

THE SHADOW'S JUSTICE

by Maxwell Grant

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THE SHADOW'S JUSTICE

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CHAPTER I. SHADOWS OF NIGHT

“TURN left, Holland.”

“Yes, sir.”

The uniformed chauffeur thrust a warning arm from the window of the sedan. He swung the big car across the slippery road. The glaring headlights showed a driveway between two lion-topped stone posts. Gravel crunched beneath the tires as the automobile rolled through the entrance of the Long Island estate.

The man in the rear seat was leaning forward, watching the driveway reveal itself through the drizzling mist. Rain-soaked shrubs and dripping trees bounded both sides of the roadway. The chauffeur drove carefully as he settled back behind the wheel, relieved now that he was free of the heavy traffic on the highway.

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The headlights, swinging along the curving drive, invoked moving shadows of the night. Broad streaks of blackness wavered and swung away. Heavy blotches faded as the car passed. They seemed like living things, these shadows. The passenger watched them as he stared over the chauffeur's shoulder.

A bright light gleamed like a beacon through the night. The car swerved and pulled up before a flight of steps that led to the doorway of a large mansion. The beckoning light was under the sheltering roof that extended from above that door. Compared to it, the glimmers from the windows of the house seemed faint and obscure.

The passenger stepped from the sedan and spoke to the chauffeur:

“You may call for me in one hour, Holland.”

“Yes, Mr. Tracy,” replied the uniformed man.

The sedan rolled away and left the passenger standing under the sheltering roof. While he waited for an answer to his ring at the door, Tracy turned toward the steps, and his face was clearly discernible in the night.

A MAN of medium height, his face firm and aristocratic, this individual made an impressive appearance as he waited before the closed door. His eyes, keen and perceptive, were staring out into the night, toward those spots where the sedan's headlights had so recently invoked strange, moving shadows.

All was blackness now. Tracy's eyes saw only mist; his ears heard nothing but the sounds of dripping water.

The door opened behind his shoulder. Turning, the man entered with the assurance of an expected guest.

Farland Tracy, attorney at law, now stood within the confines of a gloomy hall. The man who admitted him was standing a few feet away, bowing in courteous greeting.

“Ah, Headley,” said the lawyer. “Mr. Boswick is expecting me?”

“He is upstairs, sir,” responded the attendant, in a quiet monotone. “I shall inform him that you are here.”

Tracy watched Headley walk across the hall and up the stairs. The man's tread was soft and catlike, quite in contrast to his heavy appearance. The lawyer rubbed his hands thoughtfully and turned his gaze toward the floor, until the sound of approaching footsteps caused him to glance up.

A young man had entered the hall from a side room. Slight of form, sallow of complexion, and drooping in appearance, he made an excellent picture of dissipated youth. He was attired in a tuxedo, and in his loose left hand he held a long holder which contained a lighted cigarette.

“Drew Westling!” exclaimed Farland Tracy. “How are you, boy? I haven't seen you for a month!”

“Perhaps it's as well you haven't,” drawled Westling, with a sickly grin. “I haven't forgotten the last time. I hope you don't intend to mention it to the old gentleman.”

“To your Uncle Houston?” quizzed Tracy. Then, in an amiable tone: “No, Drew. Lawyers usually keep their clients' affairs to themselves. I am here to discuss business affairs with your uncle. Your name will not be mentioned—that is, in reference to the matter of which you have just spoken.”

“Thanks,” responded Westling, in a relieved tone. “The old gentleman has been quizzical enough about my affairs without him learning anything that won't do any good. I've kept out of jams since that last one—”

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“And you don't intend to get into any more,” smiled Farland Tracy. “All right, Drew. I'm glad to hear it.”

Drew Westling turned away and strolled back across the hall.

FARLAND TRACY noticed that Headley was returning down the stairs. The lawyer smiled. He fancied that Drew Westling would not want the attendant to hear the discussion that had just taken place.

Houston Boswick, owner of this mansion, was, as Tracy had mentioned, Westling's uncle. The old man had been away for several months, and hence knew nothing of Westling's activities during his absence.

It was Farland Tracy who had twice gained Westling's release, without scandal, after raids on gambling houses where the young man had been. Such information, coming to Houston Boswick, would prove most embarrassing to Drew Westling. The young man depended entirely upon his uncle for support.

“Mr. Boswick will see you, sir,” announced Headley. “He is in the upstairs study.”

Farland Tracy walked up the steps. Drew Westling, slowly puffing through his long cigarette holder, stood in a corner of the hall. With shrewd gaze, he watched Headley depart toward the kitchen. Then, turning his eyes upward, he waited until Farland Tracy had passed the head of the stairs.

Hastily ejecting his cigarette into an ash stand, Drew Westling pocketed the holder and followed the direction that the lawyer had taken. He tiptoed rapidly up the steps, turned into a narrow hallway, and softly approached a door near a turn in the corridor. He stopped beside the closed portal, turned about, and crouched with his ear to the door.

Watching toward the steps, Westling knew that he would be instantly aware of Headley's approach, should the butler come upstairs. Listening intently, he could hear the greetings being exchanged between Farland Tracy and Houston Boswick.

Ready to glide along the hall at the slightest alarm, Drew Westling was in an ideal position to learn what might be said within the study.

STRANGE purposes were at work within this gloomy old mansion. Standing secluded from the highway, it was invisible to the passing world. But while one man listened within, there were others who were watching without.

Across from the lighted porch, amid the blackness of a clump of shrubbery, low voices were discussing the arrival of Farland Tracy. Those voices came from a spot where the lawyer had looked, but had seen nothing in the misty night.

“Just lay low, Scully,” came a smooth command. “We've got an hour to wait, at least.”

“An' maybe nothin' to wait for,” was the growled reply.

“Probably nothing,” rejoined the smooth voice. “But we're not going in while the old man has a visitor. We're not going in blindly, either. That sort of stuff is through. We'll wait until we have a reason.”

“All right, Stacks. You're the boss. But it's too blamed wet out here—”

“Come along,” interrupted “Stacks” impatiently. “We'll slide under the cover of the side porch.”

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Two figures emerged from the bushes. They were no more than huddled shapes, but they cast long shadows as they moved toward the shelter of the side portico. Both Stacks and “Scully” were cautious in this maneuver, keeping just on the fringe of light that came from above the front door.

Confident that they were not being watched as they crept through the blurry drizzle, the men did not bother to look behind them. Hence they failed to notice a peculiar phenomenon which accompanied them.

From a spot not ten feet away from the bush where they had hidden, came a third shadow, longer and more pronounced than their own. A sinister shape of unreality, this strange silhouette accompanied the men. A black vagueness in the mist—so obscure as to be almost unseen—was the only living token of this weird streak of blackness.

Yet, had Stacks or his companion stared back toward the bushes, they would have seen a more potent sign of a being in the darkness. Two burning eyes, their brightness reflecting the glimmer of the light above the door, were following the sneaking men. Phantom eyes that seemed to float through the mist, they watched the progress of these stealthy spies.

“We'll be all right here?” came Scully's question, as the porch was reached.

“Sure,” was the whisper that came from Stacks. “Old Boswick will be up in his study—the little room that opens on the back yard—”

As he broke off his statement, Stacks chanced to glance back toward the driveway. He caught a momentary glimpse of a gliding shape along the ground; then attributed it to his imagination.

THE owner of that shadow was invisible. The tall form of a living being was skirting the edge of the porch even as Stacks spoke. Sharp ears had heard the reference to the little upstairs room. The phantom shape moved onward, unseen in the darkness.

A dim light glimmered from a small window on the second floor, at the back of the house. Beneath that window, a tall form emerged from the dampening darkness. Gloved hands pressed against the rough stone wall of the building.

A figure moved upward. The folds of a rain-soaked cloak flapped gently against the stones. A creature of the night was making its way to the window. Shortly afterward, a blackened hand appeared against the dim light, and noiselessly pushed the window sash upward.

The shadowy shape of a slouch hat was momentarily revealed by the vague illumination. A few seconds later, the head beneath the hat had moved to the side, and was no longer visible. The weird phantom of the night clung bat-like to the side of the house.

While Drew Westling, listening by the door of the study, overheard the conversation within the room, this eerie visitant of darkness was also learning what passed between Houston Boswick and Farland Tracy.

Silent, sinister, and unseen, The Shadow, man of darkness, had come to this secluded spot. The Shadow, mysterious personage who thwarted crime, was interested in the same discussion that had intrigued Drew Westling.

What was the purpose of The Shadow's visit? Did danger lurk about this place? Did the presence of huddled watchers in the shrubbery mean that crime was brewing?

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Shadows of the night had moved amidst the drizzling mist. One was a living shadow. Where plans and cross-purposes unfolded; where men of evil design maintained a secret vigil; there did The Shadow venture!

CHAPTER II. TALK OF WEALTH

WITHIN a small, but finely furnished study, Houston Boswick and Farland Tracy faced each other across a mahogany desk, totally unaware that listeners were stationed at both door and window.

The two men formed an interesting contrast in the glow of the desk lamp. Farland Tracy, still in his forties, showed virility in every action. Firm-faced, square-jawed, and stalwart, he had a dynamic air combined with self-assurance. With it, his eyes expressed understanding and sympathetic feeling.

Houston Boswick, in opposition, was aged and weary. He was a man past sixty, and his thin face marked him as one who had lost all former initiative.

His eyes, alone, revealed his intellect. At times they were colorless; but at intervals they sparkled with quick purpose. Occasionally, they showed a distinct trace of innate shrewdness.

Those eyes were Tracy's key. The lawyer watched them steadily and calmly, knowing that they alone could serve as an index to Houston Boswick's true emotions.

"Tracy"—Boswick's voice was pitifully thin—"I am an old man who has nothing left to live for."

"Hardly old," rejoined Tracy, in a quiet tone. "You have not yet reached the dividing line of threescore and ten."

"I am nearing it," asserted Boswick, with a slight shrug of his narrow shoulders, "and my life has been one of ceaseless labor. The accumulation of wealth is no sinecure, Tracy. I have made my share—more than my share, to be exact. I began almost in childhood. That is why I am nearing the end of life."

"You have retired from business," Tracy reminded him. "That should give you the opportunity to recuperate."

"I retired," interrupted Boswick, "purely because I could no longer continue. When an old horse can no longer stand in harness, his days are numbered."

Farland Tracy had no reply. Houston Boswick could see the sympathy in his expression. The old man smiled wanly.

"Do not attempt to delude me, Tracy," declared Boswick. "This last trip to Florida was for my health. Its purpose failed. The writing is on the wall. My physicians have told me that I may not have long to live. I am ready to die."

"Why?" questioned Tracy incredulously.

"Because," explained Boswick, "life holds nothing in store for me. What is wealth when one can no longer work? That has been my creed, Tracy. I shall always adhere to it.

"All my business associates were older than myself. One by one they have dropped from sight. Death has accounted for most of them. Senility has seized the rest. For the past year, I have lived with only one hope."

"Your son's return."

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“Yes. Now, Tracy, that hope is assured.”

“You have heard from Carter?”

Houston Boswick nodded.

REAL elation appeared upon Farland Tracy's countenance. The lawyer had often heard Houston Boswick speak of his absent son, Carter.

Years before, the younger Boswick had gone out to seek his own fortune. He had traveled in many parts of the world. Indirect reports had reached Houston Boswick that Carter was doing well. But not until now had the old man received direct news from Carter Boswick himself.

“Let me become reminiscent,” remarked Houston Boswick. “Tragedy entered my life some twenty-odd years ago. Directly following the death of my wife, my sister Stella—my only living relation—perished in a train wreck with her husband, Hugh Westling.

“I raised their boy with mine. My son, Carter, and my nephew, Drew Westling, were like brothers. The same age—but Carter was the stronger, and Drew the weaker. Realizing it, I favored Drew.”

“That was considerate,” observed Tracy.

“Too considerate,” corrected Houston Boswick. “Carter became obsessed with independence. Drew became a weakling, with no initiative. The result was that Carter went away, and Drew remained.

“Only a week ago, I received a letter from Montevideo. It was from Carter. A friend of mine had met him there, and had given him my Florida address. In that letter, Carter announced that he was coming home.”

“How soon?”

“He has already sailed. He is aboard the steamship Southern Star. He is coming by way of Havana, and will be here within two weeks.”

“Wonderful news!” exclaimed Tracy. “He will be glad to see you—and I know that he will receive a glorious welcome.”

“Hardly,” responded Boswick, in a wistful tone. “I shall not be here to greet him.”

“You will be—”

“Dead. Yes, Tracy, I shall be dead.”

The lawyer slapped his hand upon the table. He could not believe his ears. This statement seemed incredible—the absurd fancy of a failing mind.

“Dead,” repeated Houston Boswick quietly. “I feel the end of life approaching. It will be for the best, Tracy. I should not like Carter to see me as I am now. He should always remember me as I was when he went away—close to ten years ago.”

The lawyer settled back in resignation. He saw that it was no use to dispute the matter with the old man.

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“That is why I have summoned you, Tracy,” resumed Houston Boswick. “You have been my lawyer since my old friend, Glade Rupert, passed away. Our friendship has been a matter of but a few years, but I feel that you have been most competent and kindly. Therefore, I am relying upon you now.”

Farland Tracy bowed quietly.

“First of all,” resumed Boswick, “my son Carter must not know of my death until after his arrival in New York. You understand?”

Tracy nodded. The lawyer, to humor the old man, was accepting Houston Boswick's death as a forgone matter of the immediate future.

“Then,” added Boswick, “you will arrange full discharge of my estate, according to the terms. The bulk to Carter, with the provision of a comfortable life income for Drew Westling.”

The old man paused speculatively. Then, with a sad air, he continued on a new theme.

“My nephew Drew,” he started, “is a waster. I have provided for him because he is my sister's son. I have lost all confidence in Drew. I have not told him that I have heard from Carter. Drew knows that my health is failing. He will expect the full estate for himself. Indeed, it would be his, but for Carter.

“That is the reason, Tracy, why I have always minimized the amount of my possessions. People will be surprised, after my death, to learn that my estate is scarcely more than a round million. Only the heir—whether it be Carter or Drew—will learn, some time after my death, that ten times that sum is available!”

“You have made a great mistake,” declared Tracy seriously. “This secret of yours—the strange hiding of a vast sum of money—might lead to serious consequences. Some schemer might seek to learn the place of its deposit.”

“How can any one learn?” questioned Boswick, with a shrewd smile. “I, alone, have knowledge of the hiding place. My old lawyer, Rupert, told me that he thought the scheme was safe.”

“Even though he, like myself, was never informed of the spot where you had placed the money?”

“Rupert never knew,” smiled Boswick. “But he knew me when I was younger—at the time when I first evolved the plan of hidden wealth. He had more confidence in me than you have, Tracy. You have known me only since I became old.”

The lawyer nodded. He realized that Houston Boswick spoke the truth. Nevertheless, his expression still betrayed doubt, and old Boswick was aware of it.

“Secrets,” remarked Tracy, “have a way of leaking out. Your constant effort to minimize the size of your estate could certainly excite suspicion.”

“I believe it has,” declared Boswick quietly.

“You do?” questioned Tracy, in momentary alarm. “What cause have you to think so?”

“This house,” explained Houston Boswick, “was closed while I was away. Drew Westling was living at his club. Headley paid occasional visits here to see that all was well. Upon my return, today, I noticed that certain things had been disturbed. I questioned both Drew and Headley.”

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“What did they say?”

“Drew claimed to know nothing about it. Nor did Headley, until I pointed out certain traces which he had not noticed. He became alarmed then, Tracy. He believed, with me, that this house had been entered and searched from top to bottom.”

“Hm—m—m,” mused Tracy. “Was anything missing?”

“Nothing,” responded Houston Boswick. “That shows that a definite purpose was at work. Some one was looking for something that could not be found.”

“You are sure that the marauders were not successful?”

“Positive. They would never discover my secret, Tracy, although it lies within this house. Only my heir—whether he be Carter or Drew—can gain the clew to my hidden wealth.”

FARLAND TRACY was thoughtful. Houston Boswick's discovery surprised the lawyer; now, he was trying to find a plausible explanation for this mysterious occurrence. The old man divined the attorney's thoughts.

“Do not worry, Tracy,” he said dryly. “I do not care to know the identity of the instigator. It could be Drew Westling; it could be Headley; it could be some one entirely unknown to me. As you say, I have been almost over-emphatic in my efforts to make it appear that my supply of worldly possessions has shrunk to exceedingly small proportions.

“But what do I care now? Carter is returning. He will receive my visible wealth. Let him find the unknown treasure, if he has the initiative. Should any thing happen to prevent Carter's return, the task will belong to Drew Westling.”

Farland Tracy shook his head in stern disapproval. This strange method of handling vast resources seemed atrocious to the lawyer.

“Suppose,” he presumed, “that Carter—or Drew, for that matter —lacks the initiative. Then what will become of the wealth?”

“It will remain where it is,” smiled Houston Boswick weakly. “Why not? I shall have no use for it. My heir will not deserve it. But do not fear that consequence, Tracy. Simply proceed with the simple duties governing the affairs of my estate. The rest will take care of itself.”

The old man's gaze became prophetic. Farland Tracy was amazed at the change which filled those sad gray eyes. He listened while Houston Boswick spoke in a far-away voice.

“Carter will return,” presaged the old man. “I am sure of it now. He will find the wealth that is rightfully his. Drew Westling will subsist upon the income that I have provided for him.

“I know this, Tracy. I know it as positively as I know that I shall be dead when Carter reaches New York. I have made my plans. They will succeed, no matter what may oppose them.”

The old man was leaning weakly on his desk. With one hand, he made a feeble motion to indicate that the interview was ended. Farland Tracy arose and grasped the hand. Concern showed in the lawyer's face.

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NEITHER Tracy nor Boswick heard the slight motion that occurred outside the study door. Drew Westling, hearing footsteps on the stairs, had moved quickly along the hall.

Now came a rap at the door, followed by the even voice of Headley, Boswick's serving man. The old man pointed to the door; Farland Tracy gave the order to enter. In came Headley.

"Mr. Tracy's car is here, sir," announced the servant.

"Good night," said Houston Boswick. "Remember, Tracy. Remember. I rely upon you."

"I shall remember," replied the lawyer.

Farland Tracy's last view of Houston Boswick showed the old man collapsed upon the desk, with Headley bending over him in apprehension. Going downstairs alone, the lawyer began to believe the old man's statement that his death was near.

There was no sign of Drew Westling on the gloomy first floor. Farland Tracy donned coat and hat, and left the house. He found Holland standing by the door of the sedan. Tracy hurried into the car to escape the drizzle. He ordered the chauffeur to drive him home.

Lurking figures came from the side portico after the automobile had gone. They reached the shrubbery and lingered there for several minutes. Then came a low voice in the darkness:

"All right, Scully. It's all off for tonight. Slide along. I'll take care of myself."

"O.K., Stacks. I thought this waiting would be a lot of hooey."

The figure of Scully moved along the shrub-fringed drive, and was swallowed by the darkened mist. Stacks still remained, as though expecting some signal from the house. Finally, he followed in his companion's course.

A dim shape emerged from the shelter of the side portico. It was the same vague figure that had clung to the wall outside of Houston Boswick's study window. Weird and phantom-like, it took up the trail of "Stacks."

The Shadow was following the chief of the two watchers. Into the darkness he had gone, trailing a man whose purpose here had been one of evil. Silently, mysteriously, a being of darkness was hounding a minion of crime.

The light went out above the front porch of Houston Boswick's home. The old mansion loomed dull and forlorn amid the swirling drizzle. Its inmates no longer concerned The Shadow this night. Hidden watchers had remained unsummoned. Their work still belonged to the future. Representatives of a plotter who had sent them here, they had retired.

Out of the night had The Shadow come; into the night had he returned.

An unwitting spy was leading this master of darkness to an evil lair where a man higher up awaited!

CHAPTER III. THE BIG SHOT

"STACKS LODI is outside, chief."

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“Bring him in, Twister.”

The man who uttered the order was seated in a deep-cushioned chair, in the corner of a sumptuous apartment. His words were spoken in a harsh monotone that befitted his importance.

For the speaker was none other than “Hub” Rowley, big-time gambler and racketeer, a man whose disdain for the law had gained him fortune, and whose smooth and devious cunning had kept him aloof from the toils of the police.

Here, in his apartment on the twentieth floor of the Hotel Castillian, Hub Rowley dwelt in royal state. The portals of his abode were under the jurisdiction of “Twister” Edmonds, Hub's bodyguard. The magnificent suite occupied half the floor.

Attired in garish dressing gown, cigarette in hand, and a half-emptied glass upon the table beside him, Hub Rowley appeared to be a gentleman of leisure.

His hardened face, with pudgy lips and thick black eyebrows, marked him otherwise. Yet Hub preferred to keep up the pretense. He considered himself an aristocrat, even though he bore the stamp of the underworld.

The door opened, and Twister, a wiry, leering fellow, ushered in the visitor. Stacks Lodi, wearing a rain-soaked overcoat and carrying a dripping hat, came into the presence of his chief.

Stacks was a suitable underling for such a master as Hub Rowley. Stocky, swarthy, and shrewd of eye, he was schemer rather than mobster, yet his deportment showed him to be a hardened product of the school of crime.

“Hello, Stacks,” greeted Rowley, in a methodical tone.

“Hello, Hub.” was the rejoinder. “Nothing doing tonight.”

“So I supposed,” remarked the big shot. “Call Twister. He'll get you a drink. I guess you can use it from the way you look.”

Twister, stepping out through the door, heard the order and promptly reappeared. Stacks Lodi threw his hat and coat on a table, and took a chair near Hub Rowley. Both men watched Twister Edmonds while the man uncorked a bottle and poured out a supply of liquor for the visitor.

IT was one of those minor incidents that happened to attract the attention of all concerned. Hence it was not surprising that none of the three observed what was happening at the half-opened door while their interest was centered on the bottles.

There, from the gloom of the dim outer room, came a tall, gliding shape that stopped when only partially in view. Gleaming eyes detected that the men in the room were looking elsewhere. Those same eyes spied a pair of curtains that led to another part of the apartment.

There was not an instant's delay. A tall form clad in black moved boldly into Hub Rowley's reception room. The Shadow stood in full view; then, with swift, silent stride, the black-garbed visitant glided toward the curtains beyond which lay darkness.

It was a cool, daring venture; and one that succeeded only by the fraction of a second. Hub Rowley, glancing up, noted that the door was ajar. He grunted his disapproval as his eyes swept about the room, stopping at the curtains just after The Shadow had vanished behind them.

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“Close that door, Twister,” ordered the big shot. “Stay outside. I’ll let you know when I need you.”

Twister handed the drink to Stacks, and obsequiously obeyed Hub Rowley's order. A few moments later, the big shot and his caller were alone in the room, neither one suspecting that a hidden listener was there to hear the conversation.

“Nothing to report, eh?” growled Hub.

“Only that some fellow called to see the old man,” declared Stacks. “That was about nine o'clock. The guy went away at ten. You told me that some fellow was coming there, and to lay low until after he had gone. That was the time for the tip-off; but it didn't come.”

“I doubted that it would,” said Rowley, in a calm tone. “In fact, I felt rather sure that I would not need you tonight. Just the same, I wanted you there—in case—”

Stacks nodded.

“O.K. by me, Hub,” he affirmed. “Scully acted grouchy because he was getting soaked in the drizzle. I told him it was all in the night's work. Sent him away when I figured all was off. Say, Hub”—Stacks paused to consider his words—“who was that bird that came to see the old man tonight? I wouldn't be asking you to tell me if he hadn't looked like some one I've seen before—”

“There's no harm in your knowing,” interposed Hub Rowley. “That was Farland Tracy, the lawyer. He represents old Houston Boswick.”

“Now I remember him!” exclaimed Stacks. “He was the guy who came to see you about young Westling, Boswick's nephew—the time the kid dropped ten grand in your uptown joint when—”

“Say Louie Gurtz's joint,” corrected Hub in a cold tone.

“Well—Louie Gurtz's joint,” repeated Stacks, with a sheepish grin. “I always call it that, Hub, except when I'm talking to you. Anyway, I remember Tracy now. He came to see you about getting back Westling's I O U, didn't he?”

“Yes.” admitted Hub Rowley, “but I still have it. Just holding it—that's all. Westling knew he was in a jam, so he went to his uncle's lawyer. When Tracy came to me, he asked me to go easy on the boy. I figured that if I didn't, the old man would throw the nephew out, so I talked it over with Westling himself.

“That's the way it looked to the kid. A throw-out—no dough for me. So I'm holding Westling until I want him, that's all. I've worked the same way before.”

“What did the lawyer think about it?”

“Well, he'd like to have that I O U, all right. I've got a few more of Westling's, besides. Just about twenty grand in the hole—that's where the kid stands.”

“He'll never have the dough to pay it.”

“That's what Tracy told me. But I talked with Westling. His uncle's estate is coming through one of these days. Twenty grand—with plenty of interest.”

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“I guess you're sitting pretty, Hub,” said Stacks admiringly. “But listen—if the dough's sure, what's the good of going through the place while the old man is away?”

“Stacks,” remarked Hub reprovably, “sometimes it is not wise to know too much. That applies to you. Understand? However, just to ease your mind, I'll ask you to recall my policy concerning every I O U that I hold. What do I do when one isn't paid?”

“You collect it.”

“Right. Do I stop with the face amount?”

“No. You take plenty over.”

“How much over?”

“No limit. Whatever you can get.”

“All right,” concluded Hub. “Westling didn't pay. His uncle's lawyer told me that the old man wouldn't pay. The old man's got some dough that I know about. It's likely to be Westling's later on. If I can get it now, I will. If I can't get it now, I'll get it after Westling has it. The sooner the better—that's all.”

THERE was silence. Stacks Lodi sensed the keenness of Hub Rowley's words. Stacks, with Scully and others, had invaded Houston Boswick's home not long ago. Their search for a treasure vault had brought no results.

But Stacks could see the probabilities. Somewhere, Hub Rowley must suspect, the old man had hidden wealth. Hub Rowley intended to get it.

Stacks shrugged his shoulders as he thought of Drew Westling. The young man was a weakling, and a spendthrift. What could he do to oppose Hub Rowley? In fact, it would be easy for Hub to force Drew Westling to do his bidding.

Stacks recalled measures that the big shot had adopted in the past. He had made his victims squeal; double-cross their friends; stoop to any foul measures to meet their gaming debts.

The telephone bell rang while Stacks Lodi was engaged in this soliloquy. With an easy sweep of his hand, Hub Rowley plucked the double-ended instrument from its hook and quietly spoke into the mouthpiece. Stacks listened intently.

“Hello... Yes...” Rowley's voice was unperturbed. “Yes, I thought so... Nothing developed tonight, eh?...The old man looks bad, you say... His son is coming back?...When?...Where is...”

Consternation sudden came upon Hub Rowley's thick brow. The big shot did not like this news concerning Carter Boswick's return. Stacks Lodi had assumed—logically and correctly—that the term “old man” referred to Houston Boswick.

“All right...” Rowley was speaking again. “Don't worry...You just play the game...I'm holding those I O Us until the pudding's baked, that's all... Sure, I understand. If the son gets the tip—off the old man talked about, it leaves you in a hole... Well—there's ways of handling that... Left Montevideo, eh? What boat? Yes... Steamship Southern Star... Havana... Say, just keep mum. Leave it to me...”

THE SHADOW'S JUSTICE

Hub Rowley finished his conversation and laid the phone in the cradle. He studied Stacks Lodi thoughtfully; then asked a pointed question.

“How would you like to play the boats again, Stacks?”

“I wouldn't care for it,” said Stacks suavely.

“That's where you got your name, wasn't it?” purred Hub. “Stacks Lodi—the smoothest card sharper in the business. You can stack a full house, deal bottoms and seconds—”

“But on the boats no more, Hub.”

The big shot smiled.

“They made it pretty hot for you, didn't they, Stacks?” he questioned. “Got to know you too well. Faro dealing in a gambling joint became a healthier job.”

“They knew me on every first-class ship between here and Europe. They've got nothing on me, you understand; but the name “Stacks” has stuck. They called me that because of the way I handled the pasteboards, and it's suicide for me to try that racket any longer—”

“How about the South American boats?” interposed Hub.

“No gravy on them,” was Stacks Lodi's verdict.

“But do they know you?” questioned Hub.

“No,” responded Stacks. “I'd be as safe as a person aboard one of those packets. But there'd be nobody to trim unless a Paraguayan ambassador or some such bird showed up to be plucked.”

“I think a boat trip would do you good,” nodded Hub Rowley, with a quiet smile. “Just a little tester—that's all. Suppose, Stacks, that you hop down to Havana by air. Spend a few days around the casino. Pick a few friends there and invite them to travel up to New York with you by steamship.”

“On any boat?” Stacks was wondering at Hub's purpose.

“No,” responded the big shot. “Not any boat, Stacks. A particular boat—the Southern Star of the Panorama Line.”

Hub Rowley continued to smile as a sudden light appeared on Stacks Lodi's face. The suave henchman was connecting this suggestion with the big shot's telephone conversation.

THE smile faded, and Hub Rowley became suddenly grim and emphatic.

“Listen, Stacks,” he said, in a firm tone, “I've got an important job for you. I'm counting on you to do it—and I'm giving you enough reason for it. Keep mum about what I'm telling you.

“Big rackets are my business. I don't go in for small stuff. Whatever I do, I do right. Savvy? That's enough to let you know that I'm not playing old Houston Boswick for lunch money. I'm after plenty, and I don't mind you knowing it.

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“I had things the way I wanted them. The old man away at first —ready to kick in now that he's back—young Westling sewed up so he can't move. But I haven't been able to locate what I'm after. I wanted to grab the gravy right away, and let the howl follow, if there is one. I've seen too many good lays spoiled by a bad break.

“Right now, the bad break is coming. It just shows that my hunch was right. I've got dope that Carter Boswick—the old man's son—is coming back to America. He'd been gone so long, it looked like he might be dead. If he gets here, Westling will be out. No money—no pay—no chance for me to pick up the dough without a fight on my hands.

“Carter Boswick. That's his name. Coming north on the steamship Southern Star. It's due in New York on the twentieth, and it comes by way of Havana, with a lay-over. You're coming in on that boat”—Hub Rowley's voice became low and deliberate—“and Carter Boswick is not. Do you get me now?”

“Sure thing,” nodded Stacks slowly. “But you know my limit, Hub. I'm all right at the card table.”

“But not with the rod, eh?”

“I'm O.K. there, too,” asserted Stacks, now hasty in his tone, “but I may not be one hundred per cent—and, besides, on board a boat—”

Hub Rowley was leaning forward in his chair, eyes agleam.

“You heard what I told you, Stacks,” he insisted. “Find yourselves some friends. Invite them aboard. Play your own part—the lone gambler. Even if you get watched, it will be all the better. It leaves you out of what may happen.”

“You mean the others—”

“Certainly. But I want you there to make sure. You can handle Scully and other gorillas like him, can't you? Well—this is the same thing in a different way.”

“Sure enough, Hub,” agreed Stacks, in a relieved tone. “Say—this won't be hard at all. I'll need dough—”

“I'm giving you twenty grand—”

“And I'll have to hustle for Havana so—”

“By air, tomorrow morning. Pick your gorillas down there. The town us full of them. They're getting ideas from Chicago, those people. Bumped off a big political friend of the president with machine guns.”

“Leave it to me, Hub.”

The big shot smiled, broadly this time. The smirk showed his glittering gold teeth. Hub pulled a thick wallet from his pocket and counted off a mass of bills which he handed to Stacks Lodi.

The former card shark knew that the interview was ended. He rose, donned his hat and coat; then departed toward the anteroom, followed by Hub Rowley's shrewd gaze.

MINUTES drifted by. The big shot finished his drink and arose from his chair. He walked across the room to a door opposite the hanging curtains. He went into a next room; then called loudly for Twister Edmonds.

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The bodyguard appeared from the outside room and came to join his chief.

The way to the outer door was clear. The blackness below the hanging curtains seemed to move. As if by wizardry, it transformed itself into an upright shape—the tall figure of a weird being clad in black.

As silently as he had entered, The Shadow made his departure, crossing the reception room, and entering the outer chamber that gave him access to the outside door. Stacks Lodi had gone; again, The Shadow had followed.

The aftermath to this strange scene occurred an hour later at an agency where air travelers made their reservations. The man who was going off duty made a chance comment to the one who relieved him.

“Funny how they come in at the last minute sometimes,” he observed. “Take that Havana plane, for instance. Here we figured she would run light on this trip. Now, within a half hour of each other, two men book transportation.”

The new man looked at the list. He saw the names inscribed there. One was Antonio Lodi; the other was Lamont Cranston. Those names meant nothing to the agent. He shrugged his shoulders and went about his duty.

Yet those names actually held a peculiar significance. The first was the genuine name of a man of crime; the second, the assumed identity of one who warred against the denizens of crookdom, from small to large.

Stacks Lodi was Havana bound; tomorrow, his plane was sailing. Aboard the same ship—unknown and unrecognized by Hub Rowley's agent —would be the one personage whom all the underworld feared.

The Shadow, like Stacks Lodi, was traveling to Havana!

CHAPTER IV. IN HAVANA

STACKS LODI, versatile minion of Hub Rowley, was a man of chameleon qualities. His ability to change his physical appearance was remarkable, despite its limitations; but his great aptitude was the facility with which he fitted himself into any environment.

During the period that he had gained a profitable living through his gambling activities aboard transatlantic liners, Stacks had frequently resorted to methods of semidisguise which had served him well until all of his various artifices had become known.

After that, he had settled down to the routine existence of a faro dealer in gambling joints secretly controlled by Hub Rowley. The big shot had finally promoted Stacks to the role of lieutenant in charge of mobsmen. Stacks had served as such when he had been conducting activities at the home of Houston Boswick.

Now, as ambassador of hidden crime, Stacks had been dispatched on a new mission which had begun with the airplane flight from New York to Havana. At the time of his departure, Stacks had boasted a short, flat mustache across his upper lip. From the hour that he had left Hub's apartment, Stacks had paid particular attention to that adornment.

Perhaps the effect of tropical climate had helped the quick growth of hair upon the gambler's upper lip. Perhaps the judicious use of dark dye and wax were chiefly responsible; whatever the case might have been, Stacks Lodi, by the time he had been three days in Havana, was possessed of a conspicuous mustache with pointed ends.

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Now, as he stood within the portals of the magnificent Gran Casino Nacional, Stacks had the appearance of a suave, sophisticated habitue of palatial gambling halls.

His keen, intuitive eye was watching the brilliant throng which crowded about the whirling roulette wheels. There, Stacks was observing people, not the game; although any who noticed him would have fancied that he was most interested in the way the croupiers deftly raked in the stacks of coins that lay upon the gaming tables.

Stacks Lodi had spent most of his time in the casino. He had come there because the place was the natural gathering point of all adventurous persons who visited Havana.

With the cool, practiced eye of the professional gambler, Stacks had been looking for men whose faces were no more than masks that hid the cunning brains of criminals. He had not only discovered three such individuals; he had made the acquaintance of the trio.

Those three were in the Gran Casino Nacional tonight. But they were not under Stacks Lodi's surveillance for the present. The shrewd, mustached observer had found a new interest.

He was watching a small group of Americans who were enjoying their roulette. These were passengers who had come ashore from the steamship Southern Star, which had docked in Havana that afternoon.

Bound from Montevideo to New York, the Southern Star, delayed by a heavy equatorial storm, was slated to remain in Havana for only twenty-four hours. The ship would sail tomorrow afternoon. Between now and then, Stacks Lodi planned nefarious action.

ONE man among the Americans from the Southern Star was the individual whom Stacks Lodi sought. This man, tall, vigorous, and youthful, possessed the qualities of a powerful athlete.

His face was well molded, and showed a carefree disposition, backed by self-control. His dark-blue eyes and light-brown hair rendered him conspicuous among his companions. Stacks had heard the young man's name spoken by two of those who were with him. He knew that this was Carter Boswick.

“Hey, Carter”—one of the crowd was addressing the young man now —“we're going to skid out of here. We're running down to Sloppy Joe's bar. Coming along?”

Carter Boswick smiled and shook his head as he placed a stack of money upon the roulette table.

“I'll be here a while,” he remarked. “I'm staking three hundred and fifty dollars just to see how I make out. It's half gone now; if I get it back or lose it, I quit. I'll see you fellow's on the boat.”

Three minutes later, Carter Boswick was deserted by his friends.

Completely engaged by the play at the roulette table, the young man was due to remain there for some time at least. This was the very opportunity that Stacks had awaited.

Strolling through the room, the gambler stopped three times. On each occasion, he dropped a chance remark in the ear of a different man. Then, continuing his stroll, Stacks reached the outside garden, and followed the promenade that circled about the beautiful pond, with its central fountain of dancing bacchantes.

Here, at an appointed spot, Stacks found three men awaiting him. All were garbed in evening clothes—the same attire which Stacks Lodi wore.

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Although they had no more than a speaking acquaintance with each other, these men possessed much in common. They were adventurers all, and Stacks Lodi had made no hazardous guess when he had judged them as men to whom crime was not foreign.

“Buenos noches,” purred Stacks Lodi, speaking in smooth Spanish. “I have something to engage your attention, senores. It will bring money more swiftly than a good turn of the roulette wheel.”

Sparkling eyes and crafty glances assured Stacks that his listeners were interested.

“Tomorrow,” resumed the gambler, “the steamship Southern Star sails for New York. I shall be aboard that vessel. I am quite willing to engage first-class passage for three gentlemen such as yourselves. It will be a delightful trip—”

Stacks paused to light a cigarette. His cunning face showed above the flame of the match. The listening men detected the knowing smile that curled the lips below the black, pointed moustache.

“There will be another person aboard,” continued Stacks, as though changing the subject. “Senor Carter Boswick is his name. An Americano booked through from Montevideo.

“I do not care to make his acquaintance, senores, but I have no objection to my friends doing so. Much comes from chance acquaintance. I do not object to seeing Senor Boswick go aboard the Southern Star tomorrow afternoon but I would feel a keen regret should I see him leaving the same boat at New York.”

The innuendo was plain. The hearers knew it. They exchanged cunning glances. Then one spoke in a low tone.

“What is your offer, Senor?”

STACKS was thoughtful. His eyes suddenly wandered as he fancied that he saw a slight motion beside a hibiscus bush a dozen feet away. A second glance reassured him. He was positive that no one could be in the vicinity.

A long stretch of black shadow extended from the bush, and reached across the promenade to Stacks Lodi's feet. But the gambler thought nothing of that phenomenon. Other bushes in the luxuriant garden cast shadows also.

“Two thousand dollars to each of my friends,” remarked Stacks quietly. “Two thousand dollars payable immediately after—”

The questioner nodded. Another man uttered a short ejaculation beneath his breath:

“Two thousand dollars! Four thousand pesos!”

This expression of the sum in terms of South American currency was gratifying to Stacks Lodi. He was sure that his offer would be accepted. The conjecture proved correct.

“I am ready, senor,” announced one of the trio.

The others followed the acceptance.

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Stacks Lodi smiled. He knew now that these men were polished assassins—a fact that he had already discerned. Only the arrangements for passage remained. Stacks was about to explain this detail when one of his hirelings put forth a question.

“This man we are to meet,” suggested the would-be assassin. “Senor Carter Boswick—we shall see him aboard the Southern Star?”

“You may see him now,” responded Stacks.

“Where is he?” came the question.

“In the casino,” answered Stacks. “At the roulette table.”

“Alone?”

“Yes.”

The man laughed in an even tone as he heard Stacks Lodi's reply. With a twisting smile upon his dark lips, he asked another question.

“Would it disappoint you, senor,” he quizzed, “to have this senor Boswick stay always in Havana? Would you regret it if tonight—”

The man's eyes were flashing with a murderous intention. Stacks Lodi smiled. The others buzzed their approval. Stacks shrugged his shoulders.

“Would you be kind enough,” continued the man who made the suggestion, “to point out to us this Senor Boswick? There are opportunities in this city of Havana. Perhaps we shall make use of one.

“Whether we succeed or fail, we shall board the Southern Star. Success will mean that New York would be preferable to Havana, despite the climate; failure would mean the necessity of a new opportunity aboard the steamship.”

“Come,” said Stacks.

He led his new hirelings along the promenade, past the hibiscus bush where the long stretch of blackness still manifested itself.

The brightly lighted door of the casino attracted the attention of the four walkers. None glanced back. They did not see the motion in the blackness beside the hibiscus. Nor did they see the strange, phantom-like shape that emerged from that patch of dark.

A being of the night was following the quartet along the paved promenade. The Shadow, strange shape of mystery, had overheard the negotiations. He, too, was interested in Stacks Lodi's plans.

At the door of the gambling room, Stacks Lodi, with a low tone and an almost imperceptible motion of his hand, signaled out Carter Boswick. The young American now sported a large stack of winnings. He was preparing to leave the gambling hall.

The three minions of Stacks Lodi took their separate courses. They spread out, each with no apparent purpose. Stacks Lodi, idling by the door, was watching them.

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He knew that when Carter Boswick left, these three would follow. Stacks had given them final instructions: they were to call for their steamship tickets at the Hotel Seville.

Stacks had not introduced the men to each other; but he knew their individual names. None of them were Cubans; all were South Americans.

Stacks made a final note of them:

Cassalta—he was the one with the traces of pockmarks on his face. Bolano—that man had busy eyebrows and protruding jaw. Herrando—he had been the spokesman with the murderous grin.

Now, as Stacks Lodi calmly watched them, these men appeared to be persons of leisure, their veneer of gentlemanly deportment completely covering their actual evilness.

STACKS became suddenly conscious that another man was standing beside him. He turned to see a tall individual with calm, cold-chiseled face and hawk-like nose.

He recognized Lamont Cranston—an American who had come down to Havana on the same plane with him.

Stacks smiled. He was sure that Cranston would not recognize Stacks Lodi.

The tall American was just beginning a chance conversation with a Cuban friend at the moment Stacks happened to turn. The gambler overheard them.

“You say that a boat sails for New York tomorrow?” Cranston was asking. “That surprises me. I did not see it on the sailing schedules.”

“It is a ship from Montevideo, senor,” the Cuban replied. “The Southern Star, of the Panorama Line. If you wish to return to New York by sea, you can probably engage passage aboard that boat.”

“Excellent,” decided Cranston. “I believe I shall do that. Thank you, senor, for the suggestion.”

Stacks Lodi gave no further consideration to the talk that he had overheard. He threw a final glance toward Lamont Cranston and turned away.

Had Stacks allowed his gaze to drop to the floor, he might have gained a momentary surprise. For the length of Lamont Cranston's shadow was very strangely like that splotch of darkness that had extended from the hibiscus bush in the garden.

That silhouette, alone, was the feature that marked Lamont Cranston as the hidden observer who had overheard the conversation between Stacks Lodi and the three South Americans. This man who called himself Lamont Cranston was actually The Shadow.

Keenly watching the roulette table where Carter Boswick had been playing, Stacks Lodi did not realize that he, himself, was under observation. All during his sojourns in the Gran Casino Nacional he had been under the surveillance of the eyes that were now watching him—the eyes of The Shadow!

Carter Boswick was leaving. His stakes had been changed to United States paper currency, and he was pleased because he had regained his original sum. He passed within two yards of Stacks Lodi, but did not even glance in the direction of the shrewd-faced gambler.

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Stacks watched the trio of intended assassins follow. Cassalta, Bolano, and Herrando—these were the stalwarts who would work for him tonight. They disappeared in the same direction that Carter Boswick had taken. A triumphant smile curled upon the gambler's lips.

Stacks Lodi did not notice that Lamont Cranston, too, had left the gambling hall. In fact, he had forgotten all about the man. Hence Stacks had no reason to suspect that trouble was brewing for his minions.

He did not know that the evil trio who were trailing Carter Boswick were themselves being followed. Outside the Gran Casino Nacional, a strange, uncanny figure had materialized the moment that the three had passed.

In a spot of seclusion, the tall figure of Lamont Cranston had stepped unobserved. Now, when it emerged, it was the man no longer. The Shadow, master of darkness, was the being who had taken up the trail of Stacks Lodi's hired killers!

CHAPTER V. THE SHADOW'S MIGHT

HAD Carter Boswick been of a less adventurous temperament, he might have completely avoided danger on that evening in Havana.

His first impulse, upon leaving the Gran Casino Nacional was to return to the Southern Star. But as he hailed a waiting taxi, it suddenly occurred to him that this evening was yet young. He had no desire to join the other Americans in such a tourists' resort as Sloppy Joe's; but he did have a yearning to see the night life of old Havana.

Speaking in fluent Spanish, Carter quizzed the cab driver before entering the vehicle. The Cuban grinned and nodded.

The Americano would like to visit a place where tourists seldom went? Very well; he would be taken there. He would visit the old Barcelona Club—at one time the most exclusive private gambling place in Havana—now a spot where revolutionary plots were hatched.

Scarcely had the taxi drawn away before a man stepped into view and beckoned to two others who were a short distance away. Herrando was summoning Cassalta and Bolano.

In a few quick words, he explained what he had heard—the destination chosen by Carter Boswick. Gleaming smiles greeted the revelation. Calling another cab, the three South Americans entered and gave instructions to be driven to the Barcelona Club, in the old city. No one was in sight when Herrando gave the order, but the words were loud enough to be heard in the darkness that lurked beyond the pavement where the cab had stopped.

Meanwhile, Carter Boswick, in the cab ahead, was finding his ride most intriguing. After rolling along broad boulevards, the taxi entered an area of crooked, winding streets, among picturesque buildings that had stood here for years—some, perhaps, for centuries.

Accustomed to life in South America, familiar with the cities of Buenos Aires and Montevideo, Carter Boswick, with his knowledge of Spanish, had no qualms whatever about visiting a district so little frequented by Americans. When his cab pulled up before an archway that was blocked by an iron-grilled gate, Carter Boswick felt the intriguing appeal of the unusual.

The cab driver spoke to a man who was standing by the gate. He was explaining that this Americano wished to enter. Carter followed with a few words of his own. The gate opened, and he walked through the archway

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into a patio with a little fountain in the center.

Passing beyond the fountain, Carter ascended a flight of steps and came to a large room that once must have been the chief gaming hall of the club. It was surrounded with small, uncurtained booths; and the center portion of the floor had scattered tables. The place had been changed into a restaurant.

Carter took his seat at one of these tables and surveyed the motley persons assembled there. Grimy, sordid faces showed members of Havana's underworld; but mingled with them were persons of a higher social plane.

Carter noted that the more respectable people seemed to segregate themselves in the little booths at the sides. He remembered what the cab driver had said about revolutionary activities.

EVIDENTLY this place was tolerated because it enabled the police to keep tabs on the meetings of persons who were under ban. Carter knew that Cuba was a republic which seethed with an undercurrent of repressed animosity toward the existing administration. He imagined that some of the persons here were government spies.

His own experience of intrigues and counter-plots which he had found existing in Buenos Aires and Montevideo enabled him to identify this former club immediately.

Here, Carter felt, one sat just above the crater of a quieted volcano. One untoward incident—a cry of revolution—an accusation of a police spy—an unexpected brawl—such would suffice to create tumult.

Carter noted a huge stairway at the side of the room. It started at one corner, ran upward diagonally along the wall, and terminated in a balcony that made three sides of a square. He could see little doorways up there; and he sensed that they marked the entrances of private dining rooms or gambling apartments.

While Carter was watching, a Spaniard of dignified appearance entered and went up the stairs. A few moments later, a handful of ruffians came in and scattered themselves about at different tables.

Carter noticed that the gentleman entered one of the upstairs rooms. He caught a few words in Spanish uttered at another table. They gave him an inkling. This man was a former senator, no longer in political favor. His purpose here might be a secret meeting; these ruffians were, in all likelihood, a bodyguard.

Interested in the buzz that passed through the room, Carter did not observe the three men who entered and sidled over toward his table. They were the trio sent by Stacks Lodi.

With mutual design, they reached a table only a short distance from where Carter was sitting, but behind his back.

The room was quieting when one of these men arose. It was Herrando, the one who had appointed himself a leader. Leering as he stared at Carter's back, the man caught the attention of various persons in the place.

Carter, unaware of Herrando's presence, saw the scattered ruffians stare suspiciously in his direction. The next moment, he was seized roughly by the shoulder, and loud words of accusation were hissed in his ear.

“Americano! Bah!” Herrando's words came in a venomous voice. “You are a traitor! You have come here to spy—”

Like a flash, Carter was on his feet. He swung a swift punch in Herrando's direction, and sent the man sprawling. Cassalta and Bolano were leaping forward.

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In the gloomy light of the big hall, Carter could not distinguish their faces—he knew only that they were enemies. Plucking up the light table beside him, he flung it against the pair, and saw the two men sprawl backward. Then, with a mad rush, he ran toward the door, seeking escape.

Escape was not so easy. Carter's quick response had done exactly what Herrando had hoped. It had excited wild alarm, and had apparently proven the truth of the accusation.

The scattered ruffians were on their feet, ready to block the flight of this false Americano. A spark of flame had been set to the powder barrel of lurking suspicion.

A machete gleamed as one of Havana's mobsmen leaped forward to end Carter Boswick's dash. The American side—stepped the ruffian's swing, and planted a swift blow upon the Cuban's cheek. The machete flew across the floor; the man sprawled and started to draw a revolver from his belt.

Seeing his intention, Carter fell upon him. The action was a wise one. Just as Carter yanked the gun from the downed man's grasp, other revolvers flashed. Loud cries sounded, and startled men came from the booths to join the attack in which Carter Boswick was the focal point.

Rising, Carter pointed the revolver and fired toward a ruffian who was aiming at him. The shot went wide. With a snarl, the man moved his finger against the trigger.

But the report which followed did not come from the Cuban's gun. Instead, it issued from the door that led to the patio. It was the terrific roar of an automatic.

The Cuban sprawled upon the floor, and all the others turned quickly to greet the source of the unexpected attack.

Just within the doorway stood a tall figure in black. A sinister form, garbed in flowing black cloak and broad-brimmed slouch hat, The Shadow had arrived in time to save the doomed American!

Each hand, covered with a thin black glove, held a powerful automatic. Sharp, burning eyes glowed beneath the brim of the slouch hat. The Shadow's perfect aim had crippled Carter Boswick's antagonist.

Realizing that aid had come, Carter dropped almost to the floor. Crouching, he headed for the nearest corner.

The Shadow had diverted the attack. Fiendish cries arose as the ruffians and others of their ilk turned toward the invader. Revolvers flashed and scattered shots broke forth.

The reports of The Shadow's automatics sounded above the din. Stabs of flame burst from the huge .45s. Hostile weapons seemed useless. Bullets struck the wall beside The Shadow, but his tall form seemed to weave back and forth with uncanny precision.

The hasty aimers had no luck; those who were more deliberate never gained the chance they sought. For The Shadow's unerring guns delivered their shots at the ruffians who were coolly seeking to slay him.

Gun arms dropped as The Shadow's bullets found them. Evil-faced killers staggered and dropped to the floor before the thunder of The Shadow's wrath.

The briefness of the fight was surprising. The Shadow was aiming to wound, not to kill; and that very policy brought quick results. The cries of the crippled men were appalling to their comrades.

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There were doors in the wall away from the spot where The Shadow stood. Realizing the power that lurked in The Shadow's weapons, some of the fighters began a mad dash for safety.

The flight stimulated a general effort toward escape. Many of the denizens of this place were fearful of consequences, should they be discovered here.

Scurrying fugitives headed for the path that led away from this danger zone. The Shadow's guns spoke only at intervals, when some more daring ruffian would turn in an effort to shoot him down.

Suddenly, the black-gloved fingers opened. The automatics, their bullets spent, clattered to the floor. In a twinkling, those hands, reaching beneath the folds of the black cloak, produced another brace of guns.

The gesture was sufficient. With wild cries, the last of the fugitives hurried through the doorways, and did not return.

Three men, however, had avoided The Shadow's shots with fell design. Those three were Stacks Lodi's men. Balked in their first attack on Carter Boswick, the trio had left the American in the hands of the ruffians.

With The Shadow's intervention, Herrando had immediately feared the consequences of the riot that he had begun. With a quick gesture to Cassalta and Bolano, he had gained the long flight of stairs, and the other two had followed him.

Upon the balcony, the three were waiting. They were alone, for there was another exit from the second floor; and all upstairs had taken it. The trio remained, with revolvers in their grasp, awaiting a moment of opportunity.

Carter Boswick, back against the wall below, did not offer the suitable target that they wanted, but a strange freak of chance brought him into range.

As the last of the departing patrons were scurrying from the rear doors, whistles sounded from beyond the gate outside the patio. The shrill sounds signaled the arrival of the police.

Carter Boswick, acting upon impulse, sought a quick exit. He sprang to the stairs, and hurried upward, at the same time calling out a warning to the black-clad rescuer at the outer door.

THE SHADOW'S eyes gleamed as they turned upward. He saw Carter Boswick's intention, and realized that the American was trying to show him a way to safety. The Shadow's laugh resounded through the room, a burst of triumph that rang out in the face of danger.

To The Shadow, the invasion of the police was no more a menace than the flight of the panic-stricken cowards who were now scurrying through the doors beyond. But there was a note in The Shadow's mirth that betokened more.

His keen eyes saw that Carter Boswick, who thought himself safe, but feared for The Shadow, was actually the one who was about to encounter danger.

Three figures were rising to block the young man's path. Foremost was Herrando; behind him, ready to join in the assassination, were Cassalta and Bolano.

As he faced the top of the stairs, Carter Boswick stopped short. Almost before his eyes was the gleaming muzzle of a revolver. Herrando, leaning coolly upon the newel post of the balcony balustrade, was about to

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deliver a fatal shot.

Carter's gun was in his hand—the weapon that he had seized from the ruffian whom he had downed in combat. It was too late to use it now. He had run into certain death. The barrel of a threatening revolver scarcely a yard from his face; The Shadow, his rescuer, rods away, by the outer door!

Instinctively, Carter was sure that The Shadow could not aid him now, due to the distance of the range. The same thought had occurred to Herrando. It accounted for the South American's boldness.

But neither Carter nor Herrando had reckoned with The Shadow's might.

In that moment of tense suspense, when Herrando's finger wavered on the trigger, The Shadow's right hand acted. The same hand had raised its automatic in time with the lifting of the head above it. The automatic spoke. One single shot.

Herrando's body twisted. A cry came from the assassin's evil lips. His murderous form toppled against the balustrade. The ornamental parapet failed beneath his sagging weight. Decayed wood crackled; the rail broke, and Herrando shot forward with a wild shriek, plunging headlong to the floor below.

The Shadow's thrust shattered the morale of the other two villains. Cassalta and Bolano did not wait to learn of Herrando's fate. The unexpected stroke was proof of The Shadow's power, even at this distance.

Carter Boswick, raising his revolver as Herrando fell, was also a menace close at hand. Instead of raising their guns, the two South Americans plunged madly into the doorway of a room behind them. Carter Boswick fired futile shots at their retreating forms.

With the foiled assassins gone, Carter looked below to see what The Shadow was about to do. He saw one black arm raised; he noted the pointing finger that bade him to follow the route which the fleeing pair had taken. Carter hesitated a moment; then, as the stern finger continued to point, the young man obeyed.

He found that the room into which his enemies had run had an opening to an outside corridor. He followed this and came to a stairway. It led him to an outer doorway on a narrow, deserted street.

This was the way that all upstairs had taken. No one had remained in the vicinity. No police had arrived here as yet. Pocketing the revolver, Carter Boswick moved rapidly along, confident that he could find his way to the Southern Star unmolested.

BACK in the main room of the old Barcelona Club, The Shadow stood alone. The iron gate was clanging as police sought to break their way into the patio. Calmly sliding his two braces of automatics beneath the folds of his cloak, The Shadow moved among the tables until he reached the spot where Herrando lay.

The murderous villain was dead. The Shadow's timely shot had not killed, for it had been designed to prevent Herrando from using his own weapon, and The Shadow had picked the man's right shoulder as the most accessible spot. But the plunge from the balcony had finished The Shadow's work. Herrando's neck was broken.

A terrific clang came from the distance as the iron gate broke before the attacks of the enraged police. The Shadow's laugh seemed to join in the echoes of the clatter. There was a reason now why The Shadow did not want his presence known to these invaders.

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With strident mirth still ringing from his lips, the black-garbed fighter stooped and picked up the body of Herrando as one would lift the form of a small child. With his burden slung across his shoulder, The Shadow strode through one of the farther doorways.

When the police arrived, a minute later, they found the hall deserted, save for a few wounded ruffians who still lay among the tables. These were attackers whom The Shadow had crippled so effectively that they had been unable to join the others in hasty flight.

The Shadow, himself, was gone, leaving no token of his departure. Somewhere amid the narrow streets of old Havana, he was carrying away the dead body of the final victim.

The Shadow had prevented assassination tonight. In so doing, he had defeated a horde of Cuban apaches, and had spread terror among the evildoers of the island's capital.

The Shadow's work was not yet ended. He had not prevented the danger that was due to come. How the intended murder of Carter Boswick could still be thwarted was the next problem that The Shadow must meet.

Carter Boswick might believe himself safe aboard the Southern Star. The Shadow knew that the menace still hung over the homeward-bound New Yorker. When danger ruled again, The Shadow would meet it, by craft as well as might.

CHAPTER VI. THE SHADOW'S STRATEGY

THE Southern Star was plowing northward. The first night out of Havana, new passengers were making friends, and old ones were renewing acquaintances. Only the more experienced seafarers were in the smoking room, however, as the weather was rough, and the rolling of the ship was none too pleasant.

Two men—apparently chance acquaintances—were seated in a corner of the smoking room. One was Cassalta; the other Bolano. Each had picked up his ticket without reporting to Stacks Lodi. This was their first meeting, and they had not yet interviewed their chief.

Bolano was raising a glass of liquor to his lips. Suddenly he stopped, and his hand trembled. Cassalta looked in the direction of his companion's eyes. There, approaching the table, was their fellow villain of the night before—Herrando.

Both the seated men repressed gasps of astonishment as Herrando joined them. They noted that their returned comrade was pale; that his right arm was held stiffly at his side. But he smiled in the villainous fashion of Herrando.

“You thought I was dead, eh?” he questioned, in Spanish. “Well, comrades, you were wrong!”

“But you were shot.”

Herrando still smiled as he heard Bolano's muffled exclamation.

“In the shoulder,” he said calmly. “A flesh wound—that was all.”

“You fell through the rail?”

“Yes. A nasty tumble. It shook me terribly, but did not injure me.”

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“But the man at the door?”

“He fled. The police were coming. I, too, was able to escape. It was most fortunate.”

A pause followed. Bolano and Cassalta gulped their drinks in silence, wondering at the miraculous escape which Herrando had made. Then their newly arrived comrade spoke again.

“I have seen Senor Lodi,” he announced quietly. “I talked with him but an hour ago. He gave me a message. He does not wish to talk with any of us at present.”

The others nodded. They knew that this policy was a wise one.

“The weather is rough tonight,” continued Herrando. “It is lessening, so the captain has said. Therefore, tonight would be best for the—let us say accident—that we propose. I am confident that the Americano will not recognize us, if we keep well away from him. I spoke to Senor Lodi about last night's mishap, and he agrees.

“Senor Boswick has an outside cabin. It is likely that he will come to the smoking room tonight. Afterward, he will probably go by the door over yonder. When he shows such signs of departure, I shall precede him. You, my comrades, will follow.”

More nods of agreement. Herrando arose to go away, giving his last words of instruction.

“Senor Lodi will be here to give the signal for each of us. Keep apart, senores.

With that, Herrando went across the smoking room. Cassalta and Bolano separated. The three were apart and obscurely situated, when Carter Boswick entered the smoking room. Stacks Lodi came later, and joined a group in a card game.

The gambler was wise. He did not care if he might be recognized as a card sharp. The offense would be passed over; and it would free him from connection with the other work.

IN Carter Boswick's mind, last night's events were a muddle. He knew nothing of what had caused the trouble at the Barcelona Club. He remembered very little concerning any of his assailants.

He thought the whole affair had been a matter of mistaken identity. Furthermore, he was elated by a letter that he had received on shipboard just before sailing.

He produced the letter now. It was from his father in New York, and it filled Carter Boswick with gladness, despite a tinge of apprehension that it had also created.

He looked at the message.

Your return will be a welcome one, my son. I am overjoyed because you have been successful in foreign lands. I am nearing the end of life; whatever I have will be yours, save for a pension to your cousin, Drew Westling.

Life is uncertain; although your return will be soon, I may not be here to welcome you. But I have confidence in you, and whatever test may arise, I know that you will meet it.

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Should I not be here, Carter, my lawyer, Farland Tracy will tell you of my wishes. From him you will learn much—but there will be more to learn, even though I may be dead. Be discreet, my son, beware of hidden danger and meet all hazards that may confront you.

The odd phraseology of the letter was startling to Carter Boswick. He read the message over and over; still, he wondered at its hidden meaning. He thrust the letter in his pocket, lighted a cigar, and lapsed into a reverie of the past.

Stacks Lodi, seated at the card table, was watching Carter Boswick from the corner of his eye.

There was another for whom Lodi was watching—Lamont Cranston. He did not know why; he simply wondered if Cranston were about. He had learned that the man had booked passage on this ship. Not seeing Cranston, Lodi decided that the man must be in his stateroom. Many of the passengers had kept to their cabins tonight.

Carter Boswick was finishing his cigar. Stacks Lodi sensed that he would soon leave the smoking room. The gambler was pleased when a timely lull occurred in the game. He got up from the table and walked to the bar. On the way, he flashed a quick signal to Herrando.

The South American arose and left the smoking room. But he did not stop when he reached the outside deck. He moved swiftly, despite the roll of the ship, and gained a near-by cabin. It was not the one that belonged to Herrando. It was the cabin engaged by Lamont Cranston.

A few moments later, a figure emerged from the cabin door. Tall, black, and spectral, it loomed like a ghost from the brine that swept the deck. Herrando, the man who had so strangely come back to life, was no longer Herrando. He was The Shadow!

Had Stacks Lodi been there, he might have understood. Lamont Cranston had come aboard, and had left the ship later. Then Herrando had come on board in his place. So far as any one knew, both men were on the Southern Star; in reality, both men were one!

Within the smoking room, Stacks Lodi saw Carter Boswick arise and start for the door that made the shortest way to his cabin. Stacks was pleased to note that no one else seemed to observe Carter's departure.

From the bar, Stacks caught the eye of Cassalta, and made a slight sign. Then he spotted Bolano, and repeated the action. The two men, surreptitiously, followed the path that Carter Boswick had taken.

Stacks Lodi, his fingers gripping a revolver in his pocket, grimly resolved to follow also. He wanted to be sure that his assassins did not fail tonight.

CARTER Boswick, when he reached the deserted deck, did not go directly to his cabin. Instead, he stopped beside the rail and watched the surging sea that swirled and battered at the side of the plunging ship. In this action, he once again played into the hands of enemies.

The door opened behind him. Carter did not hear it. An instant later, Cassalta and Bolano, recognizing their intended victim, leaped forward with no thought of where Herrando might be. They caught Carter Boswick unaware.

The young man felt his body lifted upward by the rail—in another second, he would have seen hurled out into the ocean, but for the intervention which occurred.

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A mass of darkness swept upward from a spot beside the rail. A living creature conjured from nothingness, The Shadow flung himself into the fray. He sent both Cassalta and Bolano spinning. Carter Boswick plunged safely to the deck, and lay there, half stunned.

The South Americans, sprawling, did not know what had struck them, until they glanced up, terrorized, to see the strange being who had balked them in the fight of the night before.

These men were at The Shadow's mercy; but it was now their turn to gain by intervention. Stacks Lodi, stepping from the door with gun in hand, saw The Shadow. The gambler, versed in the lore of New York's underworld, recognized this terrible foe. He raised his revolver to fire.

But The Shadow, turning, saw the menace. The black-gloved hands shot forward. They caught Stacks Lodi with incredible swiftness. The gun went spinning across the deck. Stacks and The Shadow were locked in a furious tussle.

Cassalta and Bolano sprang to their feet, and rushed to aid their chief. As they arrived, Stacks shot head foremost along the slippery deck, skidding up against the rail.

The two South Americans hit The Shadow at once, from behind. The black-gloved hands caught Cassalta's wrists. The Shadow's body seemed to crumple to the deck; then snapped upward like a whipcord.

The mighty effort succeeded with amazing results. The Shadow had taken no direction in his aim. His purpose was merely to fling Cassalta away. But the twist of his body headed the assassin directly toward the rail.

As the ship rolled, Cassalta went spinning through the air like a huge missile flung from a catapult. Timed with the sidewise descent of the ship, The Shadow's terrific heave sent the assassin a dozen feet through the air, clear over the rail by a space of a full yard, and on out into the raging sea!

Bolano had no inkling of his comrade's fate. He and The Shadow were rolling across the deck. Bolano's hand fell upon Stacks Lodi's gun. With a savage cry, the second killer gripped the weapon and sought to press the trigger.

His effort was successful, but not with the result that he expected. The hand of The Shadow caught his wrist as he was about to fire. A twist occurred just as Bolano discharged the gun. Bolano groaned and crumpled away, the bullet in his own body. His fingers lost their grip, and the revolver bounced upon the deck.

Stacks Lodi, disarmed, had seen the amazing fight. He heard the shot, and saw The Shadow rolling free. With a gasp of terror, he ran along the deck, turned into a door that led to a corridor, and made his way back to the smoking room.

THE SHADOW arose. He saw the form of Bolano, dying on the deck. He reached the spot where Carter Boswick lay, and helped the groggy young man to his feet. When Carter Boswick fully regained his senses, he found himself lying on the berth in his own stateroom.

The aftermath of the strange fray began later that night, when a steward discovered the body of Bolano with the gun beside it. Stacks Lodi was still gambling in the smoking room when the news broke.

An investigation followed. It was learned that two men were missing—both South Americans—Cassalta and Herrando. Nothing else could be ascertained; but it was decided that all three—Bolano as well as the missing men—were of questionable character.

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The report was that a quarrel must have occurred; that two had united to throw the third overboard. Then the two had battled: Bolano, shot by his antagonist, had managed to hurl him into the sea.

Carter Boswick wisely kept his peace. There was much that he did not understand about the attack which had been made upon him. He knew only that a mysterious stranger had once again appeared to beat off his antagonists.

It was Stacks Lodi who maintained a trembling silence. He, too, was perplexed. He wondered what had happened to Herrando. He believed that The Shadow must have dispatched that villain before he attended to the others. He never dreamed that The Shadow had assumed the guise of Herrando!

Stacks Lodi did not see Lamont Cranston on board the ship. The reason was that Stacks Lodi seldom left his stateroom. He lay in hiding, hoping only that his share in the strange events had not been known by the dread avenger.

For Stacks Lodi had recognized The Shadow. He had terrible news to bear to Hub Rowley. There would be a new menace to confront the big shot's schemes.

The Shadow, master mind opposed to crime, had shown his hand. Now, hidden and mysterious, he was permitting Stacks Lodi to carry back the word. Contemptuous of the criminals whom he opposed, he had spared this skulking underling.

The Southern Star plowed on through lessening seas. Each day was indicative of approaching calmness on the ocean. But when the steamship landed, there would be no quietude ashore. Then forces of evil would be met by the hand of The Shadow!

During this strange lull, Carter Boswick, entirely unconscious of the cause, still wondered why he had been attacked by unknown enemies. Little did he know of the turmoil in store for him.

He had been saved by The Shadow. Would that same hand strike again to rescue him when hidden danger came?

Only The Shadow could answer!

CHAPTER VII. THE HOME-COMING

WHEN the Southern Star docked at its North River pier, Carter Boswick was one of the first persons ashore. All the way up the river, the young man had imbibed the breeze of New York Harbor with a sense of new elation.

The sky line of Manhattan, replenished with huge buildings which had been erected during his absence, the familiarity of old views which Carter had not seen for years—these conspired to give the returning man an unexpected yearning for home.

Carter's thoughts were of his father. All during the voyage from Havana he had read and reread the letter. His eagerness to greet his lone parent had reached the proportions of a mania. The details of customs examinations on the pier were an annoyance that Carter Boswick could scarcely undergo.

His luggage, each item labeled with a letter B, was subjected to an immediate examination, while Carter waited impatiently. Close beside him were passengers whose names began with C. One of those passengers—Lamont Cranston—was watching Boswick with careful gaze. Carter Boswick was not conscious of the

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surveillance.

While Carter Boswick waited, he felt a touch upon his shoulder. Turning, he faced a well-dressed man of medium height, whose features were firm and aristocratic. Carter had never seen this individual before. He was evidently some one who had come to meet the boat, for Carter did not recall him as a passenger.

“You are Carter Boswick?”

The man's question was calm, but solemn. Carter nodded, wondering who the man might be.

“I am Farland Tracy. I have come to meet you.”

The name was momentarily unfamiliar. Then Carter recalled his father's letter. The young man thrust his right hand forward.

“My father's attorney,” he said.

“Yes,” responded Tracy, in an even tone. “I was your father's attorney.”

As Carter blinked in slow understanding, Tracy's hand dropped gently upon the young man's shoulder. The lawyer's eyes were sympathetic.

“Your father is dead, Carter,” he explained quietly. “He felt that the end was near the day he wrote his last letter to you. You received it? In Havana?”

Carter Boswick nodded.

“Your father lived scarcely more than twenty-four hours after he sent that letter,” resumed Tracy. “He was weary of life—incurably ill—a shell of himself as you had known him. He chose that you should not know until you had reached New York.”

It was with difficulty that Carter Boswick controlled his emotions. For years, his father had been scarcely more than a name to him. They had never quarreled, but there had never been a real understanding between them. Returning to America, Carter had sensed that his present maturity might enable him to meet his father on a basis of mutual friendship that had not existed in the past.

A surge of regret swept through the young man's mind. He realized that he, while not a prodigal, was scarcely a deserving son. Farland Tracy sensed the mingling of emotions. He seemed to understand, and his kindly sympathy came to the fore. He beckoned toward his chauffeur, who had followed him on the pier.

“Take charge of Mr. Boswick's luggage, Holland,” the lawyer ordered. “He and I will take a taxi to the Law Club. We are having luncheon there. Call for us about three thirty.”

HOLLAND was not the only person who heard the order. Lamont Cranston, apparently busy with a customs agent, had listened to Farland Tracy's words.

A few minutes after Tracy and Carter Boswick had left the pier, Lamont Cranston followed. He stopped in a telephone booth and made a brief call. After that, he hailed a taxi and ordered the driver to take him to the Law Club.

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There was a thin smile on Cranston's lips as he alighted at the portals of the Law Club. He entered the building, and spoke to the attendant who inquired his business there.

"I am Mr. Cranston," he said in a quiet tone.

"Yes, Mr. Cranston," responded the attendant. "You may enter, sir. Judge Lamark just called, sir. He said that you were to be admitted."

Cranston still smiled as he walked through the lobby of the exclusive club. His phone call from the pier had brought quick results. Judge Vanniman Lamark was a friend of Lamont Cranston. He had been pleased to hear from him. He had promised to arrange Cranston's admittance to the club, and would try to meet his friend there at three o'clock.

In the grillroom of the club, Cranston discovered Farland Tracy and Carter Boswick ordering lunch in a booth at the side of the room. Unnoticed, Cranston slipped into the adjoining booth. He gave a quiet order to a waiter; then listened intently. His keen ears caught every word that passed between Farland Tracy and Carter Boswick.

"As I have stated," Tracy was saying, "your father made you his sole heir—except for a moderate but ample income that he left to your cousin, Drew Westling."

"Why wasn't Drew at the boat to meet me?" questioned Carter.

"I don't believe that he knew when you were coming in," answered Tracy. "Your father told him that you were on your way from Montevideo; but I don't think that Drew inquired the day of your arrival. Your father's death was a blow to Drew."

"Of course," agreed Carter. His tone, however, showed a tinge of disappointment. Drew Westling was his only relation, now that Houston Boswick was dead.

"You will probably find Drew at the house," declared Tracy. "He is living there; and Headley, your father's servant, has remained. There are other domestics—Headley is the only one of consequence. He is something of a supervisor, or caretaker."

Farland Tracy paused after this explanation. Then, in a new train of thought, he came to a matter that proved to be of special consequence.

"There is a certain factor regarding your father's estate," resumed the lawyer, "that I cannot mention just at present. I discussed it with your father shortly before his death. My instructions were to wait until you had reached the home, and had established a residence there.

"Technically, such residence will begin as soon as you have stepped across the threshold, providing you announce your intention of keeping the old house. You will assume your father's place as master there. So I shall come to visit you this evening. We can discuss affairs in the rooms that used to be your father's study."

There was a seriousness in the lawyer's tone that impressed Carter Boswick.

"TELL me," questioned the young man. "Was all well at the time of my father's death?"

"Yes and no," responded the lawyer thoughtfully. "Your father, Carter, had been living under certain apprehension. He had hoped for your return. If you had not come back, Drew Westling would have been his

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heir. Therefore, he took rather extraordinary methods to protect his estate.

“At the time he died, he believed that certain efforts were being made to interfere with his plans. He did not seem to fear that his life was in danger; but he did think that his property might be in jeopardy.

“He was positive that unknown persons had entered his home during his absence, in an effort to frustrate his plans. There was, however, no trace of an actual plot. He might have been mistaken—”

Carter Boswick interrupted. In a low, tense voice, he recounted his adventure in Havana, and the episode that had taken place aboard the Southern Star. Farland Tracy listened intently to the story. When Carter had concluded, the lawyer rubbed his chin in deep thought.

“Those events may be of a serious nature, Carter,” he declared. “It seems amazing that two attempts should have been made upon your life, at a time when you were coming home to gain a heritage. On the contrary, they may have been chance episodes. They may have no bearing upon your present situation. That, I sincerely hope, is the case.”

“Why?” questioned Carter, as the lawyer paused.

“Because,” continued Tracy, in a regretful tone, “there is only one person who could profit by your death.”

“Drew Westling?”

“Yes.”

Carter Boswick chewed his lips. He knew that Farland Tracy had spoken an apparent truth. Nevertheless, he was loath to believe that his cousin could be planning perfidy.

That, too, appeared to be Tracy's thought. The lawyer expressed it in definite terms.

“Drew Westling is a spendthrift,” he declared. “Shortly before your father's death, Drew lost heavily at the gaming table. I did my utmost to disentangle him from the snare. I succeeded only partially—enough to protect Drew for the time.

“I said nothing to your father regarding the matter. Had I mentioned it, Drew would probably have lost his income, and all claim to the estate, had you failed to arrive home.”

While Carter was still nodding his understanding, Tracy continued in a milder, more tolerant tone.

“Nevertheless,” he resumed, “Drew is a likable young man, with all his faults. I would hesitate to class him as a plotter. I feel that he should be given the benefit of all doubt. At the same time, you should use discretion, Carter. My visit tonight will be important. It must be between ourselves. It concerns your affairs only.

“Drew Westling is entitled to his provision in the terms of the will. He is your cousin. He has a right to live with you at the old mansion. I know that you will treat him generously. Still, you must remember the existing facts. Give affairs a chance to adjust themselves. Be cordial to Drew, but make your renewed friendship one of slow culmination.”

“I appreciate the advice,” responded Carter. “It is well given, Mr. Tracy. Drew Westling's lack of interest in my arrival gives me an excellent starting point. I shall be cordial and glad to see my cousin. But my experiences in foreign lands have shown me the folly of becoming too friendly all at once—even when a

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relative and boyhood chum is concerned.”

The men finished their lunch. Farland Tracy glanced at his watch and noticed that it was half past three.

“Holland must be here with the car,” said the attorney. “He will drive you to your home, Carter. I shall call tonight shortly before nine. It will apparently be no more than a chance visit; actually it will be a matter of greatest consequence. You understand?”

“Absolutely,” replied Carter Boswick. “You may rely upon me.”

The two men left the grillroom. Lamont Cranston remained. A few minutes later, an entering man stopped at Cranston's table. It was Judge Vanniman Lamark, pleased to greet an old friend whom he had not seen for nine months.

As he chatted idly with the judge, Lamont Cranston still wore his thin smile. He was thinking of that appointment between Farland Tracy and Carter Boswick. He, too, would be there at nine o'clock.

But he would not visit the Boswick mansion as Lamont Cranston. Tonight, The Shadow would reappear to again play a hidden part in the destinies of Carter Boswick!

CHAPTER VIII. THE SECRET MESSAGE

IT was eight o'clock that evening. Carter Boswick, back in his father's old mansion, was pacing the floor of the gloomy hall. He spied Headley walking morosely toward the dining room. The servant turned as Carter spoke.

“Has Mr. Westling called?” inquired Carter.

“No, sir,” answered Headley.

“Very well, then,” said Carter, with a tone of impatience. “I shall go ahead with dinner.”

“It is ready, sir. Mr. Westling is usually quite late—”

The front door opened by way of interruption. Carter Boswick turned. His keen eyes studied a man who was entering. He saw a young fellow of slight build, whose carriage and pale features marked him of the lounging type. The arrival was holding a long cigarette holder in one hand. This added to his listless appearance.

For a moment the two faced each other. Then a light crept over the features of the man who had just entered. His eyes showed an unexpected sparkle. He sprang forward with hand extended.

“Carter!” he cried. “Carter!”

The enthusiastic greeting seemed genuine. Carter Boswick caught Drew Westling's hand, and grinned at the cousin whom he had not seen for years.

They had been boys together—these two—and the physical superiority of Carter Boswick was even more marked than before. Drew Westling seemed pitifully frail beside the stalwart form of his newly returned cousin.

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A few minutes later, the pair was seated at the dining-room table. The spontaneous meeting had brought a quick bond of unrestrained cordiality. They were talking over boyhood events with real enthusiasm. To Carter Boswick, this get-together had taken an unexpected turn.

“Do you remember that game we used to play so often”—Drew Westling's voice had assumed a reminiscent tone—“and how exact we were in every detail?”

“You mean the duel between D'Artagnan and De Guise?” smiled Carter.

“Yes,” nodded Drew. “We used those short billiard cues for swords, and chalked the ends of them so we could count the thrusts.”

“We must have played that battle a hundred times.”

“Right out of the pages of 'The Three Musketeers'. We used to read the old volume of Dumas for inspiration—then change them into action. We passed that stage of life, though. Funny thing, Carter”—Drew paused wistfully—“I never could think of reading a Dumas story again, after you went away.”

Carter made no reply. His cousin was thoughtful then returned to his reminiscences.

“The old duel,” he recalled. “The one game that Uncle Houston would tolerate about the house. Perhaps that's why we played it so often. Remember how he used to watch us, Carter? How he used to criticize each thrust?”

Carter Boswick nodded. Drew Westling had brought back the one boyhood memory that was indelibly, impressed upon his mind. Only when he and Drew had fought their duel had Houston Boswick shown the real interest of a proud father and an indulgent uncle.

“Say, Carter”—Drew was on a more immediate subject—“it was pretty small of me not to meet you at the boat today. I knew you were coming in, and I should have called up Farland Tracy about it. But somehow, I've been pretty blue since my uncle—since your father—died. I was afraid you wouldn't know, and I didn't see just how—just how I could tell you. I thought if Tracy was there alone—”

“That's all right, Drew,” interrupted Carter quietly. “I understand. I did feel mighty broken up. I'm glad I didn't see you until now.”

DESPITE a resentful antagonism that he had held earlier in the evening, Carter Boswick now felt a warmth of kindness toward Drew Westling. He recognized that his cousin was a weakling, but the sentiment in Drew's nature did much to excuse that fault.

Just as dinner was ending, the doorbell rang. Headley answered it, and returned a few minutes later to announce that Farland Tracy was calling to see Mr. Boswick.

“Finish your dinner, old top,” Carter said to Drew. “I'll see what Tracy wants. Probably a friendly call. You can join us later.”

Reaching the hall, Carter found Tracy standing with a warning hand uplifted. Carter nodded, and led the lawyer upstairs to the study. The room was lighted; the shade was drawn. Carter closed the door. Tracy motioned for him to turn the key. Carter complied, and the lawyer brought out a bundle of papers.

“We must go through these,” he stated.

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The inspection began. Most of the papers were of purely legal nature. But at the bottom lay two envelopes. One was addressed to Carter Boswick; the other to Drew Westling; each envelope bore the statement that it was to be destroyed intact, should the other be the heir.

“These are letters which your father wrote,” explained Tracy. “Their contents are practically identical. He showed them to me before he sealed them. One for you—one for Drew—whichever might inherit the estate.”

Carter nodded and opened his envelope. He drew out the letter, and read it slowly, holding it so that the lawyer could also see the careful handwriting.

The letter read as follows:

My Dear Son Carter:

When you read this letter, I shall be dead. You will be my sole heir. You will be the recipient of a considerable estate. Nevertheless, if you are at all familiar with my reputed wealth, you may be somewhat disappointed.

During the past few years, I have made a constant effort to minimize the extent of my possessions. In this I have been fairly successful. I have had a definite purpose in such action. Men of great wealth are subject to preying enemies.

Their estates often are in jeopardy because the expectant heirs show jealousy or cross purposes.

In accordance with my policy, I have actually minimized my known estate. I have left it ample for your needs. You may be satisfied with its present size. At the same time, I must inform you that I have deposited, in a place of absolute safety, a sum nearly ten times as great as my announced estate.

If you wish that wealth, you may seek it. You can learn, if you will, where I have placed it. If you are a true son—as I feel sure you are—your thoughts of your dead father will prove a helpful guide.

It is my one regret, Carter, that we never understood each other as many fathers and sons have done. That lack of understanding was my fault—not yours.

When you and Drew Westling were boys together, I seldom showed interest in your activities. Only when you played your game of duel did I respond to your natural, boyish yearnings for the fatherly interest of an older man.

Perhaps you will be able to picture those exact scenes when we were together. I trust that you will go over them in detail, recalling all incidents, planning your game, and remembering me as I was then.

Perhaps the long-forgotten thrill of the battle between D'Artagnan and De Guise will enable you to understand your father as he really was—to help you know how much you mean to him today.

I possess wealth and I possess memories. To me, those memories are wealth itself. I trust that you will feel the same, Carter. This is the message that I give you. I feel sure that the future will hold in store the wealth that has been established for you by

Your father,

Houston Boswick.

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Carter Boswick studied the written lines. He checked each paragraph as he reviewed it. Finally, he laid the letter on the table, and turned to Farland Tracy.

“Is this the only communication that my father left for me?”

“Yes.”

“He speaks of a great sum of hidden wealth.”

“Yes,” declared Tracy. “Something in the neighborhood of ten million dollars, if his statement is correct. But the clew to its hiding place is one that you must find.”

“Have you any inkling of it?” questioned Carter.

“None at all,” admitted Tracy. “Your father was convinced that you would learn it after his death. How he arranged to lead you to it is beyond my comprehension. This letter is very vague; it turns from business to sentiment at a most unfortunate point. My only theory is that your father may have arranged for some communication to reach you from another source.”

“Perhaps.” agreed Carter.

“Should you learn more,” stated Tracy, “I advise you to be very careful. This letter is a private one. Another communication, if received, should be guarded. I am speaking now as your father's attorney—also as your attorney pro tem.”

“You will continue to be my lawyer,” said Carter.

“I appreciate that,” responded Tracy. “But now that my mission is completed, I shall leave you. It is most advisable that no one should know of any purpose in this visit.”

“I understand.”

Carter Boswick folded his letter, and placed it in his pocket. He took up the envelope addressed to Drew Westling, and tore it into four pieces, letter and all. He dropped the fragments in the wastebasket.

Farland Tracy was ready to leave. Carter Boswick accompanied him from the study. The door closed, and the room was empty.

That condition did not long exist.

THE window shade slowly arose, guided by a black-gloved hand from without. A tall form slid through the opening. The Shadow stood in the study. Softly, he lowered sash and shade. With quick stride, he moved toward the desk. Stooping, he plucked the torn letter from the wastebasket.

Listening outside the window, The Shadow had heard Farland Tracy's statement that the two letters—one to Carter, the other to Drew—were couched in similar phraseology. Hence, when The Shadow had quickly assembled the fragments of the torn letter, he possessed a practical replica of the epistle which Carter Boswick had so recently perused.

There, on the table, before the keen eyes of The Shadow, lay a note from uncle to nephew that carried the same theme—even to the dash of sentimental conclusion—that had appeared in the letter from father to son.

THE SHADOW'S JUSTICE

A soft laugh came from The Shadow's hidden lips. To the black-clad being, this letter had a definite meaning. Where Farland Tracy had seen nothing more than a mere statement of existing wealth that lay hidden, The Shadow was picking out a definite clew.

The subtlety of old Houston Boswick was manifested in this letter. The Shadow's black finger rested upon one vital phrase:

If you are a true nephew—as I feel sure you are—the thoughts of your dead uncle will prove a helpful guide.

That sentence was a key to the part of the letter that followed. With Drew Westling, as with Carter Boswick, the dead man had made a definite effort to guide the reader's thoughts!

Again, The Shadow laughed. Here, in this reclaimed letter that had never been delivered, he was finding the clew to Houston Boswick's secret!

CHAPTER IX. THE STOLEN CLEW

DOWNSTAIRS, Carter Boswick was bidding Farland Tracy good night. The lawyer was standing at the open door. Headley, the attendant, was holding his coat. In the driveway outside, Tracy's car was warming with Holland, the chauffeur, beside it.

Beyond were bushes. Dark splotches above a blackened lawn, they seemed to shout out a warning of hidden eyes that watched the scene at the doorway. Men were lurking in that shrubbery, but there was no tangible evidence of their presence.

The door closed. The muffled purr of Tracy's car sounded from the drive. Headley walked across the hall toward the back of the house. Carter noticed Drew Westling standing by the door of the dining room. His cousin was smoking the inevitable cigarette, in its accustomed holder.

Without comment, Carter turned back toward the stairs, which were just beyond Drew Westling's range of vision. When he reached the bottom of the steps, he did not ascend; instead, he went through a short hallway that led to the library.

This was an old room lined with many shelves of books. It was at the middle of one side of the house. It had one doorway entering from this hall, and at either end were curtained openings that led into adjacent rooms.

Carter softly closed the door behind him. He turned out a single lamp that rested on a table. Satisfied that he was free from observation, he began a prompt examination of the bookshelves.

For Carter Boswick, the moment that he had finished the second reading of his father's letter, had gained a sudden knowledge that he had kept entirely to himself. Inspired by the thought of a possible clew, he had said nothing to Farland Tracy.

It was evident that Houston Boswick had wanted his heir alone to learn of the place where wealth was hidden. The tone of the letter had given that indication. In reading, Carter had wondered at first how the information would be gained. Then, the reference to boyhood days had dropped like a bolt from a clear sky.

The very subject that Carter and Drew had discussed—those days when the two boys had played at duel with the elderly man watching them. That was a reference which only two persons could have understood with surety. Carter or Drew—either one as Houston Boswick's heir—might quickly catch the meaning. Carter believed that he had done so.

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To picture past events—to go over the details of long-remembered scenes—to follow his father's track of memory—that was the duty imposed upon Carter Boswick. In the letter, now reposing in Carter's pocket, was the statement that memories were as important as wealth.

Perhaps there was a connection between the two!

A PAIR of dusty volumes reposed high upon a neglected shelf. They were both portions of the same work—"The Three Musketeers," by Alexandre Dumas. Carter reached up and brought down one of the volumes. He ran through the yellowed pages, skimming them with his thumb, until there was a sudden stop. With a smile of elation, Carter drew forth a thin manila envelope from between the pages.

He shook the book to make sure that this was all. Satisfied, he laid the volume on the table where the lamp rested close beside a hanging curtain.

With eager fingers, Carter tore open the envelope and drew forth a slip of yellow paper. It bore a brief notation:

Lat. 46; 18' N.

Long. 88; 12' W.

Carter Boswick's mind was retentive. He read this location, in terms of latitude and longitude, and the exact position made a definite impression. Accustomed to long sea trips, Carter was used to speaking of places in such terms. He noted this as exactly as another person might have noted a telephone number.

Carter laid the paper and the envelope upon the closed book. He turned back to the shelf. Still running through his brain was the statement he had just noted:

Lat. 46; 18' N.

Long. 88; 12' W.

Carter repeated the words with silent lips as he drew down the other volume of "The Three Musketeers," and stepped back to whisk its pages.

The curtain moved beside the lamp. The slight, wavering tremble was not noticed by Carter Boswick, for the young man's mind was upon the second book which he held.

From the curtain came a slow, cautious hand. Its fingers spread beneath the soft glow of the light; they closed upon the paper and the envelope, and withdrew as quietly as they had come. Only the book remained. The direction sheet and its container were gone!

Carter was shaking the second volume. Nothing between its leaves. The one message was all that his father had left. It was enough. It marked a definite location. There, in all probability, would lie the beginning of a trail—perhaps the wealth itself.

Carter's musing ended abruptly. He was staring at the table where he had placed the first volume of Dumas. To his amazement, he noted that the paper and the envelope were gone!

Quickly, the young man began a futile search. He looked through the pages of the first volume. He found nothing. He frantically looked beneath the table; he shook the curtain. It required only a few minutes to

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convince him that the message was gone.

HAD the whole discovery been a product of his imagination? For a moment, Carter fancied so; but the constant running of the tabulated location still persisted in his mind.

Methodically, Carter drew his father's letter from his pocket. With a pencil, he wrote down the exact latitude and longitude.

Impelled by a new idea, he hastily replaced the two books upon the shelf. He opened the little door, came out through the entry, and walked across the hall. He reached the door of the dining room. Drew Westling was seated at the table, still smoking. Cigarette stumps lay in the ash tray before him.

Drew looked up as he saw Carter enter, and smiled nervously. It seemed obvious that he was trying to keep his thoughts to himself. When he spoke, he adopted an affable tone that was a trifle forced.

“Thought I'd stay in here while you finished your meal,” he explained to Carter. “Now that Tracy went away, I figured you would come back for dessert.”

“Of course,” said Carter calmly. “Very thoughtful of you, Drew.”

Headley entered while Carter was eating. The attendant cleared away the remaining dishes and went stolidly about his duty. Very few words were exchanged between Carter and Drew. Each appeared quite engrossed in his own thoughts.

Carter's mind was still picturing the scene in the library. The young man wondered if Drew Westling chanced to be considering it also. Nothing could be gained by silence; moreover, it would be wise not to mention that particular subject. Finishing his dessert, Carter opened a quiet but friendly conversation into which Drew entered with increasing vivacity.

BACK in the quiet library, the curtain moved once again; this time in darkness, for Carter Boswick had extinguished the lamp. A tiny light glimmered, held by an unseen hand. It ran along the bookshelves and stopped at two volumes that were very slightly out of place.

A black-gloved hand removed the two volumes of “The Three Musketeers.” The books were placed upon the table there, the flashlight glowed while fingers went through their pages.

A low, laugh-like whisper came from lips in the dark. The Shadow, following a clue that he had gained, had arrived after Carter Boswick had inspected these very books. A slight yielding of one volume at a certain spot indicated the place from which Carter had removed a message.

The books closed. The hands replaced them upon the shelf. The Shadow's light went out. The whisper died away in the darkness as an unseen form passed from the library, reached the hall, and looked into the dining room, where Carter still chatted with his cousin.

The figure moved toward the rear of the house. Soon it was gone. It reappeared momentarily from the side porch, and crossed the driveway toward the bushes. There, The Shadow listened. There was no sound.

Vigilant watchers were no longer here. The Shadow had detected them upon their arrival; now he discovered that they had left.

Why?

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The Shadow, even though he had arrived late in the library, sensed the explanation. The young Boswick, The Shadow knew, had found some message.

Had word of that finding been passed to those outside? Would an attack be made tonight?

Possibly; although the sudden departure of the watchers made it unlikely.

There was another explanation.

Some one within the house could have learned what Carter Boswick had found; or could even have taken whatever the young man had discovered. These watchers could have left with important information.

The Shadow had waited long in the upstairs study, believing that Carter Boswick had either failed to discover the meaning of his father's letter, or would have waited to follow instructions later in the evening. It was Carter's prompt actions that had blocked The Shadow's careful plan of previous inspection.

Much might have happened during that unanticipated interim. But The Shadow, even when he encountered ill fortune, never faltered. This strange personage had a weird ability to turn all events to his advantage. Such would be his plan tonight.

The stealthy figure made no sound, nor did it show itself as it moved across the lawn. Darkness seemed to swallow The Shadow as he set forth.

It was not until later that another figure made its appearance within the confines of the Boswick estate. A young man, cautious, but by no means invisible, took up his vigil at a convenient spot some distance from the house.

Harry Vincent, agent of The Shadow, had been summoned to keep watch and to report on Carter Boswick's actions. That would be his duty for the present. The Shadow, himself, had other work to do.

Into the darkness he had gone; within darkness would he remain. From somewhere, unseen, he would plan his campaign of swift action. The Shadow, alone, could frustrate the designs of those who had gained the stolen clew!

CHAPTER X. CARTER TAKES A TRIP

CARTER Boswick possessed an amazing faculty for walking into trouble. In Havana, aboard the Southern Star, he had deliberately stepped into difficulties. That same oddity was due to manifest itself again.

Had Carter Boswick failed to remember the latitude and longitude mentioned in the message he had found, he would no longer have been a factor in the grim game which Hub Rowley was playing. The Shadow, shrouded in darkness, knew well who was seeking the information which Carter had discovered.

Hence the course of The Shadow's investigation lay toward Hub Rowley. But The Shadow, wise in all procedure, had not neglected Carter Boswick as a possibility.

Nor had Hub Rowley.

When morning was well under way, the Boswick mansion was under surveillance from two directions, watched by men of opposing sides, neither of whom knew the others were on the job.

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Harry Vincent, agent of The Shadow, was lounging by the side of his coupe at a filling station across the highway from the Boswick home. Stacks Lodi, underling of Hub Rowley, was eating a belated breakfast in a little restaurant a few hundred yards farther down the road.

Meanwhile, within the big house, Carter Boswick was announcing plans. Those arrangements, from their very start, were destined to bring the young man back into the zone of action, making him a principal factor in the battle for wealth. For Carter, after a night of troubled sleep, had decided definitely to follow the lead that he had found in his father's message.

This meant that now, more than before, Carter Boswick would be slated for elimination by Hub Rowley. It also meant that he would be of vital importance to The Shadow—as a short cut to the information which The Shadow now was seeking to obtain.

Without realizing it, Carter was making himself a pawn on the board that lay between two shrewd and relentless players.

Yet Carter felt that he was taking every precaution when he spoke to both Drew Westling and Headley, in the dining room where he and his cousin had just finished breakfast.

“I intend to establish my residence here,” declared Carter. “Nevertheless it is essential that I follow business plans which I made before I left Montevideo. I represent a large South American importing house. My trip to New York was intended purely as a step toward a further business voyage to Europe.

“My original intention was to remain here a few weeks; then to go to Paris and Berlin. My father's death has caused me to change my plans. I must conclude the obligation which I owe to my associates in Montevideo; then I shall be free entirely. The sooner I discharge my duty, the better.

“Therefore, I shall book passage for Europe at once. I shall be back in New York within six weeks, and this will then become my permanent home. With Farland Tracy handling the affairs of the estate, there should be no obstacle in the arrangement. If you choose to remain here, Drew, you are welcome to do so—”

“Never mind about me,” interrupted Drew Westling. “I'll stay here when you're here, Carter; but in the meantime, I'd as soon drop away for a while. I'll move into the club as soon as you leave.”

“Which will be today,” remarked Carter, in an offhand tone. “I plan to go by way of Montreal and the St. Lawrence waterway. So I should like to start for Canada this evening.”

“Suits me,” returned Drew.

“As for you, Headley,” stated Carter, “you can resume your old duties of caretaker. The house will be closed; you can stay wherever you choose.”

“Very well, sir,” said the solemn attendant.

“That settled everything, then,” concluded Carter. “I have packed sufficient luggage. I shall start for the city at once. Call a cab, Headley.”

WHEN Carter Boswick's taxi rolled forth from the driveway, it became a target for watching eyes. Harry Vincent, nonchalantly stepping into his coupe, took up immediate pursuit. Stacks Lodi hurried from the restaurant and entered a sedan which had Scully at the wheel.

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The flow of traffic along the highway, the fact that the road led directly into Manhattan—these were the factors that prevented either of the trailers from noticing the presence of the other.

When the course finally ended on an uptown street in New York, and Carter Boswick left the cab and entered a towering skyscraper, it was obvious that the young man intended to visit some office in the building.

Both of the pursuers worked similarly. Harry parked his coupe across the street, and watched the door of the building. Stacks dropped from the sedan and lounged at a convenient post, while Scully managed to find a stopping point for the sedan, about half a block away.

Carter Boswick's business was brief. He told Farland Tracy exactly the same story that he had given Drew Westling and Headley. The lawyer agreed that the European trip should best be handled at once, so as to assure a return at the earliest opportunity.

He expressed only one doubt; namely, the possibility of Carter receiving some communication from a source not known.

“Remember,” he said sagely, “you may have an immense fortune almost within your grasp. It might be advisable to remain at the old home.”

“I thought of that,” returned Carter abruptly. “Nevertheless, I feel confident that my father planned well. No, Mr. Tracy, there is really no possibility of my failing to receive the information which belongs to me.”

“You speak with assurance,” said Tracy. “If you feel that way about it, I can see no objections to your voyage. Have a good trip, Carter, and do not worry. I shall attend to all affairs of the estate, and be ready with an exact report when you return.”

Coming from the building, Carter Boswick took a cab and went directly to the Grand Central Station. There, at the information booth, he drew a large map from his pocket and, after partially unfolding it, consulted certain notations which he had made on the back of it.

Carter had found this map before leaving the house; it was one of many old guides and charts that had belonged to his father's library.

Pocketing the map, Carter made inquiries regarding Western railroad lines running northwest from Chicago. He did not ask a single question concerning trains to Montreal. He named certain towns in the State of Wisconsin. The man at the booth consulted a huge railroad guide.

WHILE this was going on, other persons began to form in line. Half a dozen men were behind the rotunda counter, but all were busy. Carter paid no attention to the people close by, hence he did not realize that two men were overhearing his plans.

One was Harry Vincent. The Shadow's agent, a young man of athletic appearance, might well have been a chance traveler seeking routine information for a trip.

The other was Stacks Lodi.

But Carter would not have recognized Hub Rowley's underling, even though the man had been a passenger aboard the Southern Star. Stacks had shaved away his darkened, waxed mustache. The smooth upper lip gave him an entirely different appearance.

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When Carter Boswick had finished his questioning, he sauntered away from the information booth, his luggage in the custody of a porter. Harry Vincent stepped up and asked for a railroad time-table. Stacks Lodi did the same. Both, in walking away, followed the direction that Carter had taken.

Harry, consulting his time-table, passed the ticket window where Carter now stood, and overheard the young man making reservations. Harry kept on his way.

Stacks Lodi, arriving later, stood at the next window and heard the negotiations between Carter Boswick and the agent.

From then on, all paths diverged. Carter's western limited did not leave for a few hours. The young man checked his luggage and went from the station.

Harry Vincent sought a telephone booth. Calling a number, he stated what he had learned. He hung up the receiver and awaited a return call.

Stacks Lodi also used a telephone, in a different part of the station. His call was to Hub Rowley. He listened intently to the big-shot's response. His face gleamed as he heard Hub's words. He was smiling a wicked grin when he walked away from the booth.

The aftermath of this sequence of events came when the western limited pulled out of the Grand Central Station on its trip to Chicago.

Carter Boswick, deeply engrossed in a book that he had purchased, was seated in the club car. His mind was at ease. He had made it quite evident that he was going to Europe, via Montreal. Instead, he was off to visit the exact spot mentioned in his father's secret message—some unknown locality in the wilds of Wisconsin.

Across the way sat Harry Vincent—a quiet young man who was apparently unconcerned with those about him. At the card table, Stacks Lodi had already begun to amuse himself with a game of solitaire.

OPPOSING forces were at work. Carter Boswick, sure that he was free, with all knowledge of his secret trip a minus quantity, was already under the vigilant surveillance of two men—one who represented justice; the other, a tool of crime.

Once again, Carter Boswick was heading into trouble. Stacks Lodi, the trouble-maker, was on his trail. But still, Carter was under the secret protection of The Shadow. Harry Vincent, The Shadow's agent, had been deputed to be close at hand, forewarned that danger might strike.

Action was in abeyance on this journey. These men—neither of whom suspected the other's presence—were the advance guards. They were but the instruments of greater minds, the nullifying influences put forth by Hub Rowley and The Shadow.

Conflict was brewing between the big-shot and the dread avenger. The struggle would center about Carter Boswick, who had plunged himself into this fray for millions which rightfully belonged to him.

The impending battle was one that promised strange results—and into its fury would come others; men whose important parts in the drama of crime had not yet been revealed. Carter Boswick was totally unsuspecting of what lay ahead.

But The Shadow, hidden being of darkness, knew that unexpected consequences would soon manifest themselves. Plans long fostered were due to reach their startling climax when Carter Boswick gained the goal

that he sought!

CHAPTER XI. THE SHADOW'S PLAN

TWO nights had passed since Carter Boswick had set out from New York City. The third evening had fallen. Along a lonely road in northwestern Michigan, a swift coupe was speeding at sixty miles an hour.

Harry Vincent was the man behind the wheel. His eyes were steadily focused upon the gravel road that stretched before him. His hands responded to every bump of the jolting highway.

Despite the ordeal of the rapid drive, Harry wore a smile. He was nearing the end of his journey.

Obedient to The Shadow's order, Harry had followed Carter Boswick to Chicago; and had again taken up the trail when the young man had boarded a train north. At Green Bay, Wisconsin, a long break had occurred. Carter Boswick had been forced to wait over several hours for a connection.

This had given Harry an excellent idea. He was confident that no harm would befall the man whom he was protecting while Carter was traveling by train. The real danger lay at the stopping points. Hence Harry had used the interval to obtain an automobile capable of high speed. His study of the road maps convinced him that he could beat the time of Carter Boswick's train.

Now, with only a few miles to go, Harry was half an hour ahead of his schedule. He had waited at Green Bay until Carter Boswick had left; then he had burned up the roads in his untiring effort to reach the final destination before Carter arrived. This place was Junction City, a Michigan town some miles north of the Wisconsin border.

What was to happen at Junction City?

Harry had no inkling. He had been instructed to stay close to Carter Boswick, particularly after the end of the journey had been reached. That was exactly what Harry intended to do now. His only qualms concerned the fact that he had let Carter get out of sight during the travel from Green Bay to Junction City.

Harry Vincent had long been an agent of The Shadow. He had encountered many adventures while working in behalf of his mysterious master. In every instance, Harry had been free to act upon his own judgment when occasions arose. This had proven to be one of those cases.

Harry had changed from train to automobile for two definite reasons. First, because he feared that Carter Boswick might become aware of his presence during the final stage of the trip; second, because he knew that a car might come in handy at Junction City. The opportunity to obtain one at Green Bay had been too good to miss.

In all his episodes in The Shadow's service, Harry had encountered mystery. He had never gained an inkling as to the identity of his unknown employer.

Instructions came through only two sources—Rutledge Mann, a chubby-faced insurance broker in the Badger Building in New York City; and over the telephone, from a hidden agent named Burbank.

Through contact with one or the other, Harry received all routine information; but in times of emergency, he frequently received mysterious orders from The Shadow himself. Harry anticipated some such occurrences during this new adventure; for he was now far away from the usual base of operations.

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THOUGHTS of the unfolding mission, coupled with anxiety for Carter Boswick's present safety, spurred Harry unto a final burst of speed which ceased only when his headlights revealed a welcoming sign on the outskirts of Junction City. Here, Harry slackened the speed of the car and rolled easily through the lighted streets of a small town.

The sight of a signal light down a side street showed Harry that he was near the railroad, and he guided his car to a bumpy road that ran alongside the tracks. He finally came to a stop close beside a dilapidated railroad station.

Harry parked and waited. With lights extinguished, he could see the station platform beneath the dim glow of lamps from the overhanging roof. Leaning back in the seat, Harry took account of other surroundings. Down the street was an old building which bore the weather-beaten sign: "Junction House."

That, in all probability, would be Carter Boswick's stopping place.

A tenseness came over Harry Vincent as he began to review all that had happened since he had watched Carter Boswick at the information booth in the Grand Central Station in New York.

It was evident that Carter Boswick, although he had come directly to Junction City, had not made the best possible use of his time. Harry was already here ahead of him; and other persons could easily have achieved the same result. Therefore, trouble, if brewing, could begin tonight.

Harry glanced anxiously toward the station. His eyes became suddenly intent as he noted a peculiar phenomenon. One of the overhanging lights twinkled, as though something had passed between it and Harry. Then came a second twinkle from the next light; a third from the one farther on.

The whole effect was ghostly. Apparently, the solid form of a living being had moved along that platform; yet Harry had seen no more than an instantaneous blinking of each light.

It was happening again! This time from the opposite direction. Harry gripped the steering wheel. He knew that this could not be due to a peculiarity of the electric current that supplied the lights. No—some one had certainly passed along that platform!

In moments such as these, Harry Vincent regarded all signs as matters of consequence to himself. At first, his thought was one of hidden enemies. Then, puzzling the matter over, he gained a more hopeful thought.

Perhaps that curious manifestation signified the presence of The Shadow! Harry drew a breath of relief. It was possible that The Shadow, himself, might have come to Junction City. A fast hop by air—the slow progress of trains and attendant connections would be bettered by many hours.

While Harry still watched the lights, wondering if they would blink again, he heard the distant whistle of a locomotive. The sound was repeated with increasing loudness.

At last, the bright headlight of the engine bathed the station with brilliance. Harry still gazed at the platform. He saw no one lurking there.

The train came to a stop. Harry saw a young man alight, and recognized the figure of Carter Boswick. He saw Carter pick up a pair of heavy suitcases and start diagonally across the street. He was obviously going to the Junction House.

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But Harry, yielding to a hunch, still waited. He saw another man get off the train, with a valise in hand. Harry stared in sudden recognition. He was sure that he had seen the man before—on the limited between New York and Chicago!

HARRY was correct. This man was Stacks Lodi, still on Carter Boswick's trail. Harry saw Stacks light a cigarette, then leisurely follow the course that Carter had taken.

As soon as the second man had entered the hotel, Harry started the motor of his coupe, drove a short way up the street, turned, and pulled up at the door of the Junction House.

Harry carried his own suitcase into the hotel. No bell boy came to receive it. Harry guessed the reason. The place would not have more than two attendants; both were at present employed in showing the previous guests to rooms.

Signing the register, Harry noted two names inscribed there. One was Carter Boswick, in Room 208; the other was Antonio Lodi, in Room 215.

The slouching clerk read Harry's name; then wrote 222 after it. He rang a bell, but nothing occurred for several minutes. Then an unkempt bell boy came shambling down the stairs. The clerk tossed him the key.

After establishing himself in Room 222, Harry donned a pair of soft-soled slippers, and went out into the hallway. He noted a light beneath the door of Room 215, which was near the head of the stairs. He went on to the front of the hall, and spied Room 208. No light showed there. Evidently Carter Boswick had retired.

Starting back, Harry heard a click. He slid to the stairway that led toward the third floor, just as Stacks Lodi came out of Room 215. The man was fully dressed. Harry saw him go downstairs.

Listening at the top, Harry could hear him talking with the clerk. The discussion seemed to concern a good brand of cigar for a discriminating smoker.

The clink of coins indicated that the purchase had been made. Harry heard a remark concerning the coolness of the night. Stacks was praising the fine air of the vicinity. The slam of the front door meant that some one had gone outside.

Harry stole to the front of the hall. He opened a window above a small porch that projected over the sidewalk. This portion of the hall was almost totally dark. Harry slipped noiselessly to the porch and lay flat, peering over the edge.

He could see Stacks Lodi just beneath. The man was holding a cigar in his hand. He raised it to his lips as Harry watched, and drew two long puffs. The cigar gleamed twice. The hand dropped with the cigar; then came up for another puff. Down again, it returned, and this time the smoker puffed five times.

The meaning of those short, bright glows suddenly dawned upon Harry. Stacks Lodi was flashing the number of his own room—a signal to hidden eyes in the outer darkness—across the street, where total blackness reigned!

After a brief pause, a second signal was given. Again, the cigar glowed twice. Down; then up; but this time, there was no increase of the light. On the third trip to the signaler's mouth, the tiny gleam occurred eight times—another slow procession of sustained puffs.

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The first signal had been 2-1-5—the number of Stacks Lodi's room; the second had been 2-0-8—the number of Carter Boswick's room. Harry saw Stacks turn and walk back into the lobby. Waiting no longer, Harry crept into the hall and crouched there, expecting Stacks to come up the steps.

As minutes drifted by, Harry suddenly realized the man's plan. Stacks Lodi had given the number of his own room—indicating it as a spot of entrance for men from the dark. He had given Carter Boswick's room to tell them where to go. But he, himself, intended to remain in the lobby, establishing an alibi, no matter what might happen; and also being in a position to deal with the clerk, should such action be necessary!

HARRY returned to his own room. The light was still on. The moment that Harry entered, he stopped just within the door.

The side of the hotel was on a vacant field. If men were out there, they could easily see any one within these rooms, while the lights were on. Harry recalled that he had been foolish enough to go over by the window when he had first entered. In fact, the window was slightly open now, as he had left it.

That must be corrected at once. Harry reached for the light switch; then his eyes spied an envelope that was lying beside the bed.

Stooping, Harry picked up the object. One corner of the envelope was smashed in. Harry realized that it had been scaled through the open window by some one standing in the outer darkness below. An accurate piece of swift marksmanship had sent this unexpected message here. Harry opened the envelope and drew out a folded note.

Clear blue ink greeted his eyes. The writing was in a code which Harry understood. A message from The Shadow! Harry translated it rapidly:

Bring Carter Boswick into your room. Explain that danger threatens. His place will be taken as soon as he is gone. Wait until after commotion has begun. It will convince him of danger. Drop from window. Your car has been moved to rear of hotel. Escape with Boswick.

As Harry watched, the writing began to disappear, as though an invisible hand were erasing every sentence. Word by word, the entire message faded.

That was the way with letters from The Shadow. If they fell into the wrong hands, the enemy could profit nothing. The ink which The Shadow used asserted its vanishing properties the moment that it came in contact with the air.

Harry turned out the light. He stole to the window; instead of closing it, he opened it wide. He could barely see the ground beneath. He recognized that the drop would be an easy one.

Now to call on Carter Boswick.

A tenseness had come over Harry, and under this influence he failed totally to calculate the time element. He did not realize that this message might have come into his room just after his departure, and that he had been away for many minutes during his observation from the porch outside the hall.

Nor did he know that almost immediately after Stacks Lodi had come back into the lobby, there had been a shadowy motion outside the door of the hotel.

THE SHADOW'S JUSTICE

Harry, by his dilatory action, was unwittingly holding back The Shadow's plan. In fact, as Harry crept along the hall, he was thinking too much of what The Shadow might intend to do—and not enough of his own part.

Carter Boswick out of Room 208—The Shadow there in his place! What a surprise that would be for those who might be coming up through the window of Lodi's room, to make an unexpected attack upon a sleeping victim!

This thought was uppermost in Harry Vincent's mind as he tapped at the door of Carter Boswick's room. The response that came gave Harry new assurance. The man within was still awake. His voice, though sleepy, showed that he would be ready to listen to what Harry had to say.

The time was here for Harry's first action in accordance with The Shadow's plan.

CHAPTER XII. THE ALLIANCE

“MR. BOSWICK?”

A prompt reply came to Harry's question.

“Yes,” said a voice through the door. “What do you want?”

“I have an important message for you.”

A key turned. The door opened. Carter Boswick faced Harry Vincent in the dim light of the hall. Carter was fully dressed, except for coat and vest. He had evidently been taking a short nap. Harry was pleased at this sign of vigilance.

“My name is Vincent,” Harry explained. “I must talk with you. My room is down the hall—222—and it would be wise to go there.”

Suspicion showed in Carter Boswick's eyes. Suspicion faded. Harry's countenance was one that showed complete frankness. Carter realized that this unexpected visit must mean that trouble threatened. Harry looked like a friend.

Nodding his willingness to accompany the man who had come for him, Carter Boswick picked up his coat and vest from a chair beside the bed. Harry Vincent pointed to the other articles that could be seen from the hall—hat, overcoat, and two unpacked suitcases. He picked up the luggage while Carter took the hat and coat.

“Hurry along,” whispered Harry tensely. For the first time, The Shadow's agent was beginning to realize the amount of time that had been consumed.

Harry preceded Carter along the hall. He noted the door of Room 215 as he passed. He turned to see if his companion was following him. Carter was some fifteen feet behind, just nearing the door of Stacks Lodi's room.

Instantly, Harry discovered an impending menace. During the moment that Harry had passed, the door had opened, unobserved by Carter, who was not watching it. The door had swung inward, and Harry could see the figure of a man crouching just within the darkness.

“Look out!” Harry blurted the warning as the crouching man leaped forward.

THE SHADOW'S JUSTICE

Swift action followed. Carter Boswick turned just in time to encounter the attacker. The man's uplifted arm was descending. The striking hand held a blackjack. With an instinctive defense, Carter struck the blow aside, and planted his fist against the side of the fellow's head.

Harry, dropping the suitcases, had simultaneously sprung to the rescue. He arrived just as the attacker tumbled to the floor. He grabbed Carter Boswick's arm, in a quick effort to draw his companion from the danger zone.

It was then that Carter blundered!

Forgetting that Harry had given the warning, he thought that he had been led into a trap. He took Harry's present act as an indication of treachery. With an angry cry, he hurled himself upon the man who had befriended him.

AS the two young men struggled, the fellow with the blackjack came to his feet. It was Scully, Stacks Lodi's assistant.

There was no need for silence now. With snarling lips, Scully sounded the cry for a general attack.

Three men, armed with gleaming revolvers, pounced forth from Room 215. Scully, backed against the wall, clutched his blackjack and gave the order for murder.

“Get both of them!” was his snarl. “One is the guy we want. Bump the other one, too!”

These words came just as Harry Vincent managed to wrest himself free from Carter Boswick's grasp. In so doing, Harry had sent Carter spinning across the hall; Harry, in turn, was trying to catch himself against the wall. Both young men found themselves staring into the muzzles of revolvers.

Carter, in his staggering course, had stopped but two feet from where Scully stood. The gangster's hand came up with the blackjack. The beginning of its downward swing was the final signal for cold murder.

Fingers waited on triggers, ready to fire as that blow fell. Scully's action had brought a momentary lull, each villain ready to give their leader the opportunity for the first stroke.

As Scully's wrist poised viciously above his head, a shot sounded from the window at the end of the hall. A bullet skimmed Scully's unkempt hair, and struck the gangster's wrist.

A fiendish cry of rage came from Scully's bloated lips. The blackjack, as though plucked away by a hand from nowhere, snapped out of Scully's fingers, and made a long parabola toward the ceiling. The gangster collapsed, clutching his right wrist with his left hand.

Harry Vincent knew the source of that timely shot. The Shadow must have scaled the pillars at the front of the hotel. Lying on the porch, he had watched Harry's effort to lead Carter Boswick to safety.

Three armed gangsters! What did they matter now? The Shadow was there to pick them off. The cue was to drop out of danger, to give the hidden avenger a clear sweep.

A muffled shot sounded from the lobby below—a sign that Stacks Lodi had taken action there. But Harry Vincent scarcely heard it. He was dropping to the floor, away from the threatening guns, as he cried out to Carter Boswick to follow his example.

THE SHADOW'S JUSTICE

Harry's warning was too late. Carter had already sprung to action. He was leaping forward to mill with the armed gangsters.

Harry groaned as he reached in his pocket for his own gun. How could The Shadow save Carter Boswick now?

Carter was wrestling with one of the gunmen, and had the fellow's wrist in an iron clutch. The other gangsters swung to shoot. The grappling men were between them and the window, a protection against The Shadow's fire.

The wrestling pair swerved. Carter Boswick's stooping back caught the eye of the nearer gangster. The man stabbed the muzzle of his gun toward Carter's back, and snarled in elation. But the very situation that gave the would-be killer his opportunity to slay was also the break for which The Shadow had been watching.

A spurt of flame accompanied the roar that came from the window. The gangster sprawled forward, beside the struggling men, the triumphant leer fading from his writhing lips. The other free gunman shouted in rage. Raising his revolver, he blazed uselessly at the open window. There was no response. The Shadow, lying low, had stayed his fire.

With gun in hand, Harry Vincent leaped to his feet and attacked the firing man from behind. He struck a hard blow at the villain's head, but the man turned just in time to ward it off. He hurled Harry to the floor, and jabbed his revolver straight at Harry's forehead.

Harry saw the approaching muzzle. He could see the evil, merciless face behind it. Yellowed teeth were displayed in a loathsome grin.

Then a shot boomed, seemingly from far away. The revolver flopped from the gangster's fingers. The man's eyes bulged; his lips closed; his body rolled sidewise to the floor.

As Harry's gaze turned, he saw the termination of the fight between Carter Boswick and the one remaining gunman. All through the struggle, Carter had held the advantage until now. But a turn in the fray had enabled the gangster to wrest away. At this instant, his gun hand was free, aiming to kill.

Harry's own revolver was in his hand. He swung it upward to prevent the kill. It was a belated gesture. Harry could never have beaten the gangster to the shot. But The Shadow's unfailing hand still remained in readiness.

The final bullet sped from the window. The gangster received it in the heart. When Harry fired, his shots reached the falling body of a dead man. The Shadow, hidden marksman of the night, had accounted for all the opposition.

HARRY and Carter reached their feet. There was no hesitation now. Carter followed Harry's lead. They hurried down the hall, carrying the suitcases with them. Scully, huddled and moaning on the floor, made no effort to stop them. His shattered wrist had ended his participation in the battle.

No explanations were necessary as Harry guided Carter through Room 222 and threw a suitcase out the window. Within twenty seconds, Carter's two bags and Harry's single one were gone; Carter dropped out when he heard the order, and Harry followed.

Three minutes later, the two young men were rolling out of Junction City in Harry's coupe. Carter Boswick, tense and half bewildered, was staring at his companion. He realized now the importance of Harry's warning, and knew that he had found a man on whom he could rely.

THE SHADOW'S JUSTICE

“Say, old fellow”—Carter's voice was filled with gratitude—“you pulled me out of it tonight. I don't know where we're going, but—”

“We're going to stick together,” was Harry's response.

“Right!” agreed Carter, with emphasis. “Say, old man, something tells me that this may just be the beginning. I've got a lot on my mind. I've kept it from every one, because I didn't know whom I could trust. But you're one hundred per cent. You're game enough to chance it with me.”

Harry's right hand moved from the steering wheel. Carter caught it in a firm grasp. The two men held a prolonged clasp that betokened mutual confidence. No further words were necessary.

Harry Vincent, in the service of The Shadow, had formed an alliance with Carter Boswick, the man who sought the wealth that was his heritage. From now on, the quest would be theirs together!

CHAPTER XIII. THE MINING CABIN

THE next afternoon found Harry Vincent and Carter Boswick rolling along a narrow, rutted road in Harry's coupe. While Harry carefully guided the car, Carter studied a large map which was unfolded before him.

They were in a wild, unpopulated region. It was doubtful if a car could have been along this almost forgotten road since the beginning of the month. The road was curving upward toward the summit of a small hill. As they neared a clearing, Carter gave the signal to stop.

“This is as close as we can get,” he declared. “Why not shove the car off in the clearing, and cut through the trees to that place up there?”

He pointed to a crag-like spot on the side of the hill. It was plain that the slight eminence would serve as an excellent lookout for the terrain below. Without a word, Harry turned the car from the road and stopped it at the fringe of the woods.

It was only a short tramp to the crag. Carter's supposition proved correct. Seated on the rock, he and Harry could observe a considerable extent of wooded ground. The country here was hilly; over beyond a sloping valley, they saw another rise of ground that was rather low, but, nevertheless, mountainous in appearance.

“Down in there”—Carter was pointing to the valley—“is the probable location. I am sure that I have the latitude and longitude correct, but we may have to do considerable searching to find the exact place meant.”

Harry nodded. Carter had explained the entire situation to him. In return, Harry had frankly told Carter that he was the agent of an unknown person who had gained knowledge of certain plans to rob Carter of his heritage.

“I feel positive,” continued Carter, “that there must be some distinctive object to guide us—say a big tree—a small lake—a habitation.”

“Look over there!” Harry pointed as he spoke. “That is a cabin of some sort, isn't it?”

Carter followed the direction of Harry's gaze. He, too, saw the object. The edge of a roof was barely visible in a large clearing that had been cut away at the base of the opposite hill. Carter turned to Harry with a triumphant smile.

THE SHADOW'S JUSTICE

“That's where we're going!” he stated. “Let's go back and get the supplies out of the coupe. Then we can investigate and stay, if it looks good.”

AN hour later, the young men arrived at the clearing. They were carrying packs and boxes—items of provision and equipment that they had purchased in a small town that morning.

As they came out of the trees, they spied a fair-sized cabin that appeared to be in good condition, although it bore signs of desertion.

Finding the door unlocked, Harry and Carter entered. The cabin consisted of a single floor. In the center was a large room with a fireplace. There were three small bedrooms off at one side, and a dining room and kitchen at the other. The place was sparsely furnished, even to cots with springs.

In the kitchen, they discovered a stove and a complete array of pots and pans. A calendar was hanging on the wall. Harry pointed it out to Carter. The calendar was five years old.

“Do you think the place can have been deserted that long?” questioned Carter, in a tone of surprise.

“Very probably,” said Harry. “The calendar looks like good evidence.”

“But the furniture—the utensils?”

“No one touches anything in this country. If any people have been in here, they have taken it for granted that the owners intend to return.”

The men went out the back door of the cabin. Across the clearing, they saw a square-shaped opening in the ground—something like the mouth of a large well. Investigating, they discovered a wooden ladder leading down into a deep pit, with stone interior that glimmered in spots.

“A vertical mining shaft,” remarked Harry.

“Looks like galena,” nodded Carter, pointing to one of the glittering patches.

“I think I've got it,” declared Harry. “This is considerable of a mining region around here. The fellows that had this cabin sunk their shaft in hopes of a real strike.”

“And then?”

“They probably got wind of a better location, where others were hitting it good. When a rush starts, the first people stand the best chance. Maybe they started out for the Nipigon region, in Canada. Anyway, they took along all that they could carry and never came back.”

“It sounds logical.”

“It's quite a usual occurrence,” Harry stated. “This place has become absolutely useless. The custom of the forest is to use what comes your way, provided you do not injure it. This cabin is ours for the time being.”

“There is no doubt in my mind,” said Carter slowly, “concerning the importance of this spot. It appears to be the one place that could have been meant in my father's directions. Our search begins here.”

“Right here,” affirmed Harry, pointing to the shaft. “Who's going down, Carter? You or I?”

THE SHADOW'S JUSTICE

"I'll take the job," declared Carter promptly.

WHILE his companion made the descent into the shaft, Harry sat on the edge of the square wooden wall and kept careful watch. All seemed serene in this lonely clearing, but Harry could not avoid the suspicion of possible danger lurking near by.

Harry, gazing downward at intervals, could see the occasional flash of Carter Boswick's electric torch. Fifteen minutes went by; a head and shoulders came over the side, and Carter rejoined Harry.

"Absolute blank," was Carter's comment. "I searched the shaft all the way down. About thirty feet, as I calculated it. Solid rock, every inch. Ends in a ragged bottom. Let's go back to the cabin."

When they reached the one-story building, Harry proposed a search within. The two men spent an hour going over the floor and walls. Here, as before, they could discover nothing. Harry entered the kitchen and cooked up some coffee. Seated at the old table, the two held council as they drank.

"Here is the whole situation," asserted Carter quietly. "My father was a most unusual man. He apparently had a contempt for wealth, despite the fact that the accumulation of it was his chief endeavor. He was also a stickler for perseverance.

"Somewhere in this locality, he has placed a sum that should be close to ten million dollars. Naturally, he must have hidden it well—so effectively that chance visitors could find no clew to its location. But to a man in my position—one who knows the wealth is near—one who is willing to search every foot of the ground—the quest should certainly bring success."

"Good reliance on your perseverance," commented Harry.

"Exactly," responded Carter.

"How about your cousin?" questioned Harry. "You told me that the task would have gone to him had he been the heir. Could your father have relied upon his perseverance?"

"With ten million dollars involved?" came back Carter. "I should think any one would persevere!"

"But if you fail—what of the money then?"

Carter Boswick shrugged his shoulders.

"It will lay where it is," he decided. "That's all. But I intend to find it."

Harry strolled to the window and stared out toward the woods. He studied the terrain of forest, with sloping hill beyond. He felt a sudden consciousness that eyes were watching from amid the trees. He had the same sensation when he crossed the kitchen and gazed from a second window. He said nothing of his suspicion to Carter. Instead, he expressed his willingness to begin the search.

"It's late now," declared Harry. "The time to get started is early in the morning. But be sure of this, Carter. We must stay together at all times. The episode back in the Junction House may be just the beginning."

"We'd better take shifts watching at night," observed Carter. "If other people are engaged in the hunt, they're liable to attack us then."

THE SHADOW'S JUSTICE

“Exactly,” said Harry. “Well, we're each packing a pair of automatics. We can use them when we need them.”

“How about”—Carter paused—“how about—your friend—whoever he is?”

“We're not to count on him,” asserted Harry cryptically. “Our job is to work together. We were helped out plenty back at the hotel. We're likely to receive help in the future. But there may be a lot of angles to this that we don't know. Therefore, we have to take the attitude that we are on our own resources.”

“You said something about gangsters,” remarked Carter. “The fight at the Junction House bore that out. But what puzzles me is how they got into this at the start.”

“I have no idea.”

“YOU know,” pondered Carter, “I made one mistake. I should have checked up on Drew Westling before I left New York. Farland Tracy warned me that my father was very suspicious; that he feared some one was trying to learn where the money was hidden. Prowlers entered the old mansion while father was away.

“Then there's that matter of the stolen message. When Tracy left the house, I may have shown, by my expression, that I had something on my mind. I covered up until after Tracy had gone. But as soon as Headley had closed the door, I was eager to start.

“Drew was in the dining room. He saw the direction that I took. I wanted him to think that I was going upstairs; but I went into the library instead.”

“Post mortem won't help,” decided Harry abruptly. “All we know is that some one is on your trail. There was a mob in back of it last night, but the crowd has thinned out considerably.

“One fellow—he's the bird who took Room 215—was on the train coming west from New York. He goes under the name of Antonio Lodi. He's still at large. But who he's working for or with, is something that we may not know for a while.”

“You're right,” laughed Carter. “The best thing we can do is stick to our knitting. Maybe they'll leave us alone until after we've found the hiding place. Then—”

Harry nodded as he caught the inference. That might well be the enemy's plan, now that the goal had been neared.

Whatever might transpire, Harry Vincent was sure that a titanic struggle lay ahead. It would take more than himself and Carter Boswick to succeed. Harry realized fully that The Shadow's aid could be the only salvation.

Still by the window, Harry felt a prolonged sensation of uneasiness. Dusk was falling, and it added to the illusion of spying eyes watching from the woods. In an effort to curb his nervousness, Harry suggested dinner.

As Harry and Carter prepared their meal from canned goods, they returned to their original theme. The quest would begin tomorrow. By the next evening success might be theirs. If not, they would keep on.

For somewhere in this locality lay Carter Boswick's heritage. Time and trouble would be no barriers. The quest would not end until success had come.

CHAPTER XIV. FORCES OF CRIME

HARRY VINCENT'S intuitive sense was by no means a poor one. As darkness closed over the forest, a motion in the brush bore out his belief that a concealed observer had been watching the cabin. But Harry was not at hand to detect the presence of the prowler.

Pushing his way through the lower branches of the trees, a man hurried away from the vicinity of the clearing. After a mile of tramping, he struck a side road through the woods, and came to a spot where an old touring car was parked beside the road.

The man clambered into the automobile. He drove away and reached a better road that pointed toward the Wisconsin border. A lonely ride of a dozen miles brought him to an old road house that was just beyond the outskirts of a small town.

The man alighted from this car and entered the building. His face was revealed in the lighted hall. It was Stacks Lodi.

The newcomer spied a man with a bandaged arm, lounging in a room off the hall. It was Scully. The crippled gangster grinned. He used his left hand to indicate a stairway.

“Room right at the top,” he said. “He's in there, Stacks. Waiting for you.”

Stacks Lodi ascended the stairs, knocked at the door, and opened the portal when he heard the gruff command to enter. He found Hub Rowley seated at a table, a bottle of liquor close at hand.

“Hello, Stacks,” growled the big shot. “Have a drink. Tell me what you know.”

“I've got Boswick located,” said Stacks eagerly. “Him and another guy—”

“Start with the beginning,” interrupted Hub impatiently. “I want to know all that happened.”

“Didn't Scully tell you?”

“Yes. But I want your story.”

“O.K., Hub. Well, when I landed in Junction City, trailing this bird Boswick, the boys were there like I expected. You certainly figured a way to beat Boswick's time, and they picked up the touring car like you suggested.

“I didn't fool around any. Just registered at the Junction House, and went outside to give the cigar signal. I hung around the lobby. Clerk sent the bell hops home. He and I were there alone, and I figured an easy fight upstairs.

“And then everything broke loose. Sounded like artillery fire. The clerk grabbed a gun and started up. So I plugged him. Then I yanked the sheet out of the hotel register, and threw it in the stove. Best thing to do, Hub. Alibis would have been a mess. I didn't know what the finish would be. I clipped the only bird who knew who I was—and who Boswick was, for that matter.”

“All right,” agreed Hub. “Go on.”

THE SHADOW'S JUSTICE

“WHEN I got upstairs,” continued Stacks, “I found Scully crawling along the hall. The rest of the mob was dead. I didn’t lose any time. I dragged Scully along, and he told me where the car was.

“We ran into luck. Scully had stopped at this place on the way in. He knew it was a speakeasy, and a stop-off joint for bimboes running booze in from Canada. The boss took him to some hick sawbones. Said he got shot out hunting.

“That’s when I wired you in Chicago—to come on here—like you said. Then, along about noon, I headed out to find the location. You had it picked mighty close. Boswick is there already. I don’t know who the other bloke is.”

“Are they camping on the ground?” queried Hub.

“No,” grinned Stacks. “They’re sitting pretty. Found a cabin there. That’s why I’m sure they’ve got the place. I watched them from the woods. They were fooling around what looked like a big well.”

“A mine shaft, probably. Did they find anything?”

“Don’t think so. Boswick went down the shaft; if he’d been alone, I’d have nailed him then. But the other guy watched. I waited until after they went into the cabin. Then I cut over to the road, where I had parked my car.”

“You’re sure there’s only two of them?”

“That’s all.”

Hub Rowley was thoughtful. Then, with an angry gesture, he gulped down a glass of liquor and stared coldly at henchman.

“You know why I’m here?” he questioned.

Stacks shook his head.

“Because,” said the big shot, “there’s been too much foolishness. This is the third time, Stacks, that you have tried to get one man —Carter Boswick. In every instance, you had men capable of doing the job. They failed.”

“I told you why, chief!” Stacks fairly blurted the words. “It wasn’t Boswick that stopped them. I found it out on the boat. It was The Shadow!”

“So you say. But I’ve got to see the proof. First you claim your men tried to get Boswick at some joint in Havana. That may have been a story they cooked up. You can’t prove that The Shadow was there. Your story about the boat sounds possible; but you admit that you had liquored up a bit during the card game. Then, last night—you didn’t see The Shadow at the Junction House, did you?”

“I was downstairs. Ask Scully—he was up above.”

“I questioned him. He said you talked about The Shadow. But he didn’t see him. Scully says there was a fellow who helped Boswick out—but it wasn’t The Shadow.”

“Scully don’t know all!” protested Stacks. “He was trying to blackjack Boswick, so he says, and the others were covering Boswick’s friend. Then somebody plugs him in the wrist.”

THE SHADOW'S JUSTICE

“The man with Boswick, probably.”

“While he was covered by three rods? That don't sound right, Hub. I figure The Shadow was there, too.”

“Maybe you're right,” growled Hub Rowley. “Just the same, we're going to get that fellow Boswick. If he has another man with him, we'll pick him off, too. This time, I'll be there myself.”

“Just you and me—with Scully?”

“Scully!” Hubs voice was contemptuous. “He's crippled. Say—you are a dumb one at times, Stacks. Do you think I've come here alone? I've got Twister downstairs, and a mob all ready. Brought along a gang from Chicago. They aren't here at this dump; but they're near by.”

“Say, Hub!” Stacks spoke in an admiring tone. “This will be soft. Those eggs are hanging out in that cabin. If you want to blot them out, it will be easy.”

“We're blotting them out tonight!”

HUB ROWLEY arose and walked about the room. The big shot was planning. Finally, he turned to Stacks Lodi and delivered his final detail.

“We're starting out at midnight,” declared the big shot. “You're going to lead us. Twister and you will boss the mob—under my direction. We'll get that cabin on all sides. I'm waiting now to hear from another man who's interested in this.”

Hub paused and studied Stacks thoughtfully. The big shot was recalling the discussion on the night before Stacks left for Chicago. He was trying to remember just how much he had said to Stacks then. At last, Hub decided to go on, but he phrased his words cunningly.

“This is a big lay, Stacks,” he said. “I got hold of a man who came out with it and offered to work with me on a split. He needed help on account of Carter Boswick being in the way. Savvy? Well, if we get rid of Boswick, it's clear, but we won't stop now.”

“You remember that note that you found under the door of Boswick's house after you got the signal of the blinking light over the front door? That was what I was waiting for. It was swiped from Carter Boswick that night. Well, this fellow that's in the game arranged things so I got it. He's here now—and I'm going to see him tonight.”

“He may not go along with us. Maybe he'll hang out at some town near here. At the same time, he may decide to come with me. That's why I'm going in my own car, following the rest of you. This fellow is working with me—on the ground floor. It's his only bet. I'm telling you this, so as you'll know to keep mum. Twister is on the q. t. The Chicago boys don't mean anything.”

“All right, Hub,” agreed Stacks. “I'm ready. I'll stick downstairs with Scully until I get the word.”

Stacks Lodi left the big shot's room and joined Twister and Scully on the floor below. Shortly afterward, Hub Rowley left the road house. It was nearly midnight when a telephone call came for Stacks Lodi. Hub Rowley was on the wire.

“Tell Twister to get in touch with the mob,” were Hub's instructions. “He can drive after them in your car. Line up and wait until I show up in the coupe. That will be the signal to start. Leave Scully there at the joint.”

THE SHADOW'S JUSTICE

Stacks passed the message to Twister. The big shot's bodyguard sauntered forth. Stacks lounged around with Scully until he heard the noise of cars arriving on the road outside. He went out to find three automobiles in a row, his touring car at the head. Twister's hissing call summoned him.

"You lead the way," said the bodyguard. "Drive the first buggy. I'll run the second. Hold it until Hub gets here."

The lights of a coupe appeared while Twister was speaking. The car drew up in back of the procession. Stacks Lodi clambered into the driver's vacant seat of the touring car up front.

Hub Rowley had arrived; now was the time to start.

FOUR men were in Stacks Lodi's car. The ex-gambler listened to their muffled chatter as he drove ahead. Tough, uncouth mobsters recruited from the bad lands of Chicago, these rowdies were a more vicious group than those who had served with Scully last night at the Junction House.

Two more cars—each with its quota of gunmen. These were following now. Stacks Lodi, glancing behind as he took the first curve in the dirt road, could see the other automobiles taking up the trail. Back at the very end, just starting, was Hub Rowley's coupe.

Stacks Lodi had only a momentary glance at the rearmost automobile. Its lights made it nothing more than a dim shape behind two beaming bulbs. Hence Stacks could not possibly have seen what was happening at the rear of that coupe.

Nor did Hub Rowley, at the wheel of his small car, know what was going on in back of him.

Just as the coupe was starting, a tall shape of blackness shot forward from the dark at the side of the road. The light from the road house dimly revealed a swiftly moving splotch upon the ground.

The red tail light of the coupe seemed to blink as a mass of darkness covered it; then the light shone crimson again as a lithe form stretched itself upon the closed rear of the car. Not a jolt—not a sound. Noiseless, a being from the night had come aboard the coupe.

As Hub's car shot forward, the phantom shape remained. A hidden rider, totally invisible upon the back of the last car in the row, was riding forth with the caravan that had set out to deliver a mass attack upon the cabin in the clearing.

Tonight, Hub Rowley had scoffed at the thought of The Shadow being concerned in the enterprise that centered about Carter Boswick's millions. Hub, perhaps, was of the same opinion now; but his derogatory belief did not alter the actual circumstances.

The Shadow, master of darkness, had joined the invaders. He, too, was traveling toward the scene of battle. When the attackers struck, The Shadow would be there!

CHAPTER XV. IN THE CLEARING

"HERE we are."

Stacks Lodi, close beside Hub Rowley, pointed out the cabin from the edge of the clearing. The little building was visible under the pale moonlight. Not a light showed in any of its windows.

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Hub Rowley chuckled softly. Stacks Lodi was on one side of him; Twister Edmonds on the other. Behind them, like a ghostly crew, were the mobsters whom they had brought on this excursion.

“All right,” growled Hub, in a low tone. “We’ll spread here. You take half of the men, Stacks, and cut over to the right. You, with the other half, Twister, over to the left. Never mind the side toward the hill. If they try to get away up there, they’ll be easy meat.”

“Spread out and come in from two sides. If they make a break toward the center, we’ll be able to cut in on them from two directions. Wait a minute”—Hub paused to survey the scene like a general in a campaign—“I’ll follow up in back of your crew, Stacks. They’re more likely to scoot out the rear door in a pinch, and that’s where you’re covering. Besides”—there was a touch of sarcasm in the big shot’s tone—“I want to see how you handle things, Stacks. Maybe I’ll have a chance to help you out this time.”

Stacks Lodi made no reply. In a low, smooth voice, he called for half a dozen men, and these members of the mob separated themselves from the rest. Twister took the others.

Hub watched the two corps start out toward their respective posts. Then, with a final chuckle, the big shot glanced about to make sure that all his men had found a place. For a moment, he fancied that he saw a man still lurking in the darkness. His growl died on his lips when he realized that no one was there.

Nevertheless, as Hub trooped after Stacks Lodi’s squad, the impression still persisted that he had actually sensed the presence of some one behind him. For a moment, he had a notion to return and investigate, but he decided that it would be useless. He came to the opinion that he must have been deceived by a darkened tree trunk.

HUB ROWLEY had a definite purpose in going with Stacks Lodi’s outfit. The big shot intended to direct the advance; not to enter it himself, unless emergency required. He had discussed it briefly with Twister Edmonds, and he knew that his bodyguard would cue the actions of his squad according to those of Stacks Lodi’s band.

Hub intended to attack swiftly and effectively. Hence it would be best to start Stacks first, and let Twister act accordingly.

Soon all was prepared. Silent men were crouched at the edge of the clearing. Hub Rowley watched the cabin intently, ready to give the word. Apparently, two sleeping victims would be handled in short order.

But within that cabin, only one man slept. Carter Boswick was stretched out upon the floor in the central room. Harry Vincent was sitting in the darkness, vigilant, his ears alert for any intruding sound.

“Ps—s—t!”

Harry’s warning hiss awakened Carter in an instant. The young man groped his way toward The Shadow’s agent. Harry gave another hiss for silence.

“Just thought I heard something,” he whispered. “Listen! Maybe it will begin again.”

Carter listened. He gripped Harry’s arm.

“There’s some one outside the cabin,” he said, in a low tone. “I can’t figure which side it is.”

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“Come on,” replied Harry. “Crawl to the front door. Open it softly. We'll peek out there, and we can creep around the cabin in opposite directions. Whoever it is, we'll find him.”

“Maybe it's”—Carter hesitated—“maybe the one who sent you here.”

Harry's grunt was negative. Well did Harry know that The Shadow, when he approached a place, moved with velvet silence. He was positive that some prowler had caused the sound, unless a roving animal of the woods might be responsible.

The door opened under Harry's touch. Both men peered out. Lying close to the floor, they had partially emerged, when Harry suddenly clutched Carter's arm with a desperate grip.

“Look there!”

Creeping in from the edge of the clearing were two lines of moving men. In the dim light, their numbers seemed weirdly formidable. Harry and Carter had gained the door just in time to witness the simultaneous advance of Hub Rowley's two squads of gangsters!

Two automatics were in Harry's hands. Carter Boswick was similarly equipped. Safety catches were unlocked. Here, in readiness, the young men held weapons that could repel the invaders. Yet the size of the attack was appalling.

Quick thoughts flashed through Harry's brain. If they fired now, most of their shots would go wide. If they waited, they would be at too close quarters. They would be able to do some damage; but could they resist a charge from those hordes?

HARRY'S hesitation ended. He suddenly saw merit in opening the attack. It was a desperate chance, but it seemed the only one.

“Give them everything we've got!” ordered Harry. “Plug away full speed. With four pistols going, we can make them think they're up against a gang. Catch them while they still have a chance to go back. Then they may scatter!”

“Good,” agreed Carter. “I'll take the bunch on the right. Let's go!”

“Shoot!” ordered Harry.

The four automatics barked as the two defenders opened a vicious fire. The repeated flashes from the door of the cabin were followed by loud echoes from the trees.

The result was instantaneous. The rows of men dropped with one accord. Flat on the ground, they began to return the volley.

Stacks Lodi saw his men wavering. One gangster had been clipped, and was groaning on the ground. But Stacks showed a remarkable keenness in the face of this unexpected burst.

“There's only two of them!” he shouted, his voice audible above the barking revolvers of his men. “Give them the works!”

The encouragement rallied the gangsters. It passed to Twister Edmonds' crew. There, two men were down to stay; the others were almost on the point of flight. But the sight of Lodi's mob holding its ground was all that

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they needed.

The volley from the doorway had ended with the suddenness that had marked its beginning. Harry Vincent's plan had failed. Bullets were zimming against the sides of the cabin. With one accord, Harry and Carter flung themselves back in the big room.

“Reload!” was Harry's command.

Carter groaned as he started to obey. Through the crack of the door, he could see one row of invaders rising.

A mighty shout came from the edges of the clearing. Both Stacks and Twister had figured the trouble; two warriors within the cabin, ammunition spent. A rapid charge was starting from both sides!

Harry could see the attackers through the window. He understood Carter's groan. They were helpless, now that the ruse had failed. The attack seemed destined to end in massacre.

Then, above the shouts of the men rising for the charge, Harry heard the roaring booms of two cannon-like guns. Reload in hand, he stopped in momentary stupor. Those shots were coming from a bulging curve in the clearing, midway between the two advancing lines.

Gangsters began to sprawl upon the rough turf. Terrific bursts of flame, with roaring echoes, signaled the entry of a new contestant. As he saw the invaders toppling, first from one line, then from the other, Harry sensed the answer.

The Shadow!

FROM the projecting stretch of woods, the master of darkness was delivering an enfilade. His well-directed shots were speeding leaden messengers directly along the lines. He was not shooting at individuals; he was aiming into groups of men!

One fighter was succeeding where two had failed. The Shadow had withheld the power of his .45s until his enemies were completely at his mercy. With four automatics, two in hands and two beneath his cloak, he had reserve ammunition sufficient to wipe out the dastardly crew!

The proper type of fire proved Harry Vincent's theory. The advancing gangsters took to spreading flight. Half of them had fallen; the others were rushing away from the hidden menace. Men were sagging as they fled.

Only the mad break for safety saved the mobsters from annihilation. Some who had dropped were dead; others were wounded. But as the remainder became scattered targets, The Shadow's shots lessened in rapidity. A few pitiful enemies reached the woods and plunged into the underbrush.

Hub Rowley, alone, put up a stout effort to foil The Shadow. Back in the edge of the woods, he could see the flashes of The Shadow's guns. The big shot dropped behind a large rock and opened fire toward the bursts of flame. But although he prided himself as a marksman, he could not make a hit.

The Shadow, crouched in the darkness, swaying, moving, turning, was never in the same place twice. Hub was still firing as the few escaping mobsmen plunged to safety; and it was then that The Shadow proved his ability to do what Hub could not.

The flashes burst in Hub's direction. Picking a blind target, The Shadow aimed with amazing precision. Had it not been for the big rock, the first of the bullets would have found its mark.

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Large slivers of rock chipped away as The Shadow's bullets smashed against Hub's natural barricade. These death messengers from nowhere clicked their threat of doom. Dropping to the ground, Hub crawled rapidly away through the brush, keeping constantly beyond the rock. He had no desire to wait until The Shadow had moved to deliver a fire from the side.

Seeing The Shadow's shots directed into the woods, Harry and Carter supposed that he was driving off reinforcements. With their reloading finished, they sallied forth across the clearing. A few wild shots came from wounded gangsters in the open area. Seeing this, they covered the men and approached to disarm them.

WITH this work finished, Harry and Carter again turned toward the woods. The Shadow's fire had ceased. They did not know what might have happened. By common decision, both defenders hurried toward the woods. They could hear plunging gangsters in the darkness, and they fired rapid shots to encourage the flight.

"Hold it!" ordered Harry suddenly. "We'd better get over to the side of the cabin by the hill. Maybe there are others up there!"

At the cabin, they separated. Harry swung around one side; Carter took the other. They met on the side toward the hill.

"All clear here," declared Harry. "Come on—we'll go back."

As Harry went around the side of the cabin, Carter turned to follow. Out of the corner of his eye, he caught sight of a man springing suddenly to his feet. He had been close to the cabin wall.

Before Carter could raise his revolver the man was a dozen yards away, dashing toward the hillside. As Carter aimed, the fugitive threw a hunted glance over his shoulder. Carter's finger trembled on his trigger. A wild exclamation came from his lips as his hand dropped to his side.

The cry brought Harry Vincent from the corner of the house. It was a second before Harry caught sight of the running man whom Carter had failed to stop. Impulsively, Harry fired three shots at the fugitive; but the range was too great. The runner kept on like a frightened deer, and gained the upward-sloping woods.

"Why didn't you get him?" demanded Harry.

"I—I couldn't," blurted Carter.

"Where did he come from?" questioned Harry angrily. "When did you see him?"

"He popped up right here," answered Carter. "He had gone a dozen yards before I had a chance to fire."

"But you didn't shoot."

"I—I couldn't. I was going to—then he turned his head, and I saw his face in the moonlight."

"His face? How did that matter? This is no time to worry when you see a face—"

Harry stopped short. Carter Boswick, pale in countenance, was slumped against the wall of the cabin. His gun was almost falling from his hand.

"What's the matter, old top?" asked Harry, in a tone of anxiety. "He didn't get you, did he?"

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“No,” murmured Carter, in a weak voice. “But I—I nearly got him. I couldn't do it, though, when I saw him. Harry, when I recognized him, I forgot all about enmities. I couldn't—couldn't think of him as being one of the crowd that came to murder us.”

“You recognized him?” exclaimed Harry. “Who was he?”

“A man whom I had hoped was on the square,” said Carter solemnly. “Harry, that fellow was my cousin, Drew Westling!”

CHAPTER XVI. THE SHADOW ORDERS

IT was several minutes before Carter Boswick had recovered from the shock that had gripped him. The sight of his cousin, here by the cabin, after all others had fled, was something that he could hardly believe. Even though Harry Vincent was anxious to get back to the front of the cabin, he waited for Carter to regain his nerve.

“Brace up, old fellow,” pleaded Harry. “I know how you feel. You wouldn't mind shooting down a pack of gunmen face to face—but your cousin, on the run—”

“It's not that alone,” responded Carter. “It's bad enough for him to have been in the mess; but to find him lurking, like a snake, ready to strike.”

“Maybe he didn't have a chance to get away,” smoothed Harry. “He didn't attack you when you came around the cabin.”

“Lost his nerve,” said Carter gruffly. “That's about the size of it, Harry. I feel steady now. Let's go.”

Events had happened during the interim while Carter and Harry had been behind the house. Bodies of dead gangsters remained in view; but the wounded ones had managed to crawl to the cover of the woods.

This perturbed Harry for the moment; then he realized that pot shots from that distance would be futile. The mobsmen had been so completely routed that there was no danger of their return.

The two defenders went into the cabin. Carter turned on an oil lamp in the main room. He stopped and pointed to an old table. An object lying upon it had caught his immediate attention.

“Look!” he exclaimed. “Who left that there?”

The object was a large envelope, propped on end against a tin of tobacco. Harry picked it up and opened it. He recognized the clear blue ink and coded writing of The Shadow. Carter stared over Harry's shoulder and gasped as he saw the words begin to disappear.

“What is it?” he questioned.

“A message from my chief,” responded Harry quietly. “It tells us what to do.”

“You mean from—from whomever it was who opened fire from the woods? Say! Has he been here, too?”

“Apparently. Come on, Carter, let's get going! We'll talk about it on the way to my car.”

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Packing some of their belongings, Harry and Carter strode out into the clearing. Harry maintained silence while they looked over the field of battle. Five mobsmen lay dead—among them was Twister Edmonds, whom neither knew.

“There must have been more than a dozen of them,” remarked Carter. “If we figure five dead, and at least the same number wounded, they were pretty well mopped up.”

THE two men reached the woods and advanced cautiously, using a flashlight as a guide. They had brought only essential luggage, so were not heavily burdened. Both were on the alert for hidden enemies.

“Where are we bound?” questioned Carter.

“To Summit Lake,” answered Harry. “Town just over the Wisconsin line. Hotel there—that's where we'll stop.”

“In these outfits?”

Carter was referring to khaki knickers and leather puttees which both were wearing.

“Why not?” asked Harry. “This is primitive country. They won't refuse to admit us at the Summit Lake Hotel. If we—” He stopped abruptly and skimmed his flashlight in wide circles, revealing a myriad of clustered tree trunks.

“Hear anything?” questioned Carter.

“I thought so,” responded Harry. “Move along easy.”

He extinguished the light, and the pair went silently forward. The night had clouded, and it was quite dark. After twenty or thirty yards, Harry stopped Carter with a grip, and waited before he again turned on the light.

“Keep listening,” said Harry grimly. “Some of that mob may still be around. I thought I heard something moving off in the dark among the trees. I think we're clear now.”

“Over the Wisconsin line,” mused Carter softly. “That's not far south of here, is it? Say—I didn't think this northern peninsula of Michigan was so far up.

“It's a strip between Wisconsin and Lake Superior,” reminded Harry. Then, with a laugh: “We've both been doing a good bit of map reading lately.”

Carter's thoughts reverted to Harry's plans. He knew that this trip to Summit Lake must be in response to instructions left by The Shadow. The idea of abandoning the cabin was now becoming distasteful to him. He had a feeling of mistrust, awakened by his chance discovery of Drew Westling. Harry sensed Carter's uneasiness.

“We'll be back,” said Harry, in a confidential tone. “It's best to be away. Now that The—that my chief is here, we'll begin to get results. Leave it to him for the time being, Carter.”

“All right,” agreed Carter. “We need a change for a day, anyway. That was a tough ordeal tonight.”

They reached the spot where they had left the coupe and found the car untouched. Harry took the wheel, and the journey began. Both riders felt an immediate fatigue; but Carter Boswick retained enough initiative to

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begin a cautious questioning regarding Harry's mysterious chief.

Under the present circumstances, and in accordance with a notation that he had read in The Shadow's message, Harry replied with a more detailed explanation. It was essential that he should retain Carter Boswick's confidence; and with millions at stake, it was natural that Carter should have qualms.

IN brief phrases Harry mentioned the strange part that The Shadow played in the affairs of the underworld. A man who moved by night, a lone wolf arrayed on the side of justice, this weird being could strike terror into the evil hearts of the most hardened crime masters.

The Shadow, Harry stated, was a man of many capabilities. Even as his agent, Harry did not know The Shadow's abode. He had been rescued from hopeless predicaments by The Shadow's intervention. In fact, his acquaintance with The Shadow had begun when he had been snatched from the brink of death by the being whose will he now obeyed.

Harry's words might have sounded fanciful to any but Carter Boswick. But with the recent demonstration still vivid in Carter's mind, there was no doubt of The Shadow's power.

Carter was still mulling over the amazing events and linking them with his remarkable escapes in Havana and aboard the Southern Star, when the coupe rolled into the outskirts of Summit Lake.

Harry and Carter not only found the Summit Lake Hotel to be an excellent one; but they also discovered that their garb was an accepted form of attire. Harry and Carter obtained adjoining rooms.

It was after three o'clock, but all-night card sessions were in progress. The two arrivals decided to stroll about a bit before retiring. Their nerves needed quieting after the excitement of this night.

On the veranda of the hotel, they finished a belated pipe smoke, and finally went inside. The period of vigilance had ended, and the change was a welcome relief. This was the very thought that Harry expressed to Carter, who had agreed.

Both were wrong. While they were going up to their rooms, another car was stopping outside the door of the Summit Lake Hotel. A new guest cautiously ascended to the veranda, and peered inside before entering. This newcomer grinned as he inscribed his name upon the register, and noted the signature of Carter Boswick.

For the new guest was none other than Stacks Lodi. He was one of the few who had scurried to safety in time to escape The Shadow's fire. He had been hiding among the trees when Harry Vincent and Carter Boswick had passed. He had heard the reference to the Summit Lake Hotel.

In the woods, Stacks had been afraid to attack two men alone. Here, in a crowded hotel, he was also unable to act. But he had brought himself upon the definite mission of trailing these men whose lives Hub Rowley wanted.

The big shot's mob had been defeated; but strategy might succeed where massed strength had failed. Even with The Shadow as an enemy, Stacks Lodi was willing to play the spy. The man was grinning his evil leer when he went up to the room assigned to him by the clerk.

His part was passive now, Stacks knew; but sooner or later, the men whom he was watching would return to the zone of danger. Tomorrow, he would communicate with Hub at the Michigan road house. From then on, any move by Harry and Carter would be reported to the big shot.

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The Shadow's agent and the man whom he protected were still under surveillance by the cunning underling who served as Hub Rowley's spy!

CHAPTER XVII. OUT OF THE SKY

LATE the next afternoon a strange ship of the sky appeared above the forested area north of the Wisconsin–Michigan border. Its flight was leisurely, due to the spinning blades that whirled horizontally above it.

The Shadow's autogiro was flying above the wilderness!

To the sharp eyes that stared downward from the ship, every feature of the terrain was clearly visible. The autogiro settled slowly. Less than a thousand feet from earth, it hovered above one spot.

Directly below was the clearing with the miner's cabin in the center. No bodies were there now. They had been removed at dawn, through a cautious foray directed by Hub Rowley. The big shot had found his men at the cars, and had lain there throughout the night.

All gangsters were gone, however. The Shadow had ascertained that fact. All seemed deserted below. The cabin was silent; the vertical mine shaft yawned, a square hole in the ground. These, however, were not the only objects that The Shadow sought.

In one brief flight, The Shadow was accomplishing something that had not occurred to Carter Boswick—a complete survey of all the territory about the cabin. The autogiro, after a slow hesitation that seemed a halt, turned toward the rising hillside. Beneath it was a structure that Harry Vincent and Carter Boswick had not discovered in their short survey on the ground.

This was a shack, halfway up the hillside. The building was sheltered amid the trees. Another unusual landmark was visible from the air. This was a path, so long forgotten that it could not have been noticed by a person on the ground, but which was slightly apparent from above.

The path began at the edge of the clearing by the hill. It ascended, past the shack, to fade upon the hillside. With strange precision, the autogiro seemed to follow that path until it reached a new angle of vision.

This brought another discovery—one that could not possibly have been made upon the ground. A cracked rock revealed itself in the midst of a thick cluster of trees and dried underbrush. As the autogiro circled, slowly nearing the ground, the meaning of that concealed ledge became apparent.

So artfully hidden that only a thorough and prolonged ground search could have uncovered it, was an opening between the rocks—the entrance to a hidden mine shaft on the hillside!

The tones of a weird laugh mingled with the throbbing of the autogiro's motor. The ship poised, seeking a landing spot.

An ordinary plane would have taken to the clearing, and landed there with difficulty. But this windmill of the air was scornful. It descended with the easy motion of a parachute, and came to rest upon a flat ledge a few hundred yards away from the spot where the rocky opening was located.

The landing was rough. The giro's wheel bumped as they struck irregular stone; but the hand that guided the plane used the utmost skill. The wheel made scarcely more than a single turn. The tilting ship righted itself, and rested in the barren spot like a huge bird come to earth.

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THE SHADOW'S aerial inspection had been wisely planned. The conflict that had been waged in the clearing had caused a temporary withdrawal of the opposing forces. With a short interim at hand, the mysterious investigator had utilized air navigation as a method of observation.

Had an ordinary plane been used, its swift flight would have required more circling and interrupted study of the scene. With the hovering autogiro, The Shadow had gained quick results.

The darkening ground made excellent cover for the new progress of The Shadow. A black-clad figure appeared beside the plane. It glided stealthily along the ground, and reached a wooded area.

Feeling his way through the dusk, The Shadow, like a floating phantom, reached the clump of trees that his keen eyes had observed from an altitude of a thousand feet.

A flashlight flickered, and its rays showed the clustered barrier of wooden trunks. The position of the trees; the formation of the rocks; both conspired to completely conceal the opening which The Shadow sought. Even in the brightest light of day, a procession of men could have passed by this spot with no chance of detecting the hidden opening. Only The Shadow's positive knowledge sufficed him now.

The probing light picked a course around jugged points of tree-protected rock. It found a twisting, natural path of stony base. The Shadow's form poised momentarily above an overhanging rock; then sidled to the right, and glided to the ground below. Twisting into a short crevice, The Shadow halted directly in front of a cavernous opening.

The flashlight gleamed distinctly now. It showed a narrow, rock-jugged course that extended at an angle into the hill. The figure in black seemed to hide the light, except for brilliant flickers which occasionally glowed beyond it. Then both light and form were gone, into the recess of the earth!

Silence pervaded the place where The Shadow had disappeared. The moon, rising above the horizon, threw an eerie glow over this hidden scene as the gathering night increased. A motion occurred beyond the clump of trees that guarded the entrance of the cave.

That sound might have been the plunging of some wild animal. At first, there was nothing to indicate the positive presence of a human being. But the constant effort to work a way through the barrier soon betokened the action of a person. Then came pauses while a man breathed heavily.

Had some one, spying from the ground, noted the arrival of The Shadow's autogiro? Had that person, heading toward the spot where the ship had landed, seen tokens of The Shadow's presence through the glow of the probing flashlight?

This seemed the probable case yet the searcher was blind in his efforts. He could not make further discovery. His plowing in the brush became a clamber over jagged rocks.

It was then that his form became momentarily visible in the fringe of moonlight. The second investigator reached one of the overhanging portions of rock that hid the cave.

Here, all search would have ended fruitlessly. Perhaps, by day, the second man might have readily guessed that some important spot was below; but in the moonlight, his cautious, creeping form was heading toward the other side of the rock, away from the important spot.

It was chance that aided this new searcher. As he reached a cluster of saplings, he paused and stretched beneath the trees, listening between heavy breaths.

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A glimmer of light had caught the searcher's attention. This glow had come almost from beneath the rock that he had just abandoned. It was like distant lightning, obscured by a heavy cloud—a chance flash that revealed nothing, yet which gave positive evidence of activity.

AS the spying man watched, the light was repeated. Then the flicker came for a third time, and its glow gave the momentary sign of a blackened shape that was emerging from the rock.

That, however, was the last betraying signal. Had the spying man tried, he could not have gained an advantage over The Shadow. For the moment that the outside had been reached, the master of darkness extinguished his light completely, and became a being of seeming nothingness.

The watcher waited. He listened for something to indicate where the arrival from the cavern had gone. No clew came. The Shadow, creeping through the blackness of the half-buried rock, was returning over his corkscrew course with the utmost skill. That being of blackness could feel his way over ground once established. The Shadow's caution was supreme.

Long, tense minutes passed. The man who watched was breathing heavily. Lying still, he gave sounds that could reveal him to listening ears; but The Shadow, with silent motion, had faded into nothingness.

At last, after twenty minutes, the spy became impatient. He had seen no new trace of the light; he inferred that the person below had gone away through the darkness.

It was then that the watcher moved. He emerged from trees into moonlight, and cautiously urged his way toward the side of the rock. His own flashlight glimmered, focused on the ground. Step by step, it revealed a rocky path; and after short difficulties, the new searcher found himself before the opening in the ground.

A muffled gasp of elation came from the man's lips. Probing cautiously into the gap, he used his light as a guide, and entered. Sure that the stranger of the night had departed, he could not resist the desire to conduct an investigation of his own.

After the second searcher had disappeared a new phenomenon took place. Silent motion occurred among the saplings where the spy had lain.

A soft laugh came from hidden lips as the form of The Shadow rose into the fringe of moonlight. Keen eyes glistened from beneath the brim of a slouch hat. The folds of a black cloak hung shroud-like from The Shadow's shoulders.

Coming softly through the blackness, The Shadow had sensed the presence of the spy. He had waited, a creature of invisibility. It had become his turn to watch.

More minutes elapsed. The Shadow, aware of every action that the spy had taken, was waiting for the man's return. The patience was rewarded. A glimmering ray of light announced that the second prober was returning.

At last his figure became plain as he emerged from the cavern and picked his way, by lighted steps, back up the rock. When the man reached the saplings, The Shadow was no longer there. Flat upon a ledge of overhanging rock, the being of darkness lay invisible.

The second searcher nervously made his course off through the trees. Intermittent flashes showed the route that he was taking. All during that passage a figure stalked close behind his heels. The Shadow was following him to his destination.

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This proved to be the shack which The Shadow had observed from the air. Not far from the cavern, it formed a hidden abode among the trees.

The man's business there was brief but active. In the dim glow of an oil lamp, he gathered together various articles of food, blankets, tools. Bundling these, he extinguished the lamp and took it also. Then he emerged from the shack, and went back toward the hidden cavern, using his intermittent flashlight to guide the way.

Through the window of the shack, The Shadow's probing eyes had seen all. Now, once again, The Shadow was following the unwitting man who believed that he had gone. Observed had become observer. That was The Shadow's way.

WHILE the man laboriously lowered his burden from a ledge of rock, The Shadow's eyes still watched. When the man had finally reached the entrance to the cavern, the one who peered from darkness still remained unseen. At last, the flickering of a flashlight proved that the man from the shack had entered the cavern to stay.

The Shadow had learned the man's purpose. The cave which he had discovered and probed would be his abode.

A low, sinister laugh sounded through the moonlit night. The Shadow, too, had probed that cavern. He knew and understood the purpose which had guided the man there.

For The Shadow, keenly watchful, had seen the face of the man who had entered the cave. He had divined the fellow's purpose. Well had The Shadow studied the motives and cross-purposes that were rampant in this vicinity, where crime and death had come.

New action lay ahead. The Shadow's weird laugh betokened the activity of his mighty brain. The way to wealth had been discovered. It could be laid open to Carter Boswick now.

The Shadow's aerial visit had been made with the purpose of nullifying crime. Its successful result had proven to The Shadow's liking. The presence of the watching man from the shack had proven an unexpected factor. But The Shadow included even this in his calculations.

A moving form of obscure proportions flitted through the trees. The figure stopped beside the autogiro, and noiselessly stepped aboard. The motor purred with rhythm. No ears could hear it now. The one man in this locality had buried himself beneath the earth.

The blades above the ship were whirling. The autogiro moved forward. Its wheel lumbered across a smooth extent of rock, headed directly for dangerous, jagged points beyond the flat ledge. Before the wheel reached those menacing barriers of stone, the autogiro was in the air. Its flight was tending upward. It cleared the fringe of trees, and rose perfectly into the moonlight.

The ascent reached the vertical. The Shadow's ship hovered over the moon-bathed scene. The opening of the cavern was almost invisible now. The little shack, however, showed plainly among the trees. The cabin and the gaping hole of the vertical mine shaft were evident in the clearing.

Out of the air had The Shadow come. Into the air he had gone. He had learned the secret guarded by Houston Boswick; he had also witnessed another make the same discovery.

The plane headed rapidly southward. The Shadow had another brief mission on this night.

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The loud eerie laugh that mingled with the whirring of the autogiro was the only sound that betokened The Shadow's purpose. That mockery, somehow, seemed to indicate that The Shadow's departure was only temporary. Soon he would return to this spot in the wilderness.

What then? What would be the outcome?

Would Carter Boswick and Harry Vincent find the long-sought wealth awaiting them? How did the man who had entered the cavern figure in the plot? What action would come from Hub Rowley and the unknown man who was working with him?

All depended upon circumstance; yet the guiding forces were the purposes of those who figured in this strange drama. The unraveling of twisted threads was necessary to view the future in an understanding way.

The Shadow, alone, had made such progress. Whether the future would result in complications, one positive result must be forthcoming; and could be, after The Shadow made his return.

The Shadow knew!

CHAPTER XVIII. THE SHADOW'S CHART

HARRY VINCENT awoke with a start. The dim light of dawn was hazy through the window of his hotel room. Everything seemed dim and obscure. Sitting up in bed, Harry stared about the room. Had he been dreaming? Or had he heard his name whispered weirdly in his ear?

There was no sign of any one in the room. It would have been quite possible for a person to have entered, whispered that name, and then left while Harry was coming to consciousness. The door was closed, however, and Harry had not heard the slightest sound from that direction.

Two factors made Harry positive that he had been awakened by some one from outside. The first was that Harry seldom dreamed; the second, that he was constantly expecting some token from The Shadow. Under the circumstances, he decided to investigate.

He turned on a lamp that rested on the table beside his bed. The light revealed an envelope lying beneath it. Harry knew then that he had not been the victim of imagination. The Shadow had come into this room at the Summit Lake Hotel, and had left a message for him.

The envelope contained a note, brief and explicit in its directions. The coded writing faded.

But the envelope also held another sheet of paper—one inscribed in black ink, which did not disappear. Harry found himself staring at the detail of a well-formed chart—an exact map of the vicinity where he and Carter Boswick had found the abandoned mining cabin.

Without further ado, Harry carried the chart into Carter's room, and awakened his friend. They turned on another light, and examined the map together. A cry of elation came from Carter as he noted two cross lines, labeled, each in turn:

Lat. 46; 18' N.

Long. 88; 12' W.

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The mining cabin was located a short distance from where the lines crossed. From the cabin, a lightly dotted course extended up the hillside. It showed the exact location of the cavern which The Shadow had discovered.

Harry found another portion of the map, and traced his own course, leading from the distant road where they had parked the coupe, directly to the indicated spot upon the hill.

“My directions,” said Harry, in a low voice, “are to the spot on the hillside, avoiding the cabin if possible. We can do that without difficulty. If our enemies decide to return and watch the cabin, they will be guarding an empty bag.”

“Great!” agreed Carter. “But what about this place on the hill?”

“The message stated that we will find a trail blazed for us. Tiny marks hewed in the trees and on the rocks, beginning from the barrier of woods marked near the entrance.”

“Good,” commented Carter. “Say, Harry, it looks as though we are getting somewhere.”

“Sh-h!” Harry raised his hand in sudden warning. He arose and started toward his own room, Carter following. Harry crept to the door that led to the hall, and listened.

“What's up?” questioned Carter.

“Thought I heard some one in the hall,” answered Harry.

THE two listened tensely. Whatever sound Harry had heard was ended now. But Harry's suspicion was not groundless. Some one had actually tried the door of the room, and had inadvertently made a noise. The same man was trying the door of Carter Boswick's room at present—this time with success.

While Harry and Carter were at the door of the one room, the door of the other opened softly, and Stacks Lodi entered. Stationed across the hall from Harry's room, he had seen, through his own transom, the sudden gleam of light from Harry's.

In Carter Boswick's room, Stacks Lodi spied an object lying on the table. It was The Shadow's chart. The man stepped softly forward and reached to take it; then paused and studied the map. His eyes saw the dotted line running from the cabin to the spot on the hillside.

Stacks Lodi grinned. Hearing a sound from the adjoining room, he hastened softly to the hall. The door closed behind him just as Harry and Carter entered.

“Guess there's no one there.” observed Carter. “You say the marks will lead us from the trees—”

“Sh-h!” warned Harry.

He closed the transom over Carter's door. He picked up the chart and folded it.

“We will start this afternoon,” explained Harry. “We can reach the place at dusk. There will be enough light to guide us; but the darkness will enable us to work unseen.”

After a final study of the chart, in which Carter, as well as Harry, memorized the details, Harry tore up the paper and burned it with a match flame. He crumpled the ashes in a little tray, and threw them from the window.

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"We've got all day to wait," mused Carter. "Just the same, it's best. We might as well drive out at noon, Harry, and circle around until we get where we're going. You can't tell—some one may be spying on us here."

Harry nodded thoughtfully. The noise that he had fancied at his door might mean the presence of a hidden foe. He resolved that it would be wise to head south in the coupe, and then turn back; but he decided that it would not be necessary to leave as early as noon.

THE morning developed drearily, and Harry and Carter lounged about in the hotel. They could sense no menace, and they were mentally at ease.

They had no suspicion that this very hotel was harboring a dangerous villain from the enemy's camp. They did not know that Stacks Lodi had already called Hub Rowley at the Michigan road house, to give the big shot an inkling of their plans.

Hence, at two o'clock in the afternoon, when the two companions took to Harry's coupe they had no knowledge that they were being watched by shrewd eyes that stared from an upstairs window of a hotel room. Stacks Lodi, an evil chuckle on his lips, saw the coupe start along the road that led southward into Wisconsin.

"Trying to fool any one that's watching, eh?" thought Stacks. "Well, they've missed their guess this time!"

Fifteen minutes later, the ex-gambler who served as Hub Rowley's underling was driving away in his own car, heading toward the border of Michigan.

Meanwhile, Harry and Carter continued their routine ruse, which they had adopted merely as a precaution. They changed their course, drove back into Michigan, and found a roundabout way that led them to the hilly dirt road.

It was late afternoon when they parked the coupe at its former spot. They went to the rocky eminence, and viewed the land below. Harry pointed out a course that missed the cabin by several hundred yards.

"That's our layout," he declared. "It's getting gloomy now, Carter. What do you say we start?"

"Approved," responded Carter.

Five minutes later, the two men were pushing their way through the darkening forest. Away from all clearings, they had nothing to fear. Both felt elated, sure that their progress would be uninterrupted.

A half hour of tramping brought them to the hillside. Harry's first object was to locate the shack that had been marked on The Shadow's chart. It was nearly dark when they found the place.

"Pretty well hidden, isn't it?" questioned Harry, peering into the door of the empty building.

"Yes," agreed Carter. "Too bad we didn't have a day to look around up here. This would have been a better place to stay than the cabin.

"Yes," admitted Harry, "it would have been—if we had been on our own. But with The Shadow watching—well, we have considerably less enemies to deal with now if we encounter them!"

From the shack, they found the cluster of trees. On the base of one, Harry, with the aid of a flashlight, found a round mark, evidently of recent cut. The trail led to the right. Blackened spots upon the rock conducted them farther.

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"We're getting there now." remarked Harry.

Carter Boswick smiled. He felt that he was nearing the end of his quest. He knew that Harry Vincent shared his enthusiasm. Neither man thought of any danger that might lie ahead. Even less, did they consider a menace from behind.

They did not know that Stacks Lodi, too, had found The Shadow's chart. Little did they realize that a crew of desperate foemen was approaching near at hand, and that soon their trails would meet!

CHAPTER XIX. MEN OF CRIME

DOWN in the woods beyond the mining-cabin clearing, a crew of evil ruffians was lurking in readiness. Grim faces were hidden in the gloom as Stacks Lodi, at Hub Rowley's request, explained the situation that lay ahead.

"We don't have to go across the clearing" declared Stacks, in a cautious tone. "We can slide around it, and I'll pick up the trail on the other side. There's a shack up the hill, and when we get to it, I can find the trees we want.

"I got that map straight, Hub. It was nice and plain—all fixed easy to remember. There's a place that was marked 'cave' just beyond the trees. Maybe it would be tough to find; but I heard this boob Boswick say something about marks that would lead them to the entrance. If they can find them—so can we."

As Stacks Lodi paused, Hub Rowley held a muffled conference with a man who stood beside him. Stacks had not seen Hub's companion. It had been Lodi's duty to bring a squad of new gangsters in one touring car. Hub had come with two other men in his coupe.

Stacks had inferred that reinforcements had been brought from Chicago. All told, there were nearly fifteen men here tonight. It was as large a crew as on the previous incursion; but then, the fight had been in the open. Tonight, it would be a question of trapping unsuspecting victims at close quarters.

"All right," growled Hub. "You lead the way, Stacks. Keep together, gang. There was a snooper in with us the other night. Nothing like that's going to happen again. I'll give the orders as we go along."

The men moved quietly among the trees. With the moonlit clearing as a guide, Stacks led the way around the fringe of woods. After the process of circumnavigation, he stopped as he neared the sloping hillside. Turning away from the clearing, Stacks led the way upward.

It was quite dark under the trees, and Stacks was forced to conduct the crowd by a zigzag course in order to make sure of finding the cabin. The contour of the hill was helpful. Stacks knew that he was keeping close to the dotted line that had showed upon The Shadow's chart.

TO-NIGHT'S plans had been made immediately after Stacks had reached Hub Rowley at the road house. The big shot had decided to wait long enough for Carter Boswick and Harry Vincent to reach their destination. Furthermore, he had found it necessary to attend to important details before setting forth.

At present, Stacks Lodi had only one apprehension—namely, that he might fail to discover the end of the trail as quickly as Hub Rowley had expected.

Stacks worried as he trudged along until the glare of his flashlight suddenly revealed the side of the old cabin. At Hub's growled bidding, a pair of gangsters leaped forward and entered the building. They reported that it

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was deserted.

Changing his direction, Stacks Lodi soon located the clump of trees. Here, running his flashlight low, he discovered the same mark that Harry Vincent had found. It was the beginning of The Shadow's guiding trail.

Stacks pointed out the mark to Hub Rowley. He found other marks farther on. Soon the entire band was following the circuitous course over the rocks.

Clambering down the corkscrew twists, they neared that strange spot which The Shadow had seen from the air—where The Shadow had come and left, only to have his presence noted by a man in the darkness, whom, in turn, The Shadow had tracked.

First The Shadow had found this place. Then a second man. After that, Harry Vincent and Carter Boswick. Now, as a final touch, Hub Rowley, accompanied by strangers whom Stacks Lodi had not seen in the light, was here with his evil crew!

There was no indication that any one had passed this way within the last half hour. Hub Rowley growled for silence.

“We've given those bozos time to get here,” declared the big shot, as he viewed the crack between the rocks, which Stacks Lodi's flashlight showed. “Maybe they're here—maybe they aren't. So we'll find out—and be ready for them either way.

“When we get inside, I want two men to stay at the first good spot to lay. If our birds come in, close on them and give them the works. Meanwhile, the rest of us will go ahead—and if those bozos are already in, we'll have them trapped like rats.”

Having finished these instructions, Hub turned to the man beside him and asked a question. After the response, Hub ordered Stacks to extinguish the flashlight. The mobsters, spread out among the rocks, waited in silence and darkness while Hub Rowley conferred with his companion.

It was evident that the big shot respected this man's advice. Stacks Lodi remembered the talk of another person involved in Hub's scheme of crime.

Stacks grinned to himself as he realized that much must be at stake tonight. He realized that only he and Twister Edmonds had possessed a considerable insight of the work that was brewing.

As favored underlings, Stacks had figured that he and Twister would come in for a good share of the proceeds from this enterprise. Twister was dead, slain in the battle at the cabin. Stacks Lodi had no regrets. Twister's death made him the only favored henchman.

Stacks could figure a very definite reason for the present delay. Now that they had reached the entrance to the cavern, there was no need for haste.

If the men whom they sought had already entered, they were trapped for now. If they had not arrived, they would reveal themselves when they came, because of the difficult corkscrew path that they would have to follow.

At last the break arrived. Hub Rowley had finished his conference with his companion. Stacks noted that the second of Hub's unknown friends was silent, merely serving as a henchman to the mystery man whose advice had been sought by the big shot.

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Two had come with Hub; five with Stacks. That made a total of nine men altogether—a powerful squad to deal with two victims. Yet Stacks Lodi could not repress a momentary shudder. Here, in the dark, his mind was reverting to The Shadow.

In Havana—aboard the Southern Star—at the Junction House—by the cabin in the clearing. Each time, a mysterious being had come from nothingness to break down the plans of those who had sought Carter Boswick's life.

Would such intervention occur again tonight? Stacks hoped not. He felt that he could rely on Hub Rowley to deal with The Shadow, should the menace appear.

Then came the command for action. Hub Rowley's growl ordered Stacks to enter the break between the rocks; and to save his flashlight until he had moved well in from the opening. Stacks responded without delay.

Probing his way, he moved into the crevice. After twenty feet, he turned on his torch. The light revealed a twisting, natural course through broken rock.

Stacks Lodi was leading the murderous squad along the path that Harry Vincent and Carter Boswick had so recently taken. The trap was closing. Men of crime were here to deliver death!

CHAPTER XX. THE HIDDEN MINE

WHILE Stacks Lodi was conducting Hub Rowley and the mobsters along the wooded hillside, Harry Vincent and Carter Boswick had been making progress through the strange cavern which they had entered. A narrow, winding course through broken, rocky walls had led them on a tortuous descent of more than a hundred yards.

Progress had been slow. The roughness of the passage had delayed them; moreover, The Shadow's instructions had named nothing beyond the entrance. Therefore, both were alert, watching for any sign that might indicate the purpose of this odd corridor beneath the hill.

Harry's flashlight suddenly revealed an opening ahead. The beams glittered against the rocky wall of a man-hewn passage into which this natural channel entered. They stopped to find themselves coming into the side of a sloping mine shaft that ran at right angles to the course which they had followed to this point.

Side by side, the two men paused. Harry let his flashlight swing back and forth. The shaft which they had encountered was nearly eight feet in height, and almost the same in width. It sloped slightly downward to the left.

Harry's light glittered upon rusty rails that had been installed for the running of ore cars.

“Look what we've struck!” exclaimed Harry. “This shaft must be a couple of hundred yards in length!”

“No wonder they gave up the vertical shaft down by the cabin.” asserted Carter. “It must have been more or less of an experiment.”

“Certainly,” responded Harry. “This rocky hill was a better bet. They sure gave it a trial after they abandoned the pit in the clearing.”

“Looks like they may have been getting results,” observed Carter. “See the sparkle on the wall over there? It's mineral ore, all right—”

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“Nothing more than a promise,” interposed Harry, with a shake of his head. “They were carving right into the center of the hill, looking for a worth-while strike. They probably failed to get the results they wanted. Otherwise they wouldn't have abandoned this shaft.”

“Say”—Carter Boswick's tone was puzzled—“where does this shaft begin? There wasn't any sign of it on the hill.”

“We can find that out later,” laughed Harry. “But it isn't any mystery to me, Carter. The excavators—or some who came here later—must have blocked the entrance, probably with a big lot of rocks and plenty of turf.”

“Why?”

“One reason might be to keep the shaft for themselves. But I hardly think that is it. They still had the claim, I suppose. No, Carter, I can see a better reason—particularly for this shaft, with the natural entrance through which we have come.”

“What is it?”

“Some one—in all probability your father—may have obtained possession of this old mine, and realized its possibilities as a hiding place for one who might choose to use it as such.”

“You've hit it, Harry! With the entrance of the shaft blocked, no one could discover it unless they had some clew to this narrow side passage which we have just used. Remember how I said I'd search every foot of land before I'd give up? We'd have found this place eventually.”

“I think we would. But now that we're in the main alley, it would be a good idea to go on.”

Carter Boswick chuckled. He was positive that the end of the quest was within immediate reach. This sloping shaft could not be of any great length. He was more eager than Harry. Without further delay, he pushed into the shaft and urged his companion on.

THE downward course was the natural way to go. Harry and Carter trudged along the narrow-gauge track, the beam of the flashlight showing the way ahead. They had not traveled more than fifty feet before the presence of a blocking wall became detectable ahead. Either the shaft ended there or turned, Harry remarked.

As the men approached more closely, they saw that the wall marked the division of the shaft into two separate corridors: one to the left, the other to the right. The tracks ended at that point.

“Hold up a minute, Carter,” said Harry. “We've got to pick our way, from here on. Evidently these fellows tried to turn, hoping to strike a good supply of ore. When, their first effort failed, they went the other way.”

They were at the end of the main shaft. The side corridors were like the bar on a letter T. Both ways were practically level; there appeared no choice.

Harry, in his deliberation, first turned the flash back up the main shaft. Its rays faded amid the long corridor. Then he illuminated the path to the left, to reveal a blocking wall about thirty feet distant.

Harry noted what appeared to be an opening in the floor of the side passage, at the barring wall.

“Try the other direction,” suggested Carter.

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Harry responded.

The same situation revealed itself. Thirty feet of passage; then a wall with glittering streaks. Beneath it, the edge of a gaping hole.

“When the turns didn't work, they must have excavated straight down,” remarked Harry. “This mine must have been a heartbreaker. No wonder the others called it quits.”

“Come on,” urged Carter eagerly. “We're not calling quits. I'll bet there's something in this place besides galena or whatever that glittering stuff is. Strike out to the left, Harry.”

They made their way along the passage which Carter had indicated. Here, the floor was rough, in contrast to the finished surface along which the track had been laid.

The investigators stopped when they came to the hole. Harry's conjecture proved correct. It was a vertical shaft, round and jagged, some thirty feet in depth.

“Nothing down there,” observed Harry, as he turned the flashlight toward the bottom.

“Doesn't look that way,” responded Carter, peering over the edge. “Let's try the other corridor. We can come back here later.”

They turned and made their way to the dividing point. Both were tense. Harry began to feel an impending sense of danger within these depths. There was a sinister, spectral atmosphere in this forgotten mine. Carter Boswick sensed it, also.

“Creepy, isn't it?” he questioned, with a slight laugh.

“Come on,” returned Harry. “We've got to take a look down this other corridor. It may be the finish.”

“The finish?” repeated Carter solemnly. “That doesn't sound so good, Harry. Let's say it may be the beginning. If—”

He did not end the sentence. At that precise moment, the unexpected occurred. The investigators were almost at the end of the right passage—the hole which they were seeking was no more than a dozen feet away.

But as Carter Boswick spoke, there was a click from the hole beyond. The brilliant rays of an electric lantern filled the corridor, outshining Harry's light.

Caught in this sudden illumination, Harry and Carter stopped flat-footed, as a voice called out an order. The echoes of its threatening tone were hollow within that rocky vault.

“Stop where you are!” came the cry. “One step more, and you die! I've got you covered. Up with your hands!”

CARTER and Harry obeyed instinctively. The flashlight fell from Harry's grasp. Caught totally unaware, with their automatics in their pockets, instead of in their hands, both men were at the mercy of the one who had challenged them.

A nervous, frenzied laugh sounded from the hole ahead. Then, from the pit, emerged the head and shoulders of a man, a revolver sparkling in the light as it pointed forward from the extended hand that held it.

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Into the illumination came the challenger; a white-faced individual who half raised himself from the hole. The man's revolver wavered, as though in an inexperienced hand; yet its muzzle formed a constant covering that was too dangerous to resist.

Harry Vincent clenched his upraised fists. He was angry to realize that he had led Carter Boswick into such a trap as this. He threw a sidelong glance at his companion. He was amazed to note that Carter's face was twitching with a sudden fury.

The reason came an instant later. Carter Boswick had recognized the man whose hand had balked them. His voice, low and harsh, poured forth its imprecations.

“Drew Westling!” Carter was contemptuous as he pronounced his cousin's name. “Drew Westling! You double-crosser! I knew you were in this dirty game!”

CHAPTER XXI. THE ENEMY REVEALED

DREW WESTLING'S hand trembled as Carter Boswick spoke. The heir's cousin was resting on the brink of the pit from which he had come, blinking nervously at the men whom he had balked. His face was pale at the edge of the light; his eyes seemed bewildered.

“Go ahead!” growled Carter. “Shoot us, you snake! That's what you're here for!”

For the first time, Drew Westling seemed to recognize the voice that he heard. He still held the gun in his shaking hand but when he spoke, his tone was no longer one of menace.

“Carter!” he exclaimed. “Carter! It can't be you!”

Carter Boswick's gruff laugh and words of growled animosity left no doubt as to his identity. Drew Westling rubbed his free hand across a perspiring forehead.

“Carter!” Drew's voice was nervous. “Carter! I—I thought—you had gone!”

With that, the challenger sank exhausted at the edge of the pit. The revolver clattered from his hand. Carter Boswick, with an exultant cry of triumph, began to leap forward. Harry Vincent gripped him by the arm.

“Easy, old man!” Harry exclaimed. “Hold back! He's all right. Can't you see he's not your enemy? He's ready to drop from sheer exhaustion!”

Harry's words were restraining. Their truth was evident. Drew Westling had stretched on the rough floor of the corridor. His breath was coming in long gasps. Carter Boswick's attitude changed instantly.

“Drew!” he exclaimed, in a kindly tone. “What's the matter, old man? Tell me—how did you get here?”

Carter was at his cousin's side, he was clasping the hand that Drew weakly proffered. Harry Vincent arrived beside the pair. Both he and Carter could see that Westling's face was deathly pale. They propped the frail young man against the side of the corridor. Drew Westling smiled weakly.

“Guess it's all”—he paused to draw a breath—“it's all—been—too much of a strain for me. Thinking—you had gone. Trying to do it—all alone—”

“Tell us about it,” suggested Carter.

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Drew pointed to the pit. Harry turned his own flashlight downward. The glow revealed a large flat slab at the bottom of a five-foot pit.

THE edges of the slab had been mortared to the rock. Tools lay upon it. Drew Westling had been working to pry the slab loose.

“It's yours, Carter!” gasped Drew. “Whatever is under there belongs to you. I came here—not to get it for myself—I came to get it—for you.”

“I though you were with the gang,” said Carter, in a tone of remorse. “Steady, Drew. There's a lot I've got to know. Why didn't you tell me before?”

“I've got to explain, Carter,” declared Drew, becoming suddenly calm. “Maybe I should have told you before; but I was afraid you wouldn't understand. I came here to help you. Carter, because I knew there was danger.”

“Go on.”

“You found the note, didn't you?”

“You mean the directions—latitude and longitude? Yes, I found it—but it was stolen. What do you know about it?”

“Stolen?”

“Yes. Right after I found it. I went to the library when Farland Tracy left the house, my first night home. I thought maybe you had taken it, Drew.”

The pale young man shook his head. He moistened his lips and stared squarely into Carter's eyes.

“Let me tell you the beginning,” he said. “I'll be brief. There's work to do. But we had better understand.”

Carter nodded.

“Uncle Houston did not trust me,” declared Drew Westling. “I knew it for a long while. He did not approve of my way of living. Sometimes he became so enraged at me that I wondered if he might be losing his mind.

“He talked about his estate—that it would go to you, if alive; otherwise to me. But he minimized his wealth—so outrageously that I could not believe him.

“One night, some months ago, he went into the library. He slammed the door behind him, and came out a short while later. He went upstairs, and I went into the library myself. I was a trifle apprehensive, Carter. I wondered what he had been doing.

“He had been talking about you as his heir; and the thoughts of old times impelled me to take down that old copy of Dumas. Running through its pages, I came across an envelope. I fingered the flap, and it opened. It had just been sealed. The glue was not quite dry.

“I knew that Uncle Houston had left it there. That must have been his purpose in the library. I opened the envelope and found the message. Latitude and longitude. I wondered what queer quirk had made him put the message there.”

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Drew paused reflectively; then, noting Carter's intense interest, proceeded.

"I came here for a few days last summer" continued Drew. "I couldn't understand why Uncle Houston had left a message naming this locality. I couldn't find a clue here. But later, when Farland Tracy called at the house, I heard Uncle Houston say something about money that no one could find.

"That was just before he took his trip to Florida. When he returned, he claimed that some one must have entered the house during his absence. He was very angry. He summoned Tracy.

"That night, I listened outside the door of the study. It was then that I heard him speak of hidden wealth; in a place that only his heir could find, because he would leave a clue for either you or me.

"Then I understood. The message in the Dumas book! How easy it would be for him to leave some word that would guide either of us to it! The night you came home, I was afraid you might not learn. That was why I brought up the subject at the dinner table.

"But as soon as Tracy left—I figured he had brought you a letter of some sort—I saw you start for the stairs, and I imagined that you were going to the library instead. You seemed worried that night. I felt sure that you had found the message. The next morning, you announced a trip to Europe. I was positive that you would come here instead."

"Why didn't you tell me so?" demanded Carter.

"Because I feared that you would not understand," answered Drew. "I owed money for gambling debts—my own fault—and Tracy knew about it. I was afraid that he had mentioned the matter to you. I couldn't forget that I would have been the heir if you had not returned. I didn't want your money, Carter.

"But to admit that I had pried into your father's secret; to try to get in on a search for wealth that might perhaps have come to me; to bring up a matter concerning which you had preserved absolute silence —"

"I understand now," nodded Carter thoughtfully. "I understand now, because I know I would not have understood then."

"Besides that," added Drew, "I feared for you. I knew that some one —somehow—had learned of this hidden wealth. It might have looked as though I had squealed—if you came here and ran into trouble—"

"So you came here alone?" interrupted Carter.

"Yes," admitted Drew. "I knew of the shack on the hill. I came here, to watch—to try to protect you. I saw you and your companion come to the cabin. That night, I crawled down to investigate. I was just outside the cabin—"

"That's what I heard" interposed Harry, nodding as he turned to Carter Boswick.

"—outside the cabin," went on Drew, in a monotone, "when the firing began. I laid low. When you two came around, I didn't know who you were at first. I didn't know until I ran, Carter. I saw you were ready to shoot. I kept on, hoping that you would not recognize me. I was afraid you would not understand my motive, my being there at that time."

"I didn't," said Carter grimly.

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“So I stayed in the shack,” explained Drew. “I waited there, hoping you were safe, afraid that the others would come to search if you did not return. Last night, an autogiro landed near this spot. I saw a light flickering among the trees. It came out of the cave on the hill.

“After the person with the light was gone, I discovered the cave—the spot for which I had searched last summer! I was sure, then, that the enemy had found the place. So I came in here immediately.

“I have been working, trying to uncover what is under the slab—to get it out before they came. I wanted to save it for you, Carter, and there was no time to lose. When you two came in here tonight, I thought you were the others. That’s why I came up with the gun.”

Carter Boswick thumped his cousin on the back. Harry Vincent sat in silence. He knew the significance of the autogiro. He thought of that corkscrew entrance to the cave. Invisible to eyes on the ground—visible to the eyes of The Shadow from the air!

A SLIGHT sound interrupted Harry’s reverie. The noise seemed to come from back in the main shaft. Harry reached forward, and extinguished the lantern. He spoke softly in the darkness.

“I think we’re safe enough,” he said. “I know who it was who found this place for us, Carter. The enemy can’t know about it. Just the same, it would be wise to go back to the shaft and look about a bit. Come on. I’ll turn on the light when we reach the main shaft.”

Cautiously, Harry led the way. They reached the junction of the main shaft and the side corridor. With Harry whispering for silence, the three moved on through the darkness. They had not gone a dozen feet before Drew Westling stumbled over one rail of the track. He blurted an exclamation as he fell.

Harry delivered a warning hiss. It came too late. The sound of the fall had traveled along the shaft. As if by a signal, a battery of flashlights turned on, toward the spot where the passage from the rocks entered the shaft.

Harry and his companions fell back. Gloating cries sounded loudly in their ears as those shouts echoed down the shaft. The three young men were covered by five revolvers. It was too late!

The enemy had come. They were trapped by a squad of murderers who had somehow found this place. Harsh commands sounded along the shaft. The cornered men raised their hands and let their guns fall. It was the only hope that their lives might be spared.

Harry Vincent, knowing the brutality of the men with whom they had fought before, expected instant death. He was sorry the moment that he dropped his automatic. It would have been better to have died fighting, he decided, now that it was too late.

But the death shots did not come. Instead, a man stepped into the light, assuming a position in which his face could be seen. Harry Vincent did not recognize the cold, leering countenance; but the cries of surprise which Carter and Drew uttered showed that the cousins knew their adversary.

The man who had withheld gun fire that he might ridicule the victims was Farland Tracy, the attorney!

CHAPTER XXII. SHOTS OF DEATH

FARLAND TRACY indulged in an evil laugh as he showed himself to the trio at the end of the shaft. Backed by glimmering revolvers, the lawyer had nothing to fear from the men whom he and Hub Rowley had trapped.

THE SHADOW'S JUSTICE

There was no kindness in the attorney's features. His face, usually feigning sympathy and understanding, had become the gloating countenance of a fiend. The accustomed mask had lifted.

“So the cousins have joined forces,” sneered the lawyer, in a low, sarcastic tone. “They've talked things over, maybe? Wondered why they didn't understand each other fully? Well, they've found out, now.

“Easy money for Carter Boswick, eh? Letting Cousin Drew in on the wealth, perhaps. Well, it's all off now, my boys. You and your helper made a lot of trouble; but we've got you where we want you—and we'll leave you here!”

Another face appeared beside the lawyer's. Hub Rowley was stepping forward to add his malicious approval. Drew Westling was the only one who recognized the big shot.

“Don't blame Cousin Drew,” jeered Tracy, addressing Carter Boswick. “It was your father's folly that brought you here—although Drew was partly responsible. I knew all about you father's clever secret—all except where the hiding place could be found. It looked like you were never coming back; and Drew was kind enough to get himself into trouble—with this gentleman who stands beside me.

“A gambling debt. Money owed to Mr. Rowley. So I called on Mr. Rowley—with kindly intentions at first. But when I learned that Mr. Rowley deliberately intended to bleed Drew Westling, I decided it would be a good idea. I made a deal with Mr. Rowley, involving Houston Boswick's hidden wealth.

“We decided to find it for ourselves. We knew that we could take care of little Drew Westling. When we couldn't find it at the old mansion, we decided we would pump Drew after the legacy became his. The old man didn't have so long to live.

“But when you popped up, Carter Boswick, we decided to put you nicely out of the way. I learned that you were coming from Montevideo. I called Mr. Rowley, and he sent a man to meet you. Somehow, you were fortunate enough to get home.”

Carter Boswick clenched his teeth. He thought of Havana—of the Southern Star. Then, again, he was listening to the sarcastic tones of Farland Tracy's voice.

“We didn't get you,” announced the lawyer, “but we did get the message that you found. We had a very able agent planted in your house. Step forward, Headley.”

Houston Boswick's former servant stepped into the light. The malicious grin upon his face betrayed his treacherous nature. He, like Farland Tracy, had worn a mask in the past.

“You see,” purred the lawyer, “I had long had dealings with Mr. Rowley. He is a gentleman who delights in evading the law; hence he frequently calls on capable legal counsel. He has a way of dealing with people—and our friend Headley chanced to be one with whom he had dealt in the past.

“Headley was very useful. He took the message. He was watching when it was discovered. He signaled for a messenger, who was waiting patiently outside. Mr. Rowley and I went into conference that very evening.”

The lawyer's cold tones ended.

HE needed to say no more. All was plain to Carter Boswick and Drew Westling. Harry Vincent understood also.

THE SHADOW'S JUSTICE

Big brains had formed an alliance. A crooked lawyer, thinking more of millions than the trust that was his to keep, had called in a supermind of crime to aid him in the purloining of vast wealth.

Now came a new statement—one that showed a reason for Farland Tracy's restraining action. The lawyer had more than a merely malicious purpose in withholding death.

“It would be most unfortunate,” declared Tracy, “if you had managed, somehow, to remove the fortune that Houston Boswick deposited in this place. There is that possibility, however, since we have discovered you at the probable spot.

“So to mollify your previous endeavors, we shall investigate before we pay our final respects to you. Mr. Rowley and myself have agreed that such should be the best procedure. We may find it necessary to question you before you die. Previously, your instant death would have been preferable. Now we can afford to grant you a brief respite.”

With that, Farland Tracy advanced along the side of the shaft. Hub Rowley and Headley followed him. All three were armed, but their revolvers were lowered. The mobsmen in the shaft, Stacks Lodi in command, were the ones who covered Harry Vincent and his comrades.

The advance merely increased the hopelessness of the situation. It was bringing three deadly enemies to closer range. Harry Vincent was longing for a break. He and his companions were only a few yards from the corridor that ended in the treasure vault.

With a loaded automatic still in his pocket, with Carter Boswick similarly equipped, Harry knew that they could put up a short struggle if they could gain the pit. It would be better to die fighting in the face of odds, than be mercilessly butchered. But the threatening revolvers up ahead were held by men whose aim would surely be fatal, unless some unexpected surprise might intervene.

Somehow, these villains had kept watch. Harry realized that he and Carter had failed to use the proper precaution. The Shadow had given them their opportunity. The meeting with Drew Westling had added to their strength.

But in the meanwhile, the enemy had gained by strategy. Where mass attacks had failed, cunning had succeeded.

The position now was one that would tax The Shadow, even should he appear upon the scene.

Harry groaned inwardly as he realized his own stupidity had brought this finish. Had he and his companions remained at the end of the side corridor, they would have been in a stronghold. His foolish desire to investigate had brought himself and two others face to face with an overpowering force.

THESE thoughts swept through Harry's brain with the rapidity of lightning. A man who faces grim death thinks of all neglected possibilities. Harry was no exception. His mind turned over the entire situation during the interval of a scant few seconds.

A break! If it would only come!

Anything—a stumble on the part of one of the three approaching men—an argument among the covering mobsters—anything that would grant the opportunity for a dive into the corridor where Harry and Carter had found Drew Westling!

THE SHADOW'S JUSTICE

Harry's fists tightened.

Shots of death! Let them come! He would make the break himself and take the consequences. He felt no qualms at sacrificing his companions. They were surely doomed—the sooner the end came, the better.

Harry spoke; but his lips did not move in the effort. The undertone was heard only by Carter Boswick and Drew Westling, for Farland Tracy and Hub Rowley were still twenty feet away.

“When I say, Go!”—these were Harry's words—“jump for the corridor. It's our only chance. Ready—”

Before Harry could pronounce the next word, a terrific roar came through the sloping shaft. Some one had opened fire from the section beyond the spot where the side entrance converged within the mine. The heavy booming of automatics sounded like a cannonade.

One of the covering gangsters staggered. The others, with one, accord, dropped to the ground, and turned in the direction of the fire. Farland Tracy and Hub Rowley turned in alarm.

Amid the thundering echoes came Harry's hoarse command:

“Go!”

The break had come—and the word was timed with it! With Carter Boswick and Drew Westling, Harry scrambled for the side corridor. Only one man sought to stop them.

Headley, alone, had not yielded to the momentary surprise that had gripped the others of the invading crew. He saw the doomed men escaping. He fired quick shots in their direction. Fortunately, his aim was hasty.

A bullet skimmed Drew Westling's shoulder. Drew staggered head-foremost into the side corridor. Harry and Carter caught him as he fell and dragged him with them. A few moments later they were in the pit.

Suddenly a terrific tumult sounded through the mine shaft. Mobsters were firing up the slope toward their hidden foe. The roar of automatics was responding.

Harry Vincent knew the answer, as he grimly drew forth his automatic. The Shadow, alone, had brought this timely rescue. The master of darkness had opened fire upon the mob, to save the three whose doom had seemed so certain.

Bullets of death! The Shadow had loosed them. But The Shadow, like Harry Vincent and his comrades, was trapped by a merciless mob!

CHAPTER XXIII. THE LAST FIGHT

VOLLEYS thundered through the sloping shaft of the forgotten mine. Gangsters, prone upon the rusted track, were blazing furiously at an unseen target. Bullets ricocheted from jagged walls. Answering shots responded from above.

Flashlights, glimmering intermittently so that they would not reveal the men who held them, were the advantage which the mobsmen possessed. Those flashes of light showed a wavering form in black, retreating up the shaft.

THE SHADOW'S JUSTICE

The Shadow was retiring in the face of formidable odds. The cover of darkness was his no longer. The walls of the shaft afforded no spot from which he could thrust a pistoled hand while his form remained in safety.

Those shots with which The Shadow had begun the fray had been distant ones. For The Shadow had realized the danger of close approach. Even now he was in the utmost danger; for although the range was long, the gunmen had a veritable shooting gallery along which to aim.

Bullets that ricocheted could prove as deadly as those which were discharged with perfect aim. Had The Shadow not taken all factors into consideration, he would have fallen with the first volley sent in his direction.

Retreat was the only game; and in that retreat, The Shadow gave high encouragement to the men who opposed him. Stacks Lodi had shouted out the identity of the antagonist.

The Shadow was on the run!

Evil mobsters spat oaths as they fired. All the venom of the underworld was loosed tonight. The Shadow trapped! Death to The Shadow! He would never escape this trap alive!

Two of the mobsmen had fallen. Two others had received wounds, but were still in action.

As Stacks Lodi urged his men forward, they passed the spot where the secret entrance joined the shaft and there they were reinforced by the two gunmen who had been left to guard the outer opening.

The Shadow's retreat had increased in speed. His form was hidden by the increasing slope of the shaft. Stacks Lodi shouted for prompt pursuit.

Why not? The range was long. The advantage was equal for every shooter. The horde outnumbered The Shadow more than eight to one. If they could catch a glimpse of that retreating form within the glare of their flickering lights, death would stalk The Shadow.

Into Stacks Lodi's cunning brain came the realization that the opening of this shaft must be blocked. There, The Shadow would be at bay. When he was backed against the final wall, lights would no longer glimmer. A barrage sweeping through the darkness would surely spell The Shadows doom!

Below, Farland Tracy and Hub Rowley were keeping the three trapped men from escaping. Headley was with them. Stacks could hear the echoing sound of shots. He surmised what was going on.

Peering from the edge of the wall, into the short corridor that led to the right, the lawyer and the big shot were sniping at Harry Vincent and Carter Boswick. Harry and Carter were wisely withholding their fire as they lay within the shelter of the pit. Every shot counted how. They waited for the enemy to appear in the corridor itself.

Stacks Lodi still urged his men up the shaft. The slope was one which increased as they proceeded. This accounted for The Shadow's disappearance. The ceiling formed a curve that covered his retreat.

Suddenly, as a flashlight illuminated the rising cavern, a gangster emitted a cry of exultation.

"There he is! There he is!"

As the light went out, Stacks Lodi caught sight of a stooping figure up ahead.

THE SHADOW'S JUSTICE

The Shadow!

Stacks had seen the flowing cloak and the lowered head, buried beneath the slouch hat.

BEFORE the gangsters could fire, four quick shots came down the shaft. Bullets glanced from the ground, and one gangster coughed out his life amid the darkness.

What was one man now? Stacks aimed and fired into the blackness. The range was closer than before. They had neared the end of the shaft.

The mobsters followed the example. The darkness showed repeated spurts of flame; the air reeked with powder fumes.

“Hold it! Hold it!”

Stacks Lodi's command was heard. Echoes of the final shots rolled dimly down the shaft. Silence followed. A hiss of exultation came from Stacks Lodi's evil lips.

The Shadow was no longer returning the fire. Perhaps he lay wounded or dead!

On the contrary, he might be resting for the final moment, seeking to trap his enemies by some ruse. If so, it would be futile. One more revelation of that black-garbed form, and The Shadow's end would be at hand!

“Ready!” growled Stacks. “Get set, and we'll give him all the light he wants. Keep it on this time. Bust loose when I shoot the big light.”

As Stacks pressed the switch of a bull's-eye lantern, a strange sound manifested itself from above. A low rumble occurred in the darkness. The light came on. A snarl burst from Stacks an instant before the gangsters opened fire.

From a hundred feet up the shaft, a mining car was slowly starting down the slope. Its sides of metal, its interior brimming with a huge load of glistening rock, this carrier was the first car of an entire train!

Gangster bullets spattered against the steel front of the car. They did no harm. The Shadow was behind—beyond—in safety.

Stacks Lodi cried out in terror. He understood now why The Shadow had been stooping when they last had seen him. The lone fighter had released a mighty Juggernaut upon his enemies!

The ore train of the abandoned mine! Still loaded with its last burden of rock that had never been taken away. Rusted wheels were responding under the impetus of the great weight. Cars with bulging sides were about to sweep cleanly through the deserted shaft!

Before Stacks Lodi could cry an order to his men, the terrorized gangsters were on their feet, turning to dash along the shaft. Only one remained with Stacks. He, like the leader, had seen the only chance for safety; to leap upon the foremost car before it gathered dangerous speed.

That moment was approaching now. The rumble had become a roar. The cars were coming steadily down the slope. Stacks Lodi and his single companion rose grimly to meet them. Then came loud, bursting shots from the stack of ore atop the foremost car.

THE SHADOW'S JUSTICE

THE SHADOW was clearing the way! He wanted no riders upon his train of destruction. With the cars in motion, he had sprung aboard and come to the mound that topped the leading carrier.

Stacks Lodi staggered and fell against the side of the shaft. His companion collapsed at his feet. The crushing cars came on; when they arrived, the head of the train threw the two bodies between the tracks and the wall, crushing them to mangled forms.

Neither Stacks nor the gangster was alive to feel that fate. The Shadow's clearing bullets had silenced them forever. Even as the train gained speed along the slope, the black-garbed figure was following another purpose. It was crawling rapidly back along the cars.

Fleeing gangsters had gained a precious lead in their dash down the slope. But the uneven footing of the trackage stayed their progress. The descending train was gathering impetus. Faster by thrice than a man could run, it hurtled down upon these maddened underlings of crime.

As the heavy cars surged toward the mid-point of the shaft, The Shadow dropped from the rear car. The only token of his presence was the sinister laugh that now echoed through the man-made cavern. The Shadow had reserved that mockery for the moment when his terrible avalanche of death would strike.

The plunging cars brooked no interference. A screaming gangster was thrown forward a dozen feet when the head of the train overtook him. He was crushed to death while the cars swept on.

Another victim came a second later—then a third. Still the train roared on, as it passed the only spot of safety between the top and the bottom of the shaft—the entrance to the natural passage that led from the mine.

A pair of mobsters cowered there—the last of Stacks Lodi's pursuing crew. They had reached the safety point just in time. They, alone of those who had cried death to The Shadow, remained to see the death that he had delivered to his trappers.

As the train thundered onward, a gleam of light appeared from up the shaft. It signified the presence of a living being—one who had escaped the grinding death. Behind that light was The Shadow, the avenger who had loosed the train of destruction.

The light spotted the gangsters. They knew who held it. With vengeful snarls, they raised their revolvers to fire at the unseen being.

As the revolvers spoke, quick bursts of flame came from below the gleaming light. The Shadow, crouching, had drawn the mobsmen's aim upward.

The gangsters fell while firing. They sprawled forward into the shaft, across the rails, as dead as their mangled fellows.

Quick had been that action. As The Shadow rose to stride down the slope, the roar of the hurtling cars was still in progress. The Juggernaut of doom had not yet come to its stopping place.

BELOW, other men of crime now knew the menace. Hub Rowley had been the first to hear the rumble of the cars. He had spoken tensely to his companions. They had stayed their fire to await the outcome.

Now, in the light that Headley shot up along the shaft, they could see the terrible approach. The train, surging on at terrific speed, was an irresistible menace that they could not stop.

THE SHADOW'S JUSTICE

With one accord, the three invaders turned to safety. They did not seek the corridor where Harry Vincent and Carter Boswick were located. Instead, they sprang for the cover of the opposite passage.

A flashlight glared as they leaped. With one accord, Harry and Carter fired at the fleeing men. Headley went down in the passage. The following shots would have found their marks, but for the intervention of the train, which suddenly arrived to protect the men whom it had threatened.

A mighty crash shattered the end wall of the slope. The heavy cars piled up amid a deluge of flying ore that spread in all directions. The burden of broken rock alone prevented the train from telescoping.

Twisted, battered, the cars sagged back on the rebound, and lay, a mass of wreckage, along the bottom of the mine slope.

As the continued echoes died away, Harry and Carter sprang from their pit. They had fired futilely as the cars arrived; then they had ducked to escape chunks of hurtling ore. They still had enemies with whom to deal; and they knew where the others had gone.

Grimly, they climbed over piles of rocks and reached the nearest car. Harry reached forward to fire. The burst of a revolver drove him back. Hub Rowley and Farland Tracy had chosen the same purpose.

New shots sounded amid the wreckage. Faces appeared above the car. Harry and Carter scrambled back to the pit, the only place from which they could return the fire. High up, near the ceiling of the shaft, the enemy had the protection of the upturned car that had headed the death train.

THE advantage was with the plotting villains. Their angle enabled them to fire down into the edge of the pit. Harry and Carter crouched low, unable to return the shots. Hub Rowley, snarling, had crawled to one side, to gain a better shot.

A light shone from beside the battered train. Hub turned, and his gold teeth glimmered in an evil grin. He raised his revolver to fire at the menace which he knew was there. An automatic roared its greeting.

Hub Rowley swayed crazily. His loathsome smile became a sickly grimace. His revolver twirled as it fell from his fingers. His body lost its balance and plunged to the ground.

Farland Tracy saw the approaching light. With a fiendish cry, the lawyer backed from the upturned car and sought the refuge of the corridor, where Headley's body lay half-covered with broken ore.

Firing intermittent shots, the crooked lawyer sought to prevent the approach of the dreaded being who had deprived him of his allies. His effort failed. He could not thwart The Shadow.

Backing toward the wall of the short passage, Tracy half-raised his arms as a token of surrender. He held the revolver pointing upward. The Shadow did not fire when he saw the gesture.

But Farland Tracy's action was a ruse. He suddenly lowered his hand to fire a quick shot. His treacherous deed received a prompt penalty. The Shadow's automatic spoke before Tracy could shoot. The bullet struck the lowering arm, as token of The Shadow's power. The offending hand dropped the gun.

Farland Tracy, justly crippled for his foul attempt, blurted a cry of pain and staggered backward. He was ignorant of the fact that the short corridor ended in a precipitous shaft. His back never reached the wall that it sought.

THE SHADOW'S JUSTICE

The lawyer lost his footing on the brink of the pit. With a wild, screaming snarl, he threw his good arm outward, but in vain. His body toppled backward, and plunged to the jagged bottom of the hole, more than thirty feet below.

No further cry came from the blackened shaft. Farland Tracy, like the others, had gone to a deserved doom. The last fight was ended. The Shadow was the conqueror.

A long, weird laugh shivered through the gloomy corridors. It returned, a cry of ghoulish echoes. That laugh was mirthless. The Shadow's triumph was given as a solemn knell to crime. Justice had won in the last fight!

CHAPTER XXIV. THE SETTLEMENT

MORNING had dawned. A trio of solemn men were beside the cabin in the clearing. The sunlight of another day made this place seem strangely far from the gloomy shaft of the forgotten mine.

“Ready?”

Harry Vincent, standing, put the question to Carter Boswick, who was beside him. Carter nodded. Both turned to Drew Westling, who was seated on a metal box, his face pale, and his shoulder bulging from bandages that had been packed beneath his coat.

“Come on,” said Harry, with a grin. “Time to be moving, young fellow. Remove yourself from those millions. We have to take them with us.”

Drew Westling complied. Harry and Carter lifted the heavy box and carried it between them, while Drew followed unsteadily.

It was a long trudge, with frequent stops, before they reached the coupe. Drew was more tired than the others. They helped him into the car, and packed the chest in the back.

“All I can say,” remarked Harry, as he mopped his brow, “is that I appreciate your father's foresight in packing away paper currency and securities in preference to gold.”

“It helped out a lot.” responded Carter, as they entered the car. “The big job was cracking open the slab. It wasn't so much for the two of us—Drew had gotten along pretty far when we arrived.”

They discussed the subject as they rolled along. There had been two hours work at the pit in the mine after The Shadow's fight had ended. There, continuing sturdily despite the ordeal they had undergone, Harry and Carter had unearthed the coffer, while Drew Westling had lain asleep from complete exhaustion.

They had taken Drew to the cabin first; then they had returned to the shaft of death to bring the box of millions. Both Harry and Carter had been pleased because Drew was groggy when they took him from the mine. The scenes where the secret entrance joined the shaft were not pleasant to remember.

The metal box had proven, indeed, to be a treasure chest. There was no clew to its placement in the mine. Whether Houston Boswick had taken it there himself—old though he was—or had relied upon trusted helpers, was a matter of speculation.

It was also impossible to determine how long the wealth had been hidden. Two years seemed the limit, judging by some of the documents. Long-term bonds had view with government certificates of high denomination.

THE SHADOW'S JUSTICE

Among the mass of wealth, Harry and Carter had discovered a few stocks that were apparently worthless. In their thorough inspection at the cabin, they had found stock certificates showing complete ownership of the Golden Glow Mine—and this had proven to be the mine in which the treasure had been hidden.

AS they rode along toward the Wisconsin border, Drew Westling explained his dealings with Hub Rowley. Harry and Carter laughed when Drew spoke of the I O Us which the dead big shot had held.

“Let some one try to collect now,” declared Carter grimly. “Those are out now, Drew.”

“But if some one does—”

“I’ll take care of them,” laughed Carter. “Don’t worry, Drew. You can put that income of yours away in the bank. You’re due to your share of this harvest.”

A moment of silence; then Carter spoke to Harry.

“And for you, old fellow—”

Harry stopped him with a gesture.

“Forget it, Carter,” he said. “I was working under orders. I’m out of the division.”

“But the—the person who sent you to help me. Perhaps you can arrange with him.”

“Whatever he wishes, he can call for. But you may not hear from him. He does not expect return for what he gives.”

There was a cryptic meaning in Harry’s statement. Carter Boswick smiled seriously as he recalled last night’s events. Then, The Shadow had given—but had avoided all return. He had delivered messengers of lead, and had loosed a thunderbolt of steel. The results had been dire to fiends of crime.

What had become of The Shadow?

Carter Boswick did not know, and he realized that Harry Vincent shared his ignorance. They had both heard the final cry of triumph. But after its sinister echoes, no further sound had come.

Carter had expressed a fear for their mysterious protector. Harry had answered it with a knowing smile. The Shadow triumphant was a living Shadow!

The old mine was again forgotten. Within its sordid corridors, deep silence lay. The bodies of dead men, if ever found, would be taken as the reason for the closing of the mine—years before last night’s event. The shattered wreckage of the death train would appear as evidence of an accident that had been buried to avoid an inquest.

As they reached the Michigan border, Carter Boswick reached into his pocket and drew forth the only documents that he had removed from the chest of wealth. These were the stock certificates of the Golden Glow Mine.

Methodically, Carter tore the papers into tiny fragments. He let them trickle in batches from the window, where a rising breeze swirled and scattered them far apart.

THE SHADOW'S JUSTICE

Harry Vincent, smiling, approved the action. Let the forgotten mine remain forgotten. The only records of its existence would appear in those secret books which none would ever find—the hidden archives of The Shadow.

For to The Shadow belonged the triumph. His hidden presence, haunting the innermost recesses of the discovered shaft, had distributed rescue and destruction simultaneously—each apportioned to the ones who rightfully deserved it.

The menace that had threatened Carter Boswick's heritage was gone forever. Vile schemes had ended—and the schemers had gone with them.

The Shadow had prevailed, and justice ruled!

THE END