to visit friends, who could be trusted not to reveal her whereabouts.

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Isabel agreed. Moreover, she told The Shadow that she would start at once, and she named her destination. The friends that she chose lived out on the Main Line, near Bryn Mawr.

Ten minutes later, a trim coupé arrived at Isabel's apartment house; it was the girl's own car, brought from garage. Isabel entered it, carrying a suitcase.

When she drove westward along Walnut Street, Isabel noted that a cab was following her. She didn't know that the taxi had The Shadow as its passenger, that he was convoying her as far as the city limits, just beyond Sixty-third Street.

During that portion of the trip, The Shadow observed that no one else was on Isabel's trail. He halted the cab at Sixty-third and let Isabel drive on alone, much to her relief. The Shadow rode back to town on the elevated.

Walking the few blocks from Market Street to his hotel, Kent Allard, otherwise The Shadow, whispered a repressed laugh that passing pedestrians did not hear.

Tonight, The Shadow had stopped murder in its tracks. Beginning with tomorrow, he would start a thrust to the heart of the racket, as represented by the big-shot, Ring Brescott.

CHAPTER XVI. CRIME'S RALLY.

WHEN Whiz Birsch awoke the next morning, he had a bad headache. At first, he laid it to a night that he had spent in intermittent sleep, bothered with dreams about The Shadow.

Time and again, Whiz had wakened to grope for a light that he didn't find. Every time, he had plopped back to a bed that seemed shaky and unfamiliar. It wasn't until daylight that Whiz realized why.

This wasn't his bed, it wasn't even his room. He was on a ramshackle cot, in a dingy, carpetless place quite different from the cheap hotel where he had stopped while in Philadelphia. Peering from a shadeless window, Whiz saw that he was quartered above an alley; at an angle, he could see a street with an old burlesque theater on the other side. Scratching his head, he encountered a tender spot that brought back recollections.

He remembered that he had been slugged by The Shadow; that Keezer had gotten him away. This must be the hide-out that Keezer had promised.

But where was Keezer?

Thinking of his pal, Whiz remembered, too, that Keezer had recognized the girl at Crue's. That made Whiz grin grimly. Keezer had earned the five hundred dollars due him, and had added some free service into the bargain.

Still, Keezer wasn't around. That was bad, enough so for Whiz to start an investigation. He went to the door of the room, found it locked.

The door looked frail. Whiz began to shoulder it, then decided that he might make too much noise. While he was figuring what to do next, he heard footsteps on stairs outside. Whiz reached to his hip, drew a revolver and waited.

A key turned in the lock. A man stepped in from the darkened stairs. Whiz poked a gun in the fellow's ribs, forcing him back, with the snarl:

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“Stick em up, lug, or I'll give it!”

The fellow didn't “stick em up,” so Whiz “gave”; but without result. His revolver was empty; his trigger tugs brought harmless clicks. Shoved back to the cot, Whiz found himself faced by a rangy, stoop-shouldered thug whose long face wore a smirky grin.

“Who're you?” demanded Whiz.

“Sorry,” returned the stooped man, dryly, “but I don't carry no calling cards. I'd have to have an index for em, with all the names I go by. But I'll give you my right moniker, because you've probably heard it. I'm Clip Arsham.”

Whiz had heard, of “Clip” Arsham. He was a New York gunman who had lammed after a brief, but hectic, career.

“Glad to know you,” said Whiz. “Yeah, I've heard of you, but I thought you was out in Chi.”

“I was,” responded Clip, “until the town got too hot for me, like New York. I thought I'd cool a while, in Philly. But from what was doing last night, this don't seem to be no good place to freeze in.”

CLIP sat down on a soap box opposite the cot.

“Last night,” he informed, in an undertone, “I was coming out of a bar near here, when I seen a sedan pull up acrost the street. There was a guy in it who looked like he was about ready to fall out.”

Whiz nodded slowly, then questioned:

“Was it Keezer?”

“Yeah,” replied Clip. “Him and me was pals onct. He knowed who I was, when he seen me. He wanted me to help him lug you up here, then take him to a croaker.”

“Did you get him there?”

For reply, Clip pulled a rumpled newspaper from his pocket. Whiz read the news of how Keezer's body had been found in the otherwise deserted sedan.

“Tell me about Keezer,” suggested Whiz. “Did he spill anything before he croaked?”

“Yeah,” answered Clip. “He told me to join up with you. And he said for you not to forget what he told you last night.”

“Did he say what it was about?”

“He said to remind you that he'd seen the dame. That was all.”

It was enough. Whiz thrust out his hand to shake with Clip, remarking that Keezer's pal could consider himself “in the racket”. That, in itself, was smart business, for Whiz knew that he would need capable trigger-men to replenish his depleted gang, and he couldn't have hoped for a better recruit than Clip Arsham.

Soon, the pair were in a deep corner of an Eighth Street hash-house. Over cups of sickly coffee, they were

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discussing their next move.

“I'm keepin' you with me, Clip,” informed Whiz, “an the first thing we've got to do is get in touch with the big-shot.”

Clip didn't ask who the big-shot was.

That pleased Whiz as much as all that had gone before.

“That's where you can help,” added Whiz, “because The Shadow's been makin' trouble for this racket. He may be out lookin' for me. So I'd better stick up at the hide-out until dark.”

Clip was willing to cooperate, however needed. Whiz scrawled some lines on a sheet of paper, handed the penciled notation to the stoopy man.

“Stick this want ad in one of the evenin' bladders,” said Whiz. “Sometimes them newspapers won't run it the day you had it in, but maybe you can fix it by payin' extra. Here's dough, anyway. Since the big-shot gave up his headquarters, it's the only way I can get in touch with him.”

Whiz handed Clip a roll of bills. The stoop-shouldered man took his departure. Whiz returned to his hide-out; after a half hour, he began to watch for Clip's return. At last, he saw his new trigger-man entering the alley. Clip's mode of entry pleased Whiz. He paused to make sure that no one was trailing him, before venturing near the hide-out.

The rangy man had put the want ad in a newspaper. Later in the afternoon, he and Whiz read it during a trip to the side-arm cafe where they had breakfasted.

“We're all set!” declared Whiz, exultantly. “When it gets around six o'clock, we'll go to the right place and see if the big-shot noticed the want ad and sent me a message.”

THEY started out at dusk. The “right place” proved to be an obscure hotel south of Market Street, a place that had once been patronized by theatrical troupes. Leaving Clip out front, Whiz went to the hotel desk, inquired for a message that had been left for “J. M. Wright”, the name Whiz had put in the want ad.

The message was there. Whiz read it, stepped to the door and beckoned Clip into the lobby. While they were buying cigarettes, Whiz undertoned:

“All jake out front?”

A nod came from Clip. Whiz suggested that they go out through a side entrance. As they were stepping into the alley, he remarked:

“Maybe you'd better head back to the hide-out, while I go see the big-shot. After I've talked to him—”

Clip gave a nudge for silence. Whiz listened. A sound was present in the alley, a shuffly, sneaky noise that indicated a prowler.

Before Whiz could locate it, Clip had it spotted accurately. With a quick spring, he was across the alley; using a flashlight, he had it trained on a man's face, while he pulled a revolver with the other hand.

The prowler wasn't The Shadow, as Whiz feared. He turned out to be nothing more than a shambly

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panhandler, who scurried along his way after an oath-filled command from Clip. But when Whiz joined Clip, a quarter minute later, he had formed new plans for the coming expedition.

“Stick along with me,” ordered Whiz, “I'm goin' to introduce you to the big-shot. After, the way you spotted that guy, I'm figurin' you'll be a good guy to have around, with The Shadow on the loose.”

Whiz Birsch meant what he said. As they stalked along through the gathering night, he kept watching Clip Arsham with more and more approval. The fellow had a way about him that was smooth without being sneaky. Whiz figured Clip as worth half a dozen of his former henchmen, Keezer included.

In the back of his head, Whiz had another idea.

Sooner or later, there might be a meeting with The Shadow. It was possible even tonight, but, later, it would be more probable.

Ring Brescott wasn't through with crime in Philadelphia; his message to Whiz had indicated that he intended to stay a while and cash in on his last fifty-thousand-dollar deal, by eventually disposing of Nathan Crue, despite The Shadow.

In thinking of The Shadow, Whiz Birsch could picture no better man to thrust at that evasive foe than Clip Arsham. Already, Whiz was visualizing what might happen if the two met. There was a chance—Whiz was ready to gamble on it—that The Shadow might come out second best in a duel with Clip.

CHAPTER XVII. CUT-RATE MURDER

FOGGY weather had replaced the drizzly sleet of the night before. The darkened mist formed excellent cover, as the two mobsters headed eastward on foot to their meeting with Ring Brescott.

Clip Arsham didn't ask where the rendezvous was to be and that pleased Whiz Birsch. In Whiz's opinion, a guy who didn't ask questions was valuable. They reached Dock Street, followed its curved lines that topped the bed of an old creek, thus explaining why the street zigzagged through the checkerboard of Philadelphia blocks. The fog was thicker than before, for they were nearing the water front.

When they arrived at Front Street, Whiz picked out a dilapidated house in an old, weather-beaten row. It was near a corner, hence there was easy access to a passage leading to a back door. Drawing Clip into the darkness, Whiz whispered:

“Case the alley. Give me a blink, if everything's jake.”

Clip followed out the order. Soon, his flashlight blinked. Whiz edged through the doorway, found the rear stairway of the old house. Reaching a landing, he saw a dim light under a door. Knocking, he was admitted by Ring Brescott.

It didn't take Whiz long to recount the details of last night's fiasco. Ring gritted oaths, when he heard mention of The Shadow. His big fist clenched, attracting Whiz's attention to the diamond, as it caught the reflection of the wavery gaslight.

Whiz eyed the gem in admiration. That sparkler reminded him of a headlight.

“I read most of the stuff in the newspapers,” growled Ring. “The bladders have got some of it straight. But what I want to know is, who put The Shadow wise to what was going on at Crue's?”

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"I'd say the moll did," returned Whiz. "I mean the Rendolf dame, who got the write-up today."

"What could she have known?"

"Plenty! You know who she was? The same dame that messed into things the night we grabbed Vincent!"

THE news awoke Ring's full interest. He wanted the details, and Whiz gave them. Keezer's recognition of Isabel was sufficient to convince Ring. Then came the matter of Keezer's death; it meant one needed thug gone from the outfit.

When Ring commented on that fact, Whiz told him about Clip Arsham. After listening to a brief sketch of Clip's abilities, Ring was pleased that Whiz had brought the fellow along.

"Send Clip up here, when you go down," stated Ring. "I want to meet the guy. Meanwhile, get this through your konk: We're going right ahead with our racket, until we've knocked off old Nathan Crue.

"I'm not refunding no dough to nobody, least of all to a high-hat guy like Harlingsworth. As for the dame"—Ring chuckled—"I'd been thinking about her, anyway. She ducked out last night; what you've told me explains why. Maybe she'll be showing up again soon. If she does—"

Ring paused, to make a slicing movement with his hand, running it across his throat. Whiz grinned. He understood.

"Of course," added Ring, "we've got to lay low until things get cool. But that won't keep me from handling this Rendolf dame, if I meet up with her. I've got myself a swell hide-out, and while I'm there, I'm not even myself, if you know what I mean."

Whiz knew. He hadn't forgotten the way in which Ring played the part of Ki Woong.

"The way I'm fixed," declared Ring, "I've even talked to reporters, including one news-hound from New York, a guy named Clyde Burke. That dumb cluck didn't begin to guess who I really was."

Ring wasn't correct when he said that Clyde was dumb. Actually, Clyde Burke was an agent of The Shadow, brought to Philadelphia to aid his chief. But Ring was right, in saying that Clyde hadn't suspected him. Ring had definitely found an excellent way to cover his own identity.

About to leave, Whiz put a sudden question:

"Say, Ring—what about those lugs, Vincent and Luben? It ain't helpin' us any, hangin' on to them. What's more, I can't spare the gorillas that are watchin' them."

The big-shot eyed Whiz in shrewd fashion, then remarked:

"That's what I want to see Clip Arsham about. Send him up."

DOWNSTAIRS, Whiz found Clip at the outside door. He told his new pal that the big-shot wanted to see him. Clip went upstairs, leaving Whiz on lookout duty. Once inside the room, Clip Arsham displayed a grin of greeting.

He had recognized Ring Brescott. That wasn't surprising, since Ring had once been a well-known figure in the racket world. The two shook hands, then Ring came down to business.

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“There's a couple of mugs need to be put away,” he told Clip. “I can't leave it to Whiz and his outfit; they're for cover-up work. One good guy—Thelden—is in the hospital, and there's nobody else I can count on for a bump-off. How would the idea hit you, of taking on the job?”

“What's in it?” was Clip's laconic response.

“Well, there's supposed to be five grand,” returned Ring, leaning forward, his tone confidential, his gaze shrewd, “and that's the real hitch. It's not worth it, because the boobs don't count for much, and the whole thing ought to be a setup.”

“Only, it's the regular price, huh?”

“Yeah. That's the hitch. Whiz and his mob don't mind me farming out the job to a guy that they think is right. But their idea of a right guy is one that gets all the dough he's supposed to.”

The expression that showed on Clip's face might have been termed a smile. Ring took it to be one, and he caught its significance. The leer meant that Clip understood exactly what Ring was after. The big-shot was looking for cut-rate murder. Lifting his left hand, Clip stretched two fingers; one stood for Harry Vincent, the other for Luben. With his right forefinger, he knocked down one of the left fingers. Ring had his answer. He nudged toward the door.

“Get Whiz,” he told Clip. “I want him to be up here when we make the deal.”

Clip summoned Whiz. Ring announced that he had assigned the rub-out job to Clip. He called upon Whiz to verify the regular price of murder as twenty-five hundred dollars, which Whiz did.

Ring counted out that sum from a big roll. He handed it to Clip, with the comment: “For Vincent.” Then, dealing out another twenty-five hundred, he passed it over, stating: “For Luben.”

Clip put the two rolls of bills in separate pockets. Meanwhile, Ring was asking him how he planned to dispose of his victims.

“The easiest way,” declared Clip. “I like to bury my dead when I croak em. There's an old quarry out near Ambler, that'll do. I've got an old coupé, a junk heap, that I can spare. All I got to know is where to pick up the deadheads, and when. If Whiz trails me, he can take care of any cops, and be around to bring me back after I ditch my buggy.”

Ring gave Clip the address of the South Philadelphia headquarters where the prisoners were stowed. It was agreed that midnight would be the right time for Clip to start the journey. That decided, the three men left the meeting place.

IN the tiny alley, Whiz and Clip made separate forays to satisfy Ring that no spies were about. Clip was the first to rejoin the big-shot. In the darkness, he shoved a wad of bills into Ring's fist.

That wad was a roll of twenty-five hundred dollars, in accordance with Clip's private agreement to do two jobs for the price of one.

The trio stayed together until they neared Dock Street; there, they separated. Alone, Ring Brescott stepped to a sheltered spot near the old custom's house, which loomed up like a grimy, forgotten ghost in the fog that wreathed about its weather-marred pillars.

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Always smart, Ring was letting his two lieutenants take their separate paths before he started. If any one happened to be spotted, it wouldn't be Ring.

So Ring supposed, but he felt uneasy as he wended his way westward, toward Broad Street. Crossing Independence Square, he had the feeling that some lurker was close by in the fog. Ring remembered how Whiz and Clip had both been upstairs at the same time.

That was a time when some one—The Shadow, for instance—might have sneaked close to the meeting place. Ring didn't like that thought, but finally he shook off his impression that he was being trailed. His precaution had certainly been sufficient, he decided.

Entering the side door of the very hotel where Whiz had picked up the message, Ring went up an obscure stairway to a second-floor room. There, in darkness, he changed his attire. Toward the finish, he used a small light and a mirror to complete his work.

When Ring stole downstairs again, he took the route through the alley, where Clip had earlier spotted the squeamish panhandler. After that, Ring wasn't worried. He could stroll the Philadelphia streets as he pleased, for he was no longer Ring Brescott.

One thought was paramount in Ring's scheming mind. He was gloating, mentally, over the deal that he had pulled tonight, wherein he had saved twenty-five hundred dollars and at the same time settled the matter of two unwanted prisoners.

Though Ring asked big prices for his murderous work, he was the type of conniver who liked to shave expenses. Nothing, in all his recent deals, had pleased Ring so much as his recent arrangement for murder at cut price.

Moreover, Ring was confident that the bargain rate would bring satisfactory results; that in Clip Arsham, he had acquired a killer whose methods would be thoroughly efficient, regardless of the two for one price.

Clip was the sort who would prove tough, even if confronted by The Shadow. Holding that opinion, Ring looked forward to the time when he could use Clip in a thrust against the cloaked foe who had tried to crack the murder racket.

CHAPTER XVIII. AT THE QUARRY

SHORTLY before midnight, Clip Arsham showed up in South Philadelphia, driving the car that he had mentioned. It was a ramshackle touring car of ancient vintage, aptly fitting the term "junk heap" that he had applied to it.

Whiz Birsch commented that he wouldn't give fifty bucks for such a "load of iron", and Clip agreed that he was right. He added, though, that since this was to be the car's last ride it didn't matter much.

Harry Vincent and Luben were confined in a basement room that had once been a barber shop. They were brought out from the side door, loaded into the touring car. There were a lot of old blankets and pieces of cloth on the floor of the car, but Clip threw most of them on the seat.

Hence, the floor didn't prove a very comfortable riding spot when the prisoners were dumped there. After they were stowed in place, Clip threw the blankets over them, just in case any traffic cop happened to look into the car.

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Clip started northward, to the center of the city, then through Fairmount Park. It was twelve miles from city hall to Chestnut Hill, and Clip didn't want to break any speed laws during that portion of the journey. That was one advantage of his rattly car. It couldn't do much better than twenty-five miles an hour.

That became apparent along the Bethlehem Pike, where occasional hills made Clip's pace so slow that Whiz grumbled at having to keep in back of him. Whiz figured that a low rate of speed could produce more suspicion than a high one and told his pals—there were three of them—to keep a close watch in back.

For a while, one mobby claimed that they were being tailed by a sedan, but eventually the car stopped, or turned off somewhere. About that time, Whiz saw a sign marked "Ambler", and decided that they must be near their destination.

They were. Clip's touring car suddenly switched to a side road, that led down from a hilltop. The slope wasn't great, but it was sufficient to give the touring car a speed that its motor couldn't produce.

For a while, Clip was well ahead. When Whiz finally caught up with him, he saw the touring car parked on a rough dirt road, just off the secondary highway.

There had been road repairs going on at this spot, and stacks of timber from an old bridge formed a heap beside the dirt road. Whiz saw Clip peering from the touring car; satisfied that the cover-up crew had joined him, Clip drove ahead.

It wasn't foggy, this far out in the country. As they twisted along the dirt road, splotchy moonlight came through the trees. Soon, the cars fringed a deep gully; that was where Clip gave two blinks of the tail-light, signaling Whiz to stop.

LOOKING off to the left, Whiz saw Clip's objective, which the touring car was reaching along a curving route. The hillside was cloven by the gray-white walls of a limestone quarry; thanks to the higher altitude, Whiz could see reflected moonlight in the blackness at the bottom.

The abandoned quarry must have been one hundred and fifty feet deep, and fully a third of that depth formed a stagnant pool of water.

The touring car's dim headlights kept moving through the trees. Clip didn't stop until the car was almost to the Quarry edge. In fact, the touring car had a forward tilt when he applied the brakes, for there was a short decline toward the quarry.

With a click, the lights of the touring car went out. To listening ears came the muffled reports of a revolver, fired into the rear seat.

Whiz Birsch voiced an approving oath. Clip Arsham wasn't leaving anything to chance. It was a good policy, putting a bullet in each prisoner, even though the pair were bound.

Slowly the touring car moved forward. Although in motion, it seemed to poise upon the very brink. That was the very instant when the front door shot open; Clip did a quick dive to the ground. With one hand, he grabbed a small bush; his other fist still held his smoking gun.

Clip timed it so close, that he didn't have a chance to look around and watch the car's plunge. Whiz and the others were the actual witnesses to that occurrence.

Nose first, the touring car did a dive; turning over as it went. They could almost count the seconds, during

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that accelerating fall, until the touring car thwacked the water, striking upside down.

Moonlight showed a rising cascade that seemed to climb half to the quarry top. That had finished, when Whiz and the rest heard the resounding noise of the splash. They watched the churning water as it quieted, until only ripples wavered the reflection of the moonlight.

The death car was sunk, forgotten, in a place where it might not be found for years.

A man was clambering up from among the trees. It was Clip, grinning as he came. Whiz sent one of his followers to the back seat, so that Clip could sit beside the wheel of Whiz's car. Turning the sedan, Whiz started back along the dirt road, commenting:

“Neat work Clip!”

“Thanks,” returned Clip. Then, sharply: “Anybody tail you here?”

“No.”

Clip wasn't convinced. He muttered something about having looked back to see a third car in the procession. He was gripping his gun as he spoke; suddenly, he shoved his free hand for Whiz's arm.

Whiz applied the brakes. They were back at the paved side-road, but the scene there had changed. The timbers were no longer stacked aside. They were placed across the dirt road, forming a barricade.

In the glow from the headlights, Whiz Birsch saw a rising figure, cloaked in black. He gave a raucous cry:

“The Shadow!”

CLIP ARSHAM didn't wait to voice the news. He shoved his gun arm from the window of the car, fired three shots point-blank at the black-clad figure, while other thugs were reaching for their guns.

Crooks saw the cloaked form waver, make a staggering dive for the road beyond the barricade. They exulted in the fact that Clip Arsham had winged The Shadow, before the formidable foeman had gained a chance to fire.

Other guns were talking, but their chatter was belated. The black-cloaked prey was past the rocky corner of the road; above the gunfire came the sound of a starting car motor.

In daredevil fashion, Whiz crashed the barricade with his sedan. It gave, but timbers tangled in the car wheels. By the time Whiz had jockeyed clear, the lights of The Shadow's car were twinkling in the distance.

The car was the same sedan that crooks had previously spotted.

Whiz took up the chase. He guessed, from the zigzag course of the fleeing car, that The Shadow had been badly wounded, but that didn't slow the speed of the flight. The fugitive car was high-powered; it took steep hills as if they were level ground. Even Whiz's daredevil methods couldn't make up for that.

Within four miles, the fleeing car had left the mobsters far behind. By that time, they had crossed so many byroads that there wasn't a chance of tracing it. That didn't bother Whiz Birsch.

From the pocket in the door beside him, Whiz produced a bottle. He took a swig, passed the liquor along to

Clip, who relayed it to the back seat.

“We're drinkin' to The Shadow,” sneered Whiz, “an' to the cops that'll find him layin' stiff in that bus of his, tomorrow mornin', just the way they found Keezer!”

Whiz wasn't actually sure that The Shadow would turn up dead. But there were other facts upon which he was definitely convinced.

One was that The Shadow had tonight muffed a chance at rescue, letting two men go to their deaths. Vincent and Luben were certainly through, thanks to Clip Arsham, even if The Shadow wasn't.

The other point on which Whiz would have gambled was that The Shadow, if he survived, would be incapable of combat for a while to come. That would leave Ring Brescott clear to complete his plans of double murder.

First, Isabel Rendolf would be eliminated, as a person who knew too much. Then, when the law became unwary, Nathan Crue would get his, after all. Whiz credited himself as the person who had arranged those future prospects, although he had not personally produced results.

Along with the praise that he felt belonged to him, Whiz Birsch was quite willing that acclaim should be given to Clip Arsham, whose timely trigger-work had brought disaster to The Shadow.

CHAPTER XIX. CROOKS GET NEWS

THE next afternoon, Isabel Rendolf received a batch of letters that had been forwarded from her apartment. She had arranged that through a trusted friend, so that no clue was given to her present whereabouts, in Bryn Mawr.

One envelope particularly impressed her. It was addressed in a bold hand, with words that looked as if they had been engraved. She was sure that the message had come from The Shadow.

Opening the envelope Isabel found a single sheet of paper, enclosing a clipping that referred to a coming reception at the Hotel Penn-Delphia. The paper, itself, bore two words: “Be present.”

While Isabel stared at the message, its writing faded. Studying the clipping, the girl saw that it referred to a reception being given to Sarku Singh, a prominent Hindu nationalist, who had arrived in Philadelphia two days ago.

From the news account, Isabel realized that some of her friends had probably been invited, but, as yet, she had not been asked to the reception. That matter was settled, when she opened another envelope. It contained the invitation to meet Sarku Singh.

Still puzzled by the uncanny behavior of The Shadow's disappearing ink, Isabel studied the blank paper, then the envelope. She noted that the envelope was postmarked at ten-thirty the night before.

That meant nothing to Isabel; but it would have worried her, had she known what had occurred after midnight, out at the old quarry near Ambler.

Had Isabel heard the details of that episode, she would have lost all hope of protection from The Shadow. As a result, she would have ignored the reception invitation. It was ignorance, therefore, that lulled Isabel into a belief in her security.

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Ignorance, too, that allowed her to hope that she might meet Harry Vincent at the reception. Isabel had not forgotten The Shadow's agent. For a long while, she had been expecting Harry again to appear in Philadelphia.

Whether or not he had been taken prisoner by men of crime, Isabel was sure that The Shadow must have rescued him by this time. The fact that Isabel had been instructed to come from hiding seemed proof, in itself, that danger was past.

The reception was scheduled for tomorrow night. Isabel wrote a reply to the R.S.V.P. mentioned on the invitation, and had some one take the letter to the city.

Part of The Shadow's previous instructions had been to give no clue whatever to where she was, and he had cautioned her regarding postmarks. Thus, Isabel complied with directions, although she intuitively felt that The Shadow was probably behind this whole affair; that he might even have arranged the reception, itself, as part of his plans.

The Shadow, for all Isabel knew, might be none other than the visiting Hindu, Sarku Singh.

THAT same day, Nathan Crue received a note that had been mailed the night before. It was scrawled in a penciled hand, and had been mailed from the town of Chester, a dozen miles south of Philadelphia. Though crudely written, the note carried subtle threats. Detectives who read it, decided that it had come from some member of the thuggish band that had raided Crue's old mansion.

Crooks appeared to be plotting vengeance for their dead pals, which caused a police guard to be stationed at Crue's home. Reporters were allowed to see the note. Among them was Clyde Burke, who represented the New York Classic.

Clyde could have told a lot about that message. He, personally, had dropped it in a mail box at Chester, at nine, the previous night. That note had been prepared by The Shadow, as a means of keeping the police on the alert. It was important to The Shadow's plans that crooks should not consider an immediate thrust against Crue.

These matters, and others, were discussed that evening by Whiz Birsch and Clip Arsham, when the pair met at the tenderloin hide-out.

"The dame's next," declared Whiz. "I got word from Ring about her. Take a gander at what this bladder has to say about a swell shindig tomorrow night. That's where the moll is likely to show up."

The newspaper item to which Whiz referred was a society page announcement of the reception that had been arranged for Sarku Singh.

"Some crank shoved a nut note to old Crue," went on Whiz, "and that's keepin' the bulls out at his place. All the better, Ring says, because that's makin' them forget the moll. Crue will come later."

"Thelden, the guy that tried to knock off Crue, is getting' worse, they say. He ain't been able to talk since they took him to the hospital. Since Thelden can't squawk, it's been easy for the other guy, Wendon."

"He's laid the whole thing on Thelden. Said the guy talked him into turnin' crooked, only he didn't think it was anything more than a shakedown. The bulls ain't been able to check that story, so they fell for it."

There was more that Whiz had heard from Ring—something essential to tomorrow night's plans. Ring had

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gathered details of the suite at the Penn–Delphia, where the reception was to be held. Sarku Singh occupied a two–room suite, but for tomorrow night, he had also reserved an adjoining apartment.

Whiz drew a rough diagram of the floor plan.

“We can mooch in from the fire–tower,” he stated, and get to the room on the end. What we've got to make sure about, is that the moll stays late. Ring says that can be fixed with a fake phone call. Right here”—Whiz marked the end room with an “X”—“is where we'd like to get the dame.”

Clip noted a short extension that Whiz had added to the room in question. He asked what it was; Whiz replied that it represented a balcony outside the window. Clip decided that the balcony would be a good place for a guy to park. Whiz liked the idea.

“Yeah,” he agreed. “Why don't you cover it?”

“Me?” demanded Clip. “Say—I done my job!”

“Ring's countin' on you,” declared Whiz, his tone hardening. “He says that a guy who picked up five grand as easy as you did ought to be willing to help out with a snatch job when we're short–handed.”

CLIP'S eyes met Whiz's steady stare. There was irony in that situation. Clip, more than Ring, needed to suppress the fact that last night's work had been done at a cut rate. If that word noised around, Ring could say that he had tested Clip, as a newcomer in the murder racket.

It wouldn't take Whiz and his mobbies long to settle with Clip, if they knew the truth. The rules of the racket called for all in it to dispose of chiselers. Maybe the crooks would be sore at Ring, as well; but the big–shot was too strong, too important, for them to attack him.

In buying murder cheap, Ring had put the finger on Clip Arsham, and all the big–shot had to do was press. Miserly as ever, Ring was using the situation to get a further return for the money that he had already paid. The suggestion that Clip join with the mob tomorrow night was actually a message from Ring, secretly telling Clip what he'd have to do, or else!

Clip caught the point.

“O. K.,” gruffed the stoopy crook. “I'm with you, Whiz. I'll handle the balcony. It's where I'd like to be, if The Shadow shows up again.”

“Don't worry about The Shadow snorted Whiz. “You fixed him last night. It'll make the mob feel good, though, knowin' you're workin' with us. They feel the same as Ring, because they figured they helped you earn that dough last night.”

That ended the conversation. In harmony; the two mobsters shuffled from the hide–out, to visit some of the tenderloin dives. Whiz Birsch considered the matter closed; whether Clip did or not, was another matter.

One fact was certain. If Clip didn't like the way Ring had slipped one over on him, the time when he could best choose redress would be tomorrow night.

CHAPTER XX. THE TRAP SPRINGS

ISABEL RENDOLF drove in from Bryn Mawr the next evening. Traffic was heavy along the Montgomery Pike, but it thinned when she reached the park. As she wheeled along the drive that passed Memorial Hall, she was thinking of Louis Rulland, for it wouldn't be long before she reached the approach to the ill-fated Girard Avenue Bridge.

Perhaps those thoughts made her more alert. Looking in the rear-view mirror, Isabel observed a car that she had seen before, and she remembered it from back on the Pike. Odd that it should have caught up with her again, for she had picked a route that was considerably of her own choice.

Thought of that trailing car made her forget the Girard Avenue Bridge when she passed it. The car kept on trailing her along Thirty-fourth Street, and when she finally reached Chestnut, it turned with her, to cross the Schuylkill into town.

The girl was tense. She remembered the taxi that had followed her out toward Bryn Mawr, a few nights before; but that cab had suddenly vanished, while this car was sticking close. That made her decide that The Shadow could not be the driver. He was clever enough to keep any one from knowing when he was on a trail.

Were the men in the car crooks?

Isabel rejected that idea at first. There was no way in which criminals could have learned that she had gone to Bryn Mawr. If they had learned it, she would have had trouble from them before coming into town. Then the thought struck her that they would have gotten the license number of her car.

In that case, these trailers might represent a band of patrolling searchers. The big-shot behind the murder racket could have put many such groups on duty, in hope of some time spotting Isabel's car.

That thought was maddening. It went with Isabel's opinion that extensive crime existed in Philadelphia, even though the law had not recognized it. Isabel had gathered that from her conversation with The Shadow, but she had purposely refrained from mentioning it to any one.

She knew that such a story would produce slow investigation, enabling the crooks to clear town before the police bagged them. Her only policy was to depend upon The Shadow, and even in this apparent emergency, Isabel adhered to that plan.

Driving straight to the Penn-Delphia, she avoided complications by turning her car over to the doorman. That saved her a risky walk between a parking lot and the hotel.

THERE were at least fifty persons at the reception, including some university professors, who had come to meet Sarku Singh.

The Hindu, himself, was an imposing man. He was above average size; his brownish face was placid, but with eyes that fixed steadily upon persons with whom he spoke.

It was difficult, however, to analyze his gaze, for Sarku Singh wore blue-tinted spectacles. He bowed politely when persons were introduced to him, but there was something stiff about his manner. Isabel noted, also, that Sarku Singh spoke but little and did not smile at all.

He evidently regarded life as a very serious matter, for his limited conversation, in English mixed with Hindustani, concerned the progress of the nationalist movement in India. He was attired in a tuxedo, but wore

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no turban on his shocky hair. Evidently Sarku Singh regarded turbans as symbolic of the castes, to which he was opposed.

Harry Vincent wasn't present. That worried Isabel, for she had definitely hoped to meet him here. Instead, she could only spend her time talking to some of her local acquaintances who were present.

After a few hours had passed, Isabel was feeling quite at ease, until the refreshments were served. It was then that Isabel observed a pair of waiters who looked distinctly thuggish. At one time, she felt sure that one of them was eyeing her closely.

That roused her suspicions to the point where she became mistrustful of the other guests. However, they passed muster. There were a few wise-faced men among them, but those turned out to be reporters.

THE crowd was thinning, but Isabel waited, hoping for some word from The Shadow. At last, she decided that it would be best to leave, but before she could find her wraps, one of the waiters told her that she was wanted on the telephone.

She answered the call too late. The hotel operator told her that the caller had hung up, but had stated that he would telephone the hotel again, within the next half hour.

That was why Isabel happened to be one of the last persons who remained. Even the suspicious-looking waiters had left, when the girl stepped to an inner room and called the hotel operator. Anxiously, she inquired about the call. It had not come through.

Turning about, Isabel saw that she was not alone. Sarku Singh had entered the room; he bowed apologetically, then spoke in his quiet fashion:

“You are troubled about something?”

“I am,” admitted Isabel; then, with a smile: “It may actually be nothing at all. I merely expected a telephone call, and did not like to leave before it came.”

“You are quite welcome to stay.”

Sarku Singh turned to bow Isabel into the outside room. Loud voices mingled with song, enlivened by a high-pitched tenor, then came a longer burst of laughter.

“It is the reporters,” said Sarku Singh. “They are drinking everything that is left. Perhaps it would be better, if you waited where it is more quiet.”

He crossed the room, opened a door. Isabel saw a small, deserted living room and stepped inside. Sarku Singh left, informing her that he would return as soon as he had disposed of the newspaper men.

Isabel looked around the room. It had a door opening on the corridor, that she thought was ajar. She stared toward the window, saw the rail of a balcony beyond it. When she looked at the door again, she observed that it was actually closed. That made her feel more secure, but she still hoped that the telephone call would soon come through.

The girl didn't begin to guess what was going on beyond that corridor door.

Whiz Birsch was stealing back to join a band of mobbies past the deep turn of the corridor, near the

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fire-tower. He gave them quick-whispered news.

“We're sittin' pretty,” informed Whiz, “The moll has walked right into it! Too noisy for her in the big apartment, so she came into the little one. All we've got to do is wait until those reporters have cleared out.

They're botherin' the Hindu guy and I guess his nibs will have em' out of the way soon. I'll take a gander, and while I'm gone, shoot a flash to Clip, out on the balcony. Give him the signal to hold off until we're ready.”

WHIZ stole back to the main corridor. He had to cover an extra stretch, to see the main door of Sarku Singh's suite. Whiz had guessed right. The Hindu was ushering the reporters out, and they were the last guests in the place.

They were arguing among themselves, as they disappeared in the direction of the elevators. Some wanted to walk downstairs, instead of using the elevator, and from their babble they didn't seem to be able to make up their minds.

The mob captain listened. At last, he heard the clang of the elevator door. He sneaked back to where his gun crew waited. They gave him the word that Clip was set. Whiz led the way to the obscure door; opening it, a half inch, he peered into the room.

Isabel was seated there, but this time, she had noted the door's motion. The girl came to her feet, thoroughly alarmed, and started for the door that led to the larger suite. Whiz shouldered through, shoving a revolver ahead of him. The faces of his followers leered behind him.

Isabel stopped short.

“Stick where you are!” snapped Whiz “You're comin' with us, see? And the less noise you make, the better it—”

Whiz cut himself short, as Isabel's eyes flashed keenly. That reference to “less noise” was a bad one. It made Isabel realize that Whiz wouldn't care for noise, himself. Before Whiz could guess what was next, Isabel was making a neat move.

She knew that Whiz would block her promptly, if she tried to get back to Sarku Singh's apartment. But she saw another outlet: the window. Isabel's idea was to reach the balcony; once outside, she would be safe, long enough to call for help. That was why she shifted in that direction.

Whiz motioned his followers to keep back. He stopped the grin that was coming to his thick lips. This was where Isabel was finding trouble that she didn't expect. She had no way of knowing that Clip Arsham was on the balcony.

As the girl backed toward the window, the sash rose slowly. Isabel didn't see it, but Whiz did. He couldn't spy Clip, because the girl intervened, but when the right instant came, Whiz gave the order. Springing forward, he rasped:

“All right, Clip! Grab her!”

Isabel gave a cry as a figure surged through the window. Springing away, she landed squarely in the arms of Whiz Birsch. The crook's gun hand came up, ready to drive its weapon against the girl's head.

In that instant, Whiz Birsch flashed a triumphant glance in the direction of Clip Arsham, whose help he didn't

need. It was an ugly gloat, denoting the sure triumph that Whiz felt. But it froze, that glance, so promptly that Whiz couldn't change it.

Clip Arsham hadn't come in from the balcony. There was no sign of Clip, at all. Instead, Whiz Birsch was facing a formidable foe in black, whose aiming gun yawned its muzzle straight between the mobleader's eyes.

A burning gaze met Whiz Birsch; with it came a whispered laugh from hidden lips. The trap was sprung, in reverse.

The crook was confronted by The Shadow!

CHAPTER XXI. CRISSCROSSED CRIME

THE gulp that Whiz Birsch gave was sufficient evidence of his present inability. Whiz couldn't have swung his gun to win a thousand-dollar bet. The revolver was shaking in his wavering fist. His other hand, too, had lost its grip. No longer could he hold the girl.

Isabel broke away from the petrified crook, but she didn't scream. There was no need for it, with The Shadow present. Plucking the revolver from Whiz's useless fingers, The Shadow handed the weapon to Isabel, telling her to keep Whiz covered.

That done, The Shadow moved toward the door, to settle with the other mobsters. Before he could reach his objective, the door swung inward. The thugs thought that Whiz and Clip had captured Isabel; they were coming in to help carry her away.

They saw The Shadow, and they closed in. He was among them, a driving avalanche in black, slugging blows that felled them right and left. Revolvers popped, harmlessly. In this fray, gunmen were pulling triggers too late.

The Shadow was out in the corridor. He wheeled in again, carrying two clawing crooks with him. He had grabbed them as they tried to duck. They were the last of the small gun crew, and together, the pair couldn't match The Shadow. Isabel saw the cloaked fighter fling them half across the room.

One thug took a slashing swing at The Shadow. A cloaked arm was sweeping at the same instant. Guns clashed, the crook's was swept aside. The Shadow's heavy .45 thudded the thug's skull. Only one man was left, but looking in his direction, Isabel saw menace.

On hands and knees, the mobster was lifting his gun, to aim toward The Shadow. Isabel didn't realize how swiftly The Shadow could outmatch such aim. Forgetting Whiz, she pointed her revolver in the thug's direction.

Isabel had no chance to fire. The Shadow's gun spoke first, as he finished a swift spin. The thug sagged; his gun hand settling limply. The Shadow had beaten him to the shot, with plenty to spare. But Isabel had produced a new dilemma.

WHIZ Birsch, suddenly desperate, came out of his coma. He pounced upon Isabel, reclaiming his gun with a swift grab. Yanking the girl in front of him, he tried to use her as a shield, while he aimed for The Shadow. Caught off guard, Isabel didn't have a chance to prevent that situation.

An instant's hesitation would have been The Shadow's finish. There didn't seem to be a possible way out of that fix, but the cloaked fighter found one. He made a long, low drive, straight for Isabel and the killer behind

her.

Whiz was shooting, but his aim was high. Firing over Isabel's shoulder, he couldn't get the low range required. An instant later, The Shadow crashed Whiz and his human shield, striking them shoulder first. He bowled Isabel to the floor, along with the crook.

Isabel took a bad tumble, but it wasn't as bad as the one that came to Whiz. The crook jounced from the wall; his gun hand went wide. He saw The Shadow rolling on the floor beside him; as Whiz swung to aim, a gun stabbed upward, fired. The Shadow's one shot was all that was needed to settle Whiz.

Clamping one hand to his side, the thug coiled. His gun dropped; Isabel reached it. She looked to The Shadow, saw him rising slowly. He had taken the worst jar from that drive, but all through it, he had adhered to one purpose: that of settling Whiz Birsch.

The room was reeling before Isabel's gaze; she knew that The Shadow, too, was recuperating from the violence of his final stroke. Battle was won; all that Isabel feared was the possibility of crooked reserves arriving on the scene. While that thought stirred her, she heard a sound from the connecting door.

Isabel gave a glad cry as the door opened. Framed in sight was Sarku Singh. Isabel tried to tell him what had happened, even though she couldn't seem to rise up from the floor. Then, amid her daze, she realized that Sarku Singh wasn't listening.

The Hindu was looking straight toward The Shadow, who had slumped into a motionless state.

For the first time, Isabel saw Sarku Singh smile. It wasn't pleasant, the way his straight lips curved upward at the corners. Nor did Isabel misinterpret the hoarse, gloating utterance that came from the Hindu's throat.

From an inside pocket of his tuxedo, the dark-skinned man drew a revolver. He aimed the weapon straight for The Shadow. Sarku Singh was one man who felt no fear when he saw the figure in black. The Hindu was all venom in his manner, a fact that left Isabel agape.

THE SHADOW stirred. His own hand moved, with the Hindu watching it, ready; ferretlike, to shoot before The Shadow could aim.

Isabel came to life, sprang forward with her revolver, hoping to stop the fatal shot. Sarku Singh thrust his free hand to meet her with a straight-arm shove that reeled her to a corner.

Not for an instant did the Hindu's gun hand change its aim. Isabel caught a last glimpse of The Shadow, painfully on the move, unable to fully lift his gun. Then, as she sprawled, the girl heard a roar. A sob came from her lips at thought of The Shadow's doom.

Isabel didn't care what happened to her. She knew that she must still be dazed, for that gunburst had sounded like a volley. She hoped, though, that she could loose one shot at Sarku while the Hindu still gloried in his evil triumph. With that urge, Isabel turned.

The girl blinked in amazement. Sarku Singh, wasn't standing where she had seen him. He was flat on the floor, a motionless figure, his gun projecting from his hand. No curl of smoke was coming from that weapon. Sarku Singh hadn't fired his revolver!

Looking for The Shadow, Isabel gave a happy gasp, as she saw the cloaked fighter rising from the floor. He was gripping his automatic, but he held it lowered. Like Sarku Singh, The Shadow had taken no part in that

final gunburst.

Then Isabel saw the answer.

Standing beyond the connecting door that Sarku Singh had opened were three men. Foremost was Harry Vincent; close beside him was a man that Isabel recognized as Harlingsworth's secretary, Luben.

Not knowing of last night's expedition to the old quarry, Isabel didn't realize how remarkable it was that these men had arrived here. She recognized the third man, also. He was one of the reporters who had been at the reception. Isabel remembered that his name was Clyde Burke.

That trio had entered the Hindu's apartment immediately after the battle had begun. They had followed Sarku Singh through to the smaller suite. They had been ready, behind him, awaiting The Shadow's signal.

He had given it, from the floor. The roar that Isabel had heard had actually been a volley, not merely a single shot.

But who, and what, was Sarku Singh? It was The Shadow who answered that question, when he stepped toward the prone form. Lifting the Hindu's left hand, The Shadow reversed a ring that was on the third finger. A huge diamond sparkled from a circle that had previously looked like a plain gold band.

Gripping the Hindu's shocky wig, The Shadow yanked it away. He let the head tilt back; in death, the dyed features had lost the expression that their owner considered characteristic of Sarku Singh.

Straight lips were relaxed as they ordinarily were. Bulgy eyes had a glitter, once the bluish spectacles were away.

The man who styled himself Sarku Singh lay revealed as Ring Brescott, head of the murder racket.

CHAPTER XXII. SOLVED CRIMES

WHIZ BIRSCH, badly wounded, was staring at the dead form of his chief. He understood how Ring Brescott had bobbed up as Sarku Singh. It fitted with Ring's style; the fact that he had once posed as the Chinaman, Ki Woong, was proof that he could easily play the Hindu part.

What Whiz couldn't figure was the disappearance of Clip Arsham; and he was likewise amazed by the return of Harry Vincent and Luben. Then, as Whiz stared at these men back from the dead, the whole thing linked.

The Shadow had been Clip Arsham! He'd ridden with Whiz and Keezer in their car when they escaped from Crue's. The injuries of the two mobsters, plus the darkness of the rear of the sedan, kept them from discovering The Shadow.

Police bullets had settled Keezer; The Shadow had taken the wheel instead. He had stowed Whiz in a hide-out, then visited him as Clip. Thereby, he had used Whiz as a stooge, to meet up with Ring Brescott.

The Shadow had held one purpose: to free Harry Vincent and Luben. As Clip, he had managed it without injuring his status. He had dropped the victims at the entrance to the dirt road. The car that he had dumped into the quarry had been empty.

The reporter guy, Burke, was the fellow who had trailed along in another car. He had picked up Vincent and Luben. One of the three had worn The Shadow's cloak, while pulling that stunt with the barricade.

MURDER FOR SALE

All that had been prearranged, including the fake staggering when Clip Arsham had fired shots at the man who pretended to be The Shadow. That had served a double purpose. It had made Clip the ace of all the crooks, and it had apparently disposed of The Shadow for a while.

Meanwhile, The Shadow must have trailed Ring from Front Street, that night they met. That was how he had learned that Ring was Sarku Singh. With every new step that crooks took, The Shadow was one jump ahead.

Posting himself on the balcony, The Shadow had first parked his black garb there, then taken his position as Clip Arsham. That, so far as Whiz was concerned, made the final touch.

The mobster captain rolled over with a snarl. He didn't want to look at The Shadow any longer.

As for Isabel, she realized now that it had been The Shadow's agents who trailed her through the park, to be on hand in case of unexpected trouble. The Shadow, himself, had other work to do.

He was planning the final trap to enmesh men of crime.

FEW minutes had passed since crooks were quelled. Commotion came from Sarku Singh's apartment; police popped suddenly into sight. The sound of battle had brought them up through the lobby. They wanted an explanation. Isabel turned to look for The Shadow.

The black-cloaked victor was gone. From somewhere came the quivery sound of a weird, departing laugh. The officers looked about in puzzlement. One decided that the tone had come from the window. But the balcony was deserted, when the officer took a look along it.

There were other balconies below; they formed a vertical row, clear to the ground. It didn't occur to the policeman that the author of that mysterious mirth had taken his departure by such a precarious route.

Mobsters, dead and wounded, were removed. Then came testimony that amazed the law, beginning with Harry's story of what he had seen from the railway bridge. Luben provided facts regarding his trip to the auction gallery. Isabel supplied further testimony, that started the police on rapid moves.

By dawn, they had bagged the remainder of Ring's organization. Lesser crooks had squawked; thanks to mysterious tip-offs, other facts were gained. The law had occupied the premises of the clothing company and the auction house; they had taken over the shop of Ki Woong.

Those weren't all the details. The fake antiques at Harlingsworth's home linked him with Ki Woong. The New York office cooperated with the Philadelphia authorities by arresting David Harlingsworth before he could board a liner for Europe.

Confronted by facts, Monte Wendon blabbed his story in the hospital. When George Thelden recuperated from an operation, so much was stacked against him that he had to talk. Certain people began to clear out of Philadelphia, only to find themselves already wanted by the law.

Past murders, such as the death of Louis Rulland, were proven to the final detail. They made a bigger sensation than the attempted murder of Nathan Crue. The final note in the solution of crime was the finding of Ring Brescott's hoard of wealth, the spoils of the murder racket.

Throughout all these discoveries was woven a mysterious thread. Of themselves, links were loose. The needed connections always seemed to come from some unknown source, like those actual thrusts that had stopped crooks in their tracks.

MURDER FOR SALE

Though police reports listed these results to a “party unknown,” the phrase was merely technical. Those who had seen crime quelled—like Isabel Rendolf, and others—recognized that the unknown person was invariably The Shadow.

DAYS later, when crime's last phases had been settled, the blue light gleamed in The Shadow's sanctum. Upon the table lay clippings, mostly from Philadelphia newspapers, that covered all the details of the murder racket's finish.

To these, The Shadow added reports from agents, and other data, for inclusion in his files. He placed them all in the big folder that bore the symbol of The Hand.

Last of all, The Shadow produced the list that had once contained five names, but at present carried only four. His keen eye scanned the paper:

Thumb Gaudrey

Pointer Trame

Long Steve Bydle

Ring Brescott

Through the fourth name from the top, The Shadow drew a long line, obliterating it in the same definite fashion that he had used in the elimination of Ring Brescott and the many crooks who had aided the big-shot's insidious murder racket.

A mirthless laugh crept through the sanctum. Such was The Shadow's knell for the master crook who had sold murder, but whose final profit had been the doom that he deserved. THE END