

THE SILENT DEATH

Maxwell Grant

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CHAPTER I. EYES OF EVIL

THE lights of uptown Manhattan cast a vivid, fantastic glow when viewed from the window of the little office high in the towering Brinton Building. But the man who stood within the darkness of that thirtieth-floor room was not concerned with the spectacle of man-made brilliance. His eyes were focused upon the top stories of a huge apartment building across the street.

The apartment structure was capped by a penthouse, from which a few lights gleamed. One corner of the penthouse, which rose flush with the sheer wall of the building, was the spot which this unseen observer found most interesting.

A match glimmered in a cupped hand. As the flame ignited a cigarette, it showed a rough, hardened face. The match went out, and the watcher puffed his cigarette. As the glowing tip descended from his lips, the man emitted an evil snarl that went well with his countenance.

A rap at the door. The man by the window flicked his cigarette through the opening. He closed the window

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and drew the shade. He hurried to the door and switched on the light just as a second furtive rap was given. The man within the room opened the door, to admit a hasty visitor.

The new illumination plainly revealed the two men as characters of a strangely different type. The individual who had been standing in the darkness was short and stocky a ruffian in all save dress. His well-groomed appearance did not fit his pudgy-nosed, hard-lipped countenance, which bore a wicked, leering smirk.

The arrival, tall and stoop-shouldered, was a gray-haired man who possessed a marked dignity. His gaunt face showed firmness in spite of declining years. Only in one feature did he resemble the man who had been waiting in the office. His eyes, like those of the other man, gleamed with cunning and evil.

THE stocky, hard-mannered individual was the first to speak. In a voice which was suave, despite its harshness, he questioned the visitor's identity.

"You are Thomas Jocelyn?"

"Yes," responded the elderly man, still eyeing his questioner. "You, I presume, are Larry Ricordo?"

"That's me," answered the harsh-voiced man, with a grin. "Sit down and make yourself easy."

Thomas Jocelyn seated himself in a chair beside a table in the center of the room. He leaned solemnly upon his gold-headed cane and stared at Ricordo.

"Where is Folcroft Urlich?" he inquired.

"The professor will be here soon," replied Ricordo, while lighting another cigarette. "I came early to open the office. Plenty of time yet."

Jocelyn contented himself with the one question. He appeared nervous, despite his composed manner.

For several minutes, Ricordo stood expectantly, thinking that the old man intended to make a new inquiry. Finally, with a gruff laugh, Ricordo slouched into a chair.

"Well," he remarked, "we're all set. We're going to see the wheels run round to-night. Picking this office was a cinch."

As Jocelyn made no comment, Ricordo desisted after the one attempt to open conversation. He eyed Jocelyn almost contemptuously, but did nothing to arouse antagonism. When a firm knock sounded at the door, Ricordo leaped to his feet and went to admit the next visitor.

The newcomer completed an odd triumvirate. He was of medium height, dark-haired and of stern visage. He wore a small hat, and his hair formed a flowing mop above a bulging forehead. His face, sallow and hollow-cheeked, resembled a living skull from which a pair of sharp, greenish eyes peered with evil gaze.

This man smiled broadly as he perceived the two already in the room. He threw off his overcoat and advanced with outstretched hand, his mouth forming an ugly, irregular slit as the smile continued.

"Ah!" croaked the new visitor. "Both here, eh? My friends, Jocelyn and Ricordo. You are both friends by now, I hope. That is well. We all have much in common."

"Good evening, Urlich," said Jocelyn, in a calm tone.

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"Hello, professor," grinned Ricordo. "All set. Want to see the lay?"

"Not yet" the professor's tone was reproving "not yet. There is time to spare. It is well that we talk first."

He seated himself and looked from one man to the other. Leaning back, still smiling, Professor Folcroft Ulrich emitted a cackling laugh of satisfaction. It brought a grin from Ricordo, a nervous shrug from Jocelyn.

"So," declared Ulrich. "We shall see our first plan work, eh? We are obliged to Ricordo, eh, Jocelyn? He has arranged very well."

"I do not relish it," objected Jocelyn, in a testy tone. "This is not my business, Ulrich. I do not disapprove of death, where it is necessary; but to be a witness –"

Professor Ulrich held up his hand by way of interruption. Jocelyn subsided while Ricordo glared maliciously.

"You can end such qualms, Jocelyn," stated the professor, "and it is well that you should do so at the start. That is one reason why I have summoned you here to-night. The other is that we may discuss our plans plainly. I want no misunderstanding later on."

"Death is my idea. To a scientist such as myself, human life is a mass. The ego must be forgotten. What is one life? Nothing. But one death" as Ulrich paused, the smile writhed snakelike across his lips – "may mean much to those who live to profit by it."

"Death means millions to the three of us. Millions! Do you understand, Jocelyn? Death paves our way and I am the master who provides death. But one who provides death requires human tools. Ricordo has brought those instruments. Moreover, one who provides death wisely must have a chance for gain and you bring that opportunity, Jocelyn."

The dignified man nodded. He chewed his lips thoughtfully; then his eyes lighted as though the talk of gain had served as inspiration.

PROFESSOR URLICH leered as though he had read the old man's mind.

"That we may all understand," continued Ulrich, lowering his evil tones, "I shall recapitulate the desires which have brought us together. For years I have taken life seldom the life of human beings, I admit; but life, just the same. I do not quail at the thought of taking human life. To me, it is experimentation on a higher plane."

"Ricordo has chosen a career of crime. He is criminal by instinct, shrewd in all his dealings. He knows how to control and utilize men of the criminal type. Therefore, he is following his inclinations."

"You, Jocelyn, have profited by others' losses. You call yourself a financier. You are actually one who traffics in the failures of those less fortunate. Your opportunity will be greater now; for where living men once blocked your schemes, dead men will not."

Jocelyn shuddered at the frank terms, then smiled weakly. Professor Ulrich seemed to possess an insidious influence over the financier one which caused the man to forget his qualms despite himself.

"Simple plans are most effective." As Professor Ulrich proceeded with this statement, he drew a folded paper from his pocket. "Here is the list which you gave me, Jocelyn. It names more than a dozen big-moneyed men whose deaths will prove highly profitable to you, and therefore" Ulrich stopped to stare firmly at the man

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opposite him "profitable to myself and Ricordo.

"Your part, Jocelyn, is to simply remind me of the strategic time for any such deaths. The rest lies in my hands with the aid of Ricordo. You have named the first man. You will see him die to-night. I trust that your plans are made with all precaution."

"They are," declared Jocelyn, with a nervous laugh. "If Alfred Sartain dies to-night –"

"– when Alfred Sartain dies tonight," put in Urlich, with his wicked sneer.

"With Sartain eliminated," agreed Jocelyn, "I am sure of an immediate profit of at least five millions. He has practically agreed to refinance the Universal Chain Stores. I have large proxy holdings in the National Syndicate and in Amalgamated Stores. If Universal fails to gain the money that it needs, the concern will go into the hands of the receivers. My stocks will rise –"

"Sartain is the only salvation for Universal?"

"Positively. All depends upon him."

"You will see him die to-night!"

Larry Ricordo was on his feet, rubbing his hands warmly as he heard these words. He swung toward Jocelyn, to add weight to Professor Urlich's statement.

"You bet Sartain will take the bump," he declared. "Say! Maybe you don't know that I could be the biggest shot in New York if I'd wanted to stay in the racket. I dropped out because I saw bigger dough this way without the chance of getting filled with lead by some other guy's mob.

"I'm supposed to be out in the sticks too hot for me here. But I've got a couple of real gazebos working for me. When Sartain comes into that penthouse of his, he'll be covered –"

"One moment," interposed Urlich, staring cold at the gang leader. "I told you that violence would be unnecessary, Ricordo."

"That's all right, professor," responded Ricordo. "I'm not interfering with whatever plans you've got. Just playing safe, that's all. Duster Brooks is planted as Sartain's butler."

"That I understood."

"And I've got Slips Harbeck and a couple of gorillas in an apartment on the top floor. They won't move unless we see that Sartain is going to get away. They'll wait to hear from me."

"Very well," said Professor Urlich. "Nevertheless, your precautions were not needed." Then, to Jocelyn: "Ricordo is lacking in the technique of murder. During Sartain's absence, the penthouse was renovated. Ricordo provided a competent supervisor in the person of Duster Brooks, who is acting as Sartain's butler. Brooks had charge of the work. He is there to-night.

"Alfred Sartain will die presumably from natural causes due to my well-planned instructions."

The professor glanced at his watch. He noticed that the time was nearly half past eight. He went to the wall, and turned out the light; then to the window.

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"Come," he ordered through the darkness.

THE other men approached. The curtain raised under Urlich's touch. It was like the lifting of asbestos before a drama.

Silhouetted before the sparkling glow of the city lay the huge apartment building. The dim lights of the penthouse were the same as Larry Ricordo had viewed them. The corner was still black, and it was this spot that the professor indicated.

"There is the studio," he remarked, in a low tone. "It is Sartain's custom to retire there, alone. This will be his first visit upon his return. He is expected by nine o'clock, with his secretary. The chain-store representative will call at half past.

"Brooks has given us all the information. The documents are on Sartain's desk for his consideration. There is no reason why he should depart from his usual custom. It is upon such simple, commonplace actions that all great deeds of hidden crime should be built.

"Your presence here will inspire your confidence in my powers. Ricordo has already evidenced his doubts. You, Jocelyn, may also be apprehensive. But as you witness each step, and hear me explain its cause, you will understand."

The professor's tone had taken on the quiet notes of a scientific lecture. His calloused words brought a grunted laugh from Larry Ricordo. Thomas Jocelyn shuddered. Nevertheless, the financier stayed as close to the window as did the gang leader. There was a fascination in that scene across the street.

"You will witness death," repeated Professor Urlich, by way of conclusion. "Death undisturbed; death unsuspected; death that will be regarded as accidental. Ricordo may trust to guns and violence. I deal death with silent skill. That is the death that you will see to-night – and which will strike again and again. Silent death!"

The professor paused. The men by the open window remained motionless. Once more those insidious words sounded from the lips of Folcroft Urlich.

"Silent death!"

CHAPTER II. IN THE PENTHOUSE

PROFESSOR URLICH had spoken correctly when he stated that Larry Ricordo had methods different from his own. The gang lord who served the professor's evil designs was quite as anxious to see Alfred Sartain die as was Urlich himself. Hence he had taken even more precautions than those that he had mentioned to his companions.

Besides the gangsters stationed in a vacant apartment beneath the penthouse, there were others outside the apartment building. They were there to see that nothing might disturb the scene above; to interfere with the entrance of any other than Sartain, his secretary, and the chain-store delegate who had to-night's appointment.

Thus, when Alfred Sartain alighted from a taxi outside the building, at precisely ten minutes of nine, he was covered by slouching, hidden watchers. The millionaire was accompanied by one man, obviously his secretary, who lugged a pair of suitcases. The doorman saluted as they entered, and helped the secretary with his burdens.

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When the elevator reached the penthouse level, Sartain rang the bell at the entrance. He was admitted by a quiet-faced, middle-aged man in uniform. The secretary followed.

"Good evening, sir," said the butler, in a pronounced English accent. "It is good to see you return."

"It's good to get back, Brooks," said Sartain, with a smile.

The millionaire was a brusque man of fifty years. He gave his coat and hat to the butler, and strolled about the living room. He stopped and sniffed the air.

"Paint," he remarked.

"Yes, sir," responded Brooks. "The penthouse was renovated during your absence, sir."

"Of course," laughed Sartain. "I had forgotten it. The old place looks fine, Brooks. You were here to see that they did it right, weren't you?"

"Yes, sir. The studio was done over also. By the way, sir, I placed all your correspondence upon the desk. Mr. Broderick called to make sure about his appointment. He was very anxious, over the telephone, sir."

"Yes, he would be," smiled Sartain. "I must go in the studio immediately. You, Hunnefield" to the secretary "can receive Mr. Broderick. I shall ring for you when I am ready to interview him."

Brooks opened a door at the far end of the living room. It showed a hallway, beyond that an opened doorway. Brooks stepped nimbly ahead of Sartain, and entered the far room. He turned on the light. The millionaire walked in and glanced about admiringly.

THE studio had been redecorated to perfection. The walls were painted with a mural design in gold leaf. The large window, with its small panes of glass, had fresh paint upon its heavy iron framework. Sartain glanced toward the skylight, high in the sloping roof.

"Very nice, Brooks," was his compliment.

A large radiator was hissing softly in the corner of the room. Sartain did not appear to notice the sound. He sat down at the desk and began to examine a stack of envelopes. Brooks stood at the door. Hunnefield appeared beyond him.

"That is all, sir?" questioned the butler, as the secretary approached.

"Yes," returned the millionaire. "I do not wish to be disturbed. You may close the door, Brooks."

The butler drew the door shut and turned toward Hunnefield. The natural action had blocked the secretary's entrance. Now that Alfred Sartain was ensconced in his studio, Hunnefield decided not to enter. He walked back into the living room with the butler. Brooks closed the second door as they passed.

When the secretary had crossed the living room, Brooks threw a quick glance toward two objects. One was a bell in the corner. It was silenced by a small plug of rubber placed between the clapper and the bell itself. This was the spot where a summons from Sartain's room might be heard.

Brooks smiled. That plug made a ring impossible. But one quick, deft twist would remove it. That action would come later.

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Brooks also glanced toward a telephone in the corner. There was a switch beneath it. Pressed home, that switch connected up with the telephone in the studio. It was not quite tight now. A slight press would do the trick. That, too, would come later. At present, Alfred Sartain was completely isolated from outside communication.

Brooks glanced at his watch. Thirty minutes was the time allotted. Then these details could be quietly arranged. Brooks had little work to do. He smiled. With Hunnefield here, his actions would be accounted for; and Broderick would arrive later. The sooner the better.

Brooks was to gain the pleasure of admitting the expected visitor very shortly. For at the precise moment that the butler lounged across the living room, a man entered the lobby on the street floor far below.

This visitor to the apartment building was a tall man who wore a light-brown overcoat and a gray hat. He carried a large brief case in his hand. He stopped to speak to the doorman. In a quiet monotone, he put the query:

"Is Mr. Alfred Sartain at home?"

A chance loungee in the lobby caught the question. It was one of "Slips" Harbeck's men an underling of Larry Ricordo's trusted lieutenant. That man was very anxious to hear the rest of the conversation between the doorman and the stranger.

"I believe that Mr. Sartain is here," replied the doorman. "I can call the penthouse and tell him that you have arrived. What is the name, sir?"

"Broderick. Howard Broderick. I have an appointment."

The loungee strolled from the lobby. Howard Broderick was the name of the one person who was to have uninterrupted entrance to Sartain's domain.

The doorman put through a call. He received word to admit the visitor. He ushered the man with the brief case to the elevator. A few minutes later, the visitor stepped forth at the entrance to the penthouse. He rang the bell, and Brooks opened the door.

THE butler bowed and admitted the early arrival. He stared rather closely at the stranger. There was something about the man's appearance that troubled the false butler. Broderick's face had a cold, chiseled expression, and his eyes, as they glanced across the room, were firm and keenly observant.

"Mr. Sartain is expecting me."

The visitor's voice chilled Brooks. It also attracted the attention of Hunnefield, who was seated in a chair, reading. The secretary leaped to his feet and approached the stranger.

"Ah, you are Mr. Broderick?" he questioned. "Mr. Sartain did not expect you so early. You will have to wait, sir, until he rings for you to be admitted."

"You can tell him that I am here?"

"No, I am afraid not. He is going over papers at present; and he will notify us as soon as he is free."

Hat in hand, but with coat still on his shoulders, the tall visitor had moved easily across the room. He was

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facing the door that barred the way to Sartain's studio.

As he turned, his keen eyes spotted the bell against the wall. They also saw the telephone. Then they were turned toward the secretary.

In one sweeping glance, this person had noted the facts that so greatly concerned Brooks; but the false butler had not fully realized its keenness.

"I must wait, then," remarked the visitor, with a placid smile. "Very well, I shall do so. Admirable place that Mr. Sartain has here. Excellent view."

He was strolling across the room as he spoke. He stopped by a pair of French doors that led out to a veranda. With an easy, natural gesture, he turned the knob and glanced out into the night, toward the twinkling lights of Manhattan.

"Quite all right?" he questioned.

"To step outside?" responded Hunnefield. "Certainly, Mr. Broderick. I shall call you when we hear from Mr. Sartain, unless you come in before that."

"A delightful breeze," observed the tall man quietly. "Thank you for your courtesy."

He stepped to the veranda as he finished the sentence, leaving the door half opened behind him. Hunnefield dropped back into his chair. Brooks smiled and went about trivial duties. The presence of the visitor had made the false butler feel ill at ease. He was just as glad that Broderick had stepped out upon the veranda.

The glance of the keen eyes toward the telephone and the bell it still disturbed Brooks. But with Broderick temporarily out of sight, the butler was glad that the visitor had come. He remained just within the French window, occasionally speaking to Hunnefield. Broderick would prove useful, perhaps, later this evening. He, like the secretary, would be a good witness to the unfortunate accident that was destined to befall Alfred Sartain.

But Brooks did not actually step out to the veranda himself. He merely took it for granted that Howard Broderick was still there. Hence he did not see the strange metamorphosis that occurred beyond the French window.

THE man who had introduced himself as Howard Broderick had carried his brief case, absent-mindedly tucked beneath his arm. Alone, in the darkness, he became suddenly busy with the compact satchel. Stooping, he opened it by the rail of the veranda. Out came objects, invisible in the gloom.

The gray hat dropped from the head that wore it. The light overcoat dropped from arms and shoulders. Other garments took their place. A long black cloak, a dark, broad-brimmed slouch hat these formed Howard Broderick's new attire. The other garments went quickly into the brief case, which deft hands deposited against the wall of the penthouse.

A figure raised itself beside the rail. Barely discernible in the glow from the metropolis, it formed the sinister, ghostly shape of a tall being clad entirely in black. Even the hands of this weird phantom were now covered with black gloves. The only spots of light that showed were two blazing eyes that flashed from beneath the brim of the slouch hat.

Howard Broderick's part was ended. This visitant's statement of identity had been false. No longer guised as a

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man instead, a fantastic creature of darkness he had become The Shadow!

Sinister foe of crime, amazing master of the night, The Shadow had arrived at the spot where death was stalking. His tall, eerie shape was rising higher as it poised upon the broad rail of the veranda. Long arms, stretched upward, gripped the projecting slope of the roof.

The figure of The Shadow swung outward. It poised over nothingness; then swung upward. Unyielding hands drew the lithe body to the safety above.

The Shadow, unseen, his form now but a mass of moving blackness along the steep incline, was scaling the sloping roof of the penthouse, bound upon a precarious mission which involved the life of a man already doomed to die!

CHAPTER III. THE TRAP ACTS

THE watchers high in the Brinton Building were studying the penthouse scene with renewed interest. Their evil eyes were upon the corner window, where light had now replaced the former blackness. Beyond the framework of the studio window, plainly visible through the small panes of glass, sat Alfred Sartain. The millionaire was busy at his desk.

While Thomas Jocelyn and Larry Ricordo stared in silence, Professor Folcroft Urlich spoke in low, continued tones, still maintaining his lecture style.

"Our man is in the trap," he explained. "As yet, he has not experienced its effects. That time is coming shortly. Here is the means whereby we may study him more closely."

The professor drew a pair of opera glasses from his coat and focused them upon the scene across the street. He tendered the glasses to Jocelyn, who drew nervously away. Ricordo, however, seized them eagerly.

The former gang lord laughed gruffly as he gained a close-up view of the doomed man within the studio. He noticed a perplexed look that appeared upon Sartain's face. Then the millionaire stepped from the field of vision as he suddenly arose from his desk. Ricordo passed the glasses back to Urlich.

"He has noticed the noise from the radiator," decided the professor, as the three men watched Sartain go toward the corner. "The noise is due to the air-dry attachment which is now being used on many radiators. These devices were installed throughout the penthouse, during the renovation."

While Sartain was stooping by the radiator, the professor continued his theme.

"The air-dry attachment," he explained, "is a commercial device which is designed to remove moisture from the atmosphere. By experimenting with these articles, I learned that they could be adjusted so that they consume oxygen very rapidly. Sartain does not know it, but that piece of mechanism is sucking the life-giving element from the air in his studio."

"What if he detaches it?" inquired Jocelyn, in a weak voice.

"He cannot," responded the professor. "It is firmly fixed in place. He might manage to smash it, if he understood its purpose. But he simply considers it as a noise-making nuisance. He will decide to forget it."

Professor Urlich's statement was proven when Sartain went back to the desk. Nevertheless, the millionaire continued to glance impatiently toward the corner. They saw his hand press a button upon the desk.

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"He is ringing for some one to attend to the radiator," observed Ulrich. "The call will not be answered. Brooks has plugged the bell. Neither he nor the secretary will hear it."

A FEW minutes passed; then the watchers saw Sartain raise his hand to his forehead. Ricordo, taking the opera glasses, observed that the millionaire's face seemed a trifle pale. Professor Ulrich chuckled as Sartain again pressed the button on his desk.

"He wonders why no one comes," remarked the scientist. "It is not the noise of the radiator now. Sartain is beginning to feel a faintness, due to the lack of oxygen in the atmosphere. He will go to the window next."

The prediction proved true. Sartain went to the window and tried to open it. He tussled with the fastening to no avail. The framework would not yield.

"It is firmly fastened," stated Ulrich. "Jammed into place, by the painters. He will give it up. Watch him go to the door."

Alfred Sartain staggered momentarily as he crossed the room. The effort at the window had weakened him. He tried the knob of the door, and tugged furiously. The portal failed to open.

"That knob is ingeniously arranged," explained Ulrich. "This is the first time that the door has been shut since it was fixed. It will not turn the heavy latch at present. After some one opens the door from the other side as Brooks or the secretary will do later on the action from the outside will make the inner knob function perfectly. There will be no clew after Sartain is dead."

The millionaire seemed groggy. Ulrich chuckled. Ricordo looked on in admiration. He was gaining a great respect for Ulrich's ingenuity. Jocelyn, trembling, but fascinated, put an anxious question.

"Suppose that he breaks the windowpanes?" asked the financier. "If he realizes that he needs air?"

"That will be next," lectured Professor Ulrich. "It will prove futile" the scientist paused as they saw Sartain stride unsteadily toward the window "because the original panes were all removed during the renovation. The new ones are all of bullet-proof glass."

Sartain had seized a large book. They watched him throw it at the window. The volume rebounded from a pane. The millionaire hurled a small ash stand. It, too, dropped back.

Lifting a chair, the trapped man began to pound at the barrier. The iron framework and the panels of special glass withstood his effort. Sartain staggered back to the desk, almost on the verge of collapse.

"He is nearing the end of his resources," observed the scientist, taking the opera glasses from Ricordo. "Ah he is using the telephone. That, too, will be futile."

Sartain, leaning on the desk, had the receiver to his ear. The line was dead. He was juggling the hook with his other hand and anxiously listening while he tried to establish connection with the operator. A queer chortle came from Ulrich's lips.

"What is the matter?" questioned Jocelyn.

"Nothing," answered the professor. "I am merely glad that we came here to-night. Sartain's present actions have given me an excellent idea. This is but one death, Jocelyn. There will be others, and some may be emergencies. What I have just seen has given me an inspiration – a sure way to deal death even though I

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prefer the silence that we are viewing now –"

The speaker stopped suddenly as Sartain fell across the desk. Ricordo laughed hoarsely. Jocelyn gasped. They saw Sartain roll sidewise and rest with his back slouched against the desk, his eyes staring upward.

"The end is near," announced Professor Urlich. "The oxygen supply has not only decreased; the room also contains a considerable quantity of carbon dioxide. That gas which we emit when breathing will not sustain life.

"Should Sartain lose his hold upon the desk and fall to the floor, the end will come more rapidly. However, it is well within my expected schedule. Our victim is doomed. There is no possible source from which he can gain fresh air."

"Is he dying now?" quizzed Jocelyn, in an unsteady tone.

"Not quite," replied the professor. "One burst of fresh air would revive him quickly."

"He is staring upward."

"Yes. Toward the skylight. He realizes his predicament, and he would like to reach that spot. He does not possess the strength, however. Furthermore, it would afford him no outlet. The skylight, like the window, is firmly jammed. There is no object high enough even a chair upon the desk to let Sartain reach it with more than his finger tips. The thick glass would be almost impossible to break."

"I can't see it," said Ricordo.

"The room is quite high," remarked Urlich. "The skylight is in the sloping roof."

"He might have managed that way," observed Jocelyn.

"Might," returned the professor dryly. "But that, Jocelyn, is where I counted exactly upon probabilities. I not only regarded the skylight as almost inaccessible to a man trapped in the room; I also knew that no one would choose it save as a last resort. Could you read Sartain's mind at present, you would learn that he is regretting the fact that he did not think of the skylight as the first means of egress. He possessed strength then; it is failing him now."

A PAUSE; then a wicked chuckle as the scientist again focused the opera glasses upon the doomed victim. In a low voice, he explained the cause of his glee.

"Sartain's face is hopeless," declared Urlich. "His lips show that he is panting. The prolonged gasps of a dying man. Ah! This is wonderful, my friends! It, too, gives me a thought of new and scientific death of sure death of silent death."

He laughed; then added:

"But I must not digress with scientific ideas. I retain all that I gain by way of inspiration during my experiments. Our chief concern now is the final moment of Alfred Sartain's existence. It will not be long deferred.

"Those eyes, my friends, are staring heavenward, looking for hope, seeking help" the professor chuckled mirthfully "and seeing nothing but the closed pane of a skylight!"

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Larry Ricordo joined in the professor's laugh. Thomas Jocelyn, though unnerved by the sight of approaching death, also managed to emit a halfhearted tone of mirth.

"Perfection," murmured Folcroft Urlich. "Death by misadventure. A man who realized too late that his air supply was gone. One whose strength had failed so greatly that he was unable to ring for help, or call by phone, or open door or window. That will be the coroner's verdict.

"Guns in the hands of gangsters cannot match this subtle scheme. They are crude. They reveal murderous design. We have stayed them for to-night. You, Jocelyn, see the safety of my ways. You, Ricordo, can appreciate their artistry.

"Staring eyes that look for hope will soon stare upward no longer; Alfred Sartain is doomed!"

The professor paused to deliver a cackle of elation; then his lips formed a triumphant phrase:

"Doomed by silent death!"

CHAPTER IV. THE SHADOW ARRIVES

ALL was a blur before Alfred Sartain's weakening eyes. The doomed millionaire was staring toward the ceiling. As Professor Urlich had divined, Sartain's eyes were upon the closed skylight. Through Sartain's hopeless brain were running those very thoughts that the fiendish scientist had declared as probable.

Through that barrier lay the last chance for safety. Sartain knew now that he might have tried the skylight first. Yet he completely lacked the slightest vestige of strength that might have enabled him to undertake the task.

Through the skylight! If the heavy glass would only break; if it would only open! It was impossible, Sartain knew, yet as he felt the creeping power of death, the millionaire instinctively gazed toward that one way of hope.

Black spots danced before his eyes. The glass of the skylight seemed faded and obscure. Steady gasps came from the doomed man's lips. Then they broke into one amazed pant of wonderment.

To Sartain's blurred vision, the skylight appeared to be moving upward! The dull glow of the city-lighted sky was visible above!

Simultaneously a whiff of chill air reached Sartain's nostrils. The reviving puff sustained him sufficiently to end his decreasing weakness. All went black momentarily; then the darkness moved, and from its strange mass shone two sparkling eyes.

The figure of a living being was projecting itself through the opened skylight. Some rescuer had opened the barrier from the roof, and was descending into the studio!

The puzzled glimmer that came in Sartain's eyes was noted plainly by Professor Urlich, who was peering through the opera glasses from the office across the street. The scientist, studying each fading gasp of the doomed man as he might have examined a germ cell in a microscope, detected instantly that something had happened.

A peculiar grunt escaped the professor's lips as he lowered the opera glasses to view the studio instead of the face upon the desk. Jocelyn and Ricordo heard the ejaculation. With one accord they delivered questions of

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surprise, wondering what Urlich had seen.

"Something has happened from above!" exclaimed the professor. "I could tell it from Sartain's eyes. Our victim is reviving. What is there, above him? Can you see?"

The three men were crouching close to the sill of the opened office window, trying to gain a view of the space above Sartain's head. They were seeking the answer to the riddle. It came with unexpected suddenness.

A MASS of blackness dropped downward from the top of the studio. It spread out momentarily upon the floor; then rose upright to become the tall figure of a being clad in black, a sinister shape beneath a flowing cloak, a hidden head covered by a broad slouch hat.

"Through the skylight!" blurted Jocelyn.

"Some intruder," snarled Urlich, "come to spoil my plan of death –"

"The Shadow!"

The final cry came from Larry Ricordo. The gang lord was trembling with excitement. His companions turned toward him. They could see the whiteness of his face beside the window.

"The Shadow!" Consternation filled Ricordo's voice. "He stops at nothing! He will save Sartain! He is our enemy!"

To Jocelyn, the very tone of Ricordo's voice was alarming. The financier did not know the ways of the underworld, he did not share the common fears of gangsters who dreaded the power of The Shadow. But he sensed the menace from Ricordo's words.

To Professor Urlich, the gang leader's fright was also evident. Urlich, like Jocelyn, knew that Ricordo had sighted a potential menace. The Shadow was leaning over Alfred Sartain, raising the millionaire's body toward the reviving air currents that came from above.

Silent death had failed. Urlich, however, viewed The Shadow as an ordinary human, who had somehow bungled into this situation. He gave no thought to the weird impressiveness of The Shadow's garb. His one theme was his anger at the unexpected failure of his plot to end Alfred Sartain's life.

"Our victim is saved!" he snarled. "He will recover now to live –"

"To live!" cried Jocelyn. "Then my efforts will be of no avail! Unless Sartain dies to-night, the Universal deal will be accomplished. My holdings will lose instead of gaining!"

Larry Ricordo was leaning from the window. Venom showed in the gang leader's puffy lips. In his hand, he gripped a large revolver, which he was aiming toward the studio across the street.

"It's a long shot," he growled grimly, "but I'll try to plug them both. We've got to get Jocelyn and if we can get The Shadow, too –"

"Stop!" hissed Professor Urlich, seizing Ricordo's arm. "Your shots will be useless! They may lead to our discovery in this office!"

"Useless?" echoed Ricordo. "Watch me blast them through that window! They're set right where I want

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them!"

"The glass is bullet-proof," interposed Ulrich. "Have you forgotten that, Ricardo?"

The gang leader snarled as he let his arm fall helplessly. He had forgotten. The very feature of the trap the unbreakable window which had been designed to insure Alfred Sartain's life, had now become a protection for both the millionaire and his mysterious rescuer!

PROFESSOR URLICH stared spitefully at the scene; Thomas Jocelyn groaned. The Shadow was still working to restore Alfred Sartain to consciousness. Larry Ricardo, gripping his gun with frenzy, was the one who suddenly supplied the way of action.

"We can get him yet!" he snarled. "You'll see how I work now, professor. Those men of mine can turn the trick. The Shadow is a tough egg; but he's going to have trouble getting out of this mess!"

The gang leader leaped to a corner of the darkened office. He gripped a telephone, and swore roundly as he was forced to use a flashlight to see the dial. While muttered oaths came from his lips, he spun the number that he wanted.

"That you, Slips?" came his low voice. "Good... Yes, this is Larry... Yes, get going. Up to Sartain's. Crash right through... Hurry... Listen, there is another guy with him... Yes, you'll know him all right... The Shadow... No... No... Don't tell the others. Get going... It's the one chance, and I'm watching. Get me? I'm looking on!"

The receiver dropped on the hook. Ricardo turned toward the window, where Ulrich and Jocelyn were still staring at the building across the street.

"Still there?" Ricardo demanded anxiously.

"Yes," responded Professor Ulrich.

"We'll get him, then!" snarled Ricardo. "I tipped Slips Harbeck. He's going up with the gorillas. Duster Brooks will help them. They'll get Sartain and The Shadow both!"

"It will mean a terrible commotion," interposed Thomas Jocelyn nervously. "It will be murder, Ricardo the police will investigate."

"What of it?" growled the gang leader. "I've got my trail all covered. Only Slips Harbeck and Duster Brooks know that I'm in back of it. They won't squeal; they'll scam. As for you and the professor, there's no link between me and you bozos. What we want is to see Sartain dead."

"Ricardo is right," agreed the professor quietly. "Have no alarm, Jocelyn. I would prefer silent death; but violence is acceptable in this emergency. Thomas Jocelyn must die and his rescuer with him."

No further words came as the trio watched the studio. The Shadow was swinging Alfred Sartain to the chair beside the desk. The millionaire moved feebly. He lay, outstretched, his face staring upward.

PROFESSOR URLICH was gazing through the opera glasses. He could not, however, sight the face of that mysterious being in black. Even in that enlarged field of vision, The Shadow's head and shoulders were entirely a mass of darkness. The brim of the slouch hat cast an impenetrable gloom upon the features beneath it.

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"I can't see his face," announced Ulrich calmly, "but that does not matter. It is turned from the doorway which is most favorable. If your men are capable, Ricordo –"

The scientist paused to lower the glasses and glance at Ricordo in the dim light by the window. The gang leader emitted a coarse laugh.

"They're the best gorillas money can buy," he affirmed. "But they're up against The Shadow. Don't forget that, professor! I tipped Slips, and he won't miss a trick. The Shadow, professor! He's the one guy that they've all tried to get."

"Your men are coming now," exclaimed Jocelyn suddenly. "I can see a motion through the windows of the outer room!"

"Right!" added Ricordo. "They'll be at the door in a few seconds. Say if they blot out The Shadow –"

"Look!"

Professor Ulrich was pointing from the office window. His long forefinger indicated the black-clad figure of The Shadow.

Satisfied that Alfred Sartain was reviving, the black-clad rescuer was rising. His form became a tall, menacing shape; then, suddenly, it became motionless. A momentary pause. Black-gloved hands swung inward toward the shrouding cloak.

"They have reached the door by now," asserted Jocelyn tensely.

"Yes!" agreed Ricordo, in an excited tone. "They're at the door and they've got The Shadow!"

As though proving the truth of the gang leader's assertion, the tall form in black pirouetted suddenly toward the door of the studio. A cry of elation came from Larry Ricordo.

The Shadow, when he swung, was weaponless. He, with Alfred Sartain, seemed doomed!

CHAPTER V. THE SHADOW DEPARTS

THE three witnesses to the rare spectacle of The Shadow at work were totally unacquainted with the methods of the black-clad rescuer. Even Larry Ricordo, hardened denizen of the underworld, knew but little of The Shadow's ways. Hence the rising motion of the black-cloaked form, the passage of the gloved hands toward the garment that shrouded the shoulders beneath; even the quick pirouette of the figure itself were all accepted by the viewers as token of The Shadow's unpreparedness.

But, within the studio where doom had failed to strike, The Shadow was acting with instinctive practice. Although unaware that hidden eyes were observing him, The Shadow, master of desperate situations, had not allowed his interest in Alfred Sartain's recovery to reduce his normal vigilance.

When he had suddenly stepped away from the reviving millionaire, it had been because his keen ears had heard a slight sound at the doorway of the studio. The momentary pause had enabled him to detect the turning of the knob. The motion of his hands toward his body was the beginning of the swift method whereby The Shadow encountered foes who sought to catch him off guard.

As the black form whirled to face the door, those gloved hands swept free from the folds of the cloak. As The

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Shadow's eyes stared directly at the portal, the firm fists beneath them were gripping the powerful automatics with which The Shadow warred against fiends of crime.

The action was a timely one. Simultaneously with The Shadow's swing, the door came inward, and a pair of villainous gangsters plunged into the room. Each of Slips Harbeck's gorillas held a leveled revolver.

The gunmen held the first advantage. They were actually in the room before The Shadow faced them. But they did not know the exact spot where they must attack, so precipitous had their entrance been. They were forced to swing their gleaming weapons in order to cover their foe.

The Shadow, on the contrary, had a definite objective the doorway. His rapid turn ended in a deadly aim, whereas the gunmen acted with haste. It was this factor that turned the tide in The Shadow's favor.

Two shots burst from the doorway each from a gorilla's revolver. One bullet missed The Shadow by a foot. The other burned through a waving fold of the black cloak less than an inch from its mark.

A DOUBLE answer came a split second later. As both gunmen sought to deliver a second shot, The Shadow's automatics roared together. The forward plunging mobsters hurtled to the floor. One sprawled crazily in a sidewise swing; the other somersaulted almost to The Shadow's feet.

A bursting cry of mirth sounded from The Shadow's unseen lips. No longer concerned with the enemies whom he had dropped, The Shadow advanced toward the door. His method was slow but constant a scheme with definite purpose. From the first instant of the attack, The Shadow had kept himself as a shield for Alfred Sartain, helpless in the chair behind the desk.

Now, seeking to meet new invaders, The Shadow held to the same purpose. Blocking the path from the doorway, he gave no hidden enemy an opportunity to complete the job which had failed the murder of the hapless millionaire.

Keen eyes glistened. The Shadow's right-hand automatic roared another greeting. A scream came from beyond the doorway. A third gangster, more cautious than his fellows, had thrust forth a hand with a revolver. The Shadow's prompt response clipped the trigger finger from the hand!

The maimed mobster fled. After him tumbled another who had also kept to cover. The Shadow's guns barked a stern pursuit.

The fleeing men were heading across the living room, The Shadow following. Only one mark offered an uncovered shoulder at the farther doorway. The Shadow found it; the man staggered, but kept on.

Beyond the outer door of the penthouse, the fleeing gorillas encountered their chief, Slips Harbeck. He had sent them into the attack, intending to follow after the first onslaught. For Slips, alone, had heard the identity of the enemy whom they must meet.

The leader of the gorillas was thrown back by his fleeing henchmen. He could not stop them now. They had met the menace of The Shadow. They had seen their companions sprawl within the first two seconds of the battle.

The flight would have proven futile, had The Shadow followed his advantage. But a new duty lay before the master in black.

Across the room, Duster Brooks was struggling with Hunnefield, the secretary. The false butler was holding a

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revolver in his hand; Hunnefield was gripping the wrist below that hand.

Brooks put forth a desperate effort just as The Shadow appeared. He wrested his wrist free, and struck a fierce blow at Hunnefield's head. Fortunately for the secretary, it was a glancing stroke that failed in its murderous intent. But as the weapon thudded above his ear, Hunnefield collapsed. He would have fallen, but for the butler's grasp.

BROOKS was facing the doorway toward the studio. He saw The Shadow. He recognized the menace. With Hunnefield's body as a shield, he thrust his revolver forth and fired. The swaying of the secretary's form destroyed the aim. The bullet from the butler's gun whisked the brim of The Shadow's hat and lodged in the redecorated wall beyond.

Still keeping covered, Brooks thrust the barrel of his revolver under Hunnefield's armpit. Again he sought to shoot The Shadow.

All the while, the black clad fighter was weaving his way across the room, his burning eyes looking for an opportunity to clip Brooks without harming Hunnefield. Constantly, The Shadow's gaze roved toward the outer door.

A revolver muzzle gleamed at that spot. It was handled by Slips Harbeck, who had remained despite the flight of his crippled minions. One of The Shadow's automatics spoke once twice thrice.

The first bullet splintered the woodwork; the second struck the revolver barrel and sent the weapon spinning from Slips Harbeck's grasp. The third was delivered to catch any portion of the gangster's body that might have revealed itself.

But Slips, by amazing good fortune, had managed to stagger back. Fearing that The Shadow was coming his way, he took the last shot as a sign of sure doom, should he remain. Staggering from dread, the leader of the defeated gorillas dashed madly toward the stairs.

Another shot sounded in the living room. Duster Brooks, nerviest of the evil crew, had hoped to get The Shadow this time. His second shot, like the first, went wide. With the burden of Hunnefield's protecting form, the false butler could not gain certain aim toward that elusive form of black.

Even now, The Shadow was circling to deliver a return shot. Brooks, dropping toward the floor with Hunnefield's body, again tried to fire through the perfect loophole formed by the secretary's arm and body.

The Shadow's task seemed impossible. Brooks showed the revolver muzzle as the only target. To shoot that tiny spot would surely cause injury to the one brave man who had tried to foil the invaders. Hunnefield, still unconscious, was under The Shadow's protection.

The revolver muzzle turned. As it spat flame, The Shadow's tall form hurtled to the floor. Brooks cried out in exultation. In his excitement, the false butler did not realize that The Shadow's drop had begun before the shot was fired. It was a ruse not a sign of good aim by Brooks.

As the butler instinctively shifted, believing that he had wounded his opponent, The Shadow's right hand fired from the floor. The bullet from the .45 struck the first portion of the butler's body that was uncovered his left shoulder.

Brooks, anxious to put a sure end to The Shadow, was aiming his revolver just as the bullet from the automatic clipped his shoulder. With a frenzied cry, the man toppled sidewise and struck upon his right

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elbow. Hunnefield's body flattened in front of him.

Though wounded, Brooks was not through. Had he desisted then, the false butler might have received no further token of The Shadow's power. But Brooks was determined to fight to the end.

Flopping forward upon Hunnefield's form, he dropped his right fist upon the secretary's chest and, with glowering eyes directly above the sights of his revolver, aimed to kill the one who menaced him from the floor.

Glowing, Duster Brooks was staring straight into the burning eyes that shone from beneath the hat brim. Like The Shadow, he was facing a gun muzzle, for the menacing automatic had turned to cover him. Brooks had a life-sized target the entire figure of the black-garbed fighter.

The Shadow, in opposition, had only one mark at which to aim. The butler's revolver muzzle was the center point, with the human face behind it. It was a race for the first shot.

If Brooks won, woe to The Shadow! If The Shadow won, his aim would have to be perfect, for if he missed the slender opportunity, Brooks would fire a shot that would wound, even though it failed to kill.

Fingers pressed upon triggers. The shots barked almost with simultaneous sound.

But The Shadow's missile was delivered a split second before Brooks sent his shot. No time watch could have calculated that fractional difference. It could be measured only by the space of time required for the bullet to leave The Shadow's automatic and reach its mark. The leaden messenger struck just as Brooks was firing. Planted squarely between the false butler's eyes, its powerful impact swung the gangster's head backward with jarring force. The revolver hand moved upward with the jar. The bullet from the butler's gun swished the top of The Shadow's slouch hat and crashed into the wall beyond.

THE SHADOW rose from the floor. The duel of death was ended. By a margin so narrow that it seemed incredible, the black-garbed rescuer had gained the victory over his stubborn foe. Duster Brooks, hardened fighter from the bad lands, had fired his last shot.

The Shadow glided noiselessly across the room. He paused by the door that led to the veranda. His sharp eyes saw a man coming from the doorway of the studio.

It was Alfred Sartain. Recovered, but still a trifle groggy, the millionaire had been attracted by the shots. In his hand he held a revolver that he had taken from his desk drawer.

The Shadow slipped into the outer darkness. Sartain did not catch even a glimpse of his disappearing form. The millionaire hurried to the spot where two men lay. He found Brooks dead; Hunnefield recovering from the stunning blow that he had received.

While Sartain was attempting to revive the secretary, The Shadow reappeared. Unseen, unheard, he glided toward the outer door that led to the stairway. Bulging beneath his cloak was the brief case that contained the hat and coat which he had worn here.

Outside, The Shadow paused. He stood, like a protecting phantom, watching Sartain at work. A noise came from the elevator shaft. Quickly, The Shadow swished to the head of the stairs.

The elevator door slid back. Three men with revolvers sallied forth. They were detectives, and the keen eyes of The Shadow recognized their leader as Joe Cardona, ace of Manhattan sleuths.

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All danger was ended now. The police had arrived. Alfred Sartain would be protected against further attack. The tall figure in black glided down the stairway, a few seconds before one of the detectives at Cardona's order went to investigate that quarter.

In the penthouse living room, Alfred Sartain looked up toward the ace detective. Hunnefield's eyes, now opened, were staring in wonderment. Both millionaire and secretary were ready to give their version of the affray; but their stories would be incomplete.

Sartain, at the point of death when rescued, had gained no more than a blurred impression of the personage who had rescued him. Hunnefield, struck down by the gun which Brooks had wielded, had not seen The Shadow.

Mystery shrouded this strange rescue. Two dead gunmen in the studio; the slain butler in the living room these men could not tell what they had seen.

The plot of death had failed. The Shadow had departed, leaving no proof of his weird identity!

But the watchers in the little office high up in the Brinton Building had seen the whole strange occurrence. Their well-laid plans had been destroyed by the weird personage in black. Their start in crime was thwarted. They would try again!

CHAPTER VI. THE PROFESSOR PLANS

A SEDAN turned from a Long Island highway and entered a driveway toward a gloomy mansion. It kept on past the house, and its brilliant headlights shone upon an oddly shaped structure that resembled a gigantic cheese box. A grumbled order came from the man who sat beside the driver.

"Pull up over there, Ricordo."

The tones were those of Professor Folcroft Ulrich. Responding, Larry Ricordo brought the car to a stop beside the circular building. He followed Ulrich when the professor stepped from the sedan.

The mammoth cheese box, tucked out of view behind the old mansion, puzzled Larry Ricordo as he approached it. The gang leader studied every feature of the odd structure. Although circular, it seemed to possess a pagoda style, on a flattened scale.

First, Ulrich and Ricordo entered a sort of portico that ran entirely around the building, under a low, extending roof, which was supported by iron posts set at intervals. Ricordo noted that the floor of this peculiar ground-level porch was formed of metal plates.

Professor Ulrich pressed a button beside a double door at the front of the building. A few moments later, the two doors swung inward. They closed after the men had entered.

The pair now stood within a second circular passageway that had walls on both sides. It was a gloomy corridor that appeared to run completely around the building.

A single door showed opposite the portal they had entered. The professor ignored it.

As they walked along this strange hall, Ricordo noted again that he was treading upon plates of metal. They circled halfway around; then stopped at a door set in the inner wall.

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Here Professor Urlich pressed another button. The metal door slid upward, revealing a circular staircase that led both up and down.

Urlich conducted his companion upward, through a huge cylinder that resembled a water standpipe. When they came to the top, they emerged into a large circular room, the second story of this odd building.

"My laboratory," remarked Professor Urlich.

LARRY RICORDO blinked as they headed for another stairway in the center of the room. He saw all sorts of strange devices: crucibles, huge tubes, bottles upon shelves, machines, and models of all descriptions. Two silent men, clad in white coats and aprons, were at work there.

The outer walls of this circular chamber were windowless; but the outer rim of the roof was designed with skylights, and Ricordo noted workbenches set near the wall, so that they could gain illumination from outside during daytime hours.

The gang leader's inspection ended as Professor Urlich conducted him up the central spiral. They reached a hall above; here were doors on all sides. The professor opened one and brought Ricordo into a small room that was equipped like an office. It had a single window.

Glancing from this opening, Ricordo made out the shape of the building. The first floor was like a huge cylinder of large diameter, but of stunted height. The second was of less diameter, for it had no portico. The third, where they were now located, was even smaller in diameter.

This allowed for the skylights in the laboratory and made the building take on its pagodalike shape. Like an Egyptian pyramid, this odd edifice was built in steps, but it was circular, not square.

Ricordo found himself wondering what might be on that first floor, with the circular passage which they had followed. He asked no questions, however. Professor Urlich was speaking, and Ricordo turned away from the window to face the scientist.

"To-night," said the professor, "we encountered temporary defeat. When we saw police detectives enter Alfred Sartain's studio, we knew that there was no further hope. That is why I told Thomas Jocelyn to go to his residence; it is also why I brought you here, Ricordo. It was not wise to remain in that office across the street."

"You're right it wasn't," returned Ricordo. "Not with The Shadow on the job. I'm worried yet, professor."

Urlich indicated a telephone.

"Communicate with Slips Harbeck," he ordered. "Call the number in the usual fashion. This telephone, Ricordo, is arranged on a special wire. It cannot be traced. It has the number of a telephone in a deserted house miles from here."

Ricordo grinned and picked up the telephone. He called a Manhattan number, the underworld spot where Slips Harbeck made his headquarters. Professor Urlich went out of the room while the gang leader talked with his lieutenant. When he returned, he glanced inquiringly at Ricordo.

"THE SHADOW queered the job all right," stated Larry. "He nailed those two gorillas in Sartain's studio. He nicked the other pair, and he almost got Slips. The only reason they made a get-away was because Brooks put up a fight."

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"Slips had a guy watching the apartment house. He says The Shadow got Brooks in the finish. The cops brought out the body."

A quizzical frown appeared upon Professor Urlich's forehead. The evil-faced scientist studied his gang-lord aid. He put forth a question that startled Larry Ricordo.

"Tell me," demanded Urlich, "who is this whom you call The Shadow? The one whom we saw to-night. Let me know all that you have learned concerning him."

"The Shadow?" Ricordo's question was tinged with awe. "Say, professor, I spilled a lot about him back there in the office until you told me to let the matter rest until later."

"You were excited then," interposed Urlich. "At present, we are quiet. You can speak with calmness. What is The Shadow? Is he a gang leader, like yourself or is he a detective?"

"No one knows what he is," confessed Ricordo. "That bird must have a racket all his own. He crowds in on any good lay that he hears about, and puts the kibosh on it. He's not hooked up with the bulls; he's not a crook."

"You mean," quizzed Urlich, "that he is a roving personage of the underworld, seeking adventure through encounters with dangerous criminals?"

"That's about it," admitted Ricordo. "There's plenty of big shots that have missed out when they met The Shadow. Plenty have checked out, too. He plays a cute game, professor. Lays back and lets a good lay get all set; then steps into it himself."

"Remarkable," observed the scientist. "I have heard of this person, but I preferred to regard him as a myth. However, after to-night –"

"To-night!" ejaculated the gang leader. "Say, professor, you don't realize what we saw to-night. We saw The Shadow at work! Get that? Saw him, and got away with it!"

"Is that unusual?"

"Is it unusual? Listen, professor, it's lucky for us we were tucked out of sight across the street. You saw what he did to those two gorillas, didn't you? Well, we'd have taken it, too, if he'd known we were around!"

"Do you think so?" Professor Urlich's tone was ironical. "Well, Ricordo, I believe you are wrong. The Shadow as you term him is unquestionably a dangerous foe. I observed that fact tonight.

"At the same time, it is quite obvious that he utilizes the inferior methods that you employ: open attack, with apparent violence.

"Such cannot compare with the ways at my disposal. Silent death subtle death those are more dangerous than ordinary weapons. You saw my method this evening. It failed; but that was not Alfred Sartain's doing. The intervention of The Shadow was the unknown factor that I had not anticipated."

"Maybe not," objected Ricordo, in a bitter tone, "but, just the same, The Shadow queered the works. What are we going to do about it? Old Jocelyn has lost out on his big deal, hasn't he?"

"Jocelyn will not suffer," returned Urlich calmly. "His holdings are sound. Perhaps he will lose something on

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them. That will not matter. He will regain the loss later on. Alfred Sartain was but one of those who are upon our list."

"Now you're getting there," grinned Ricordo. "We're going right ahead, eh? Well, we're all right providing The Shadow doesn't muscle in again."

"I am glad to hear you consider that possibility," cackled Ulrich. "It has much to do with the plans that I now contemplate. We are going to forget Thomas Jocelyn for the present. We will give him time to recuperate; both nervously and financially. In the meantime, we will render the future certain."

"How?"

"By eliminating The Shadow!"

LARRY RICORDO spread his puffy lips as he heard the professor's words. His expression was one of astonishment. Then the open mouth formed a broad, doubting grin.

"You won't be able to do it, professor," declared the gang leader, with regret in his tone. "How can you fight a man you can't find? They've tried to get The Shadow before. He's stopped every one that's chanced it.

"When the big shots found that The Shadow was real, they framed every way they could think of. They even planted a bunch of gorillas around the radio studio where he broadcast. They never found him there.

"When he shows up any place, it's like he did to-night through a skylight out of the air from the middle of a mob –"

"They lacked technique," interrupted Ulrich impatiently. "I am different from those of whom you speak. I not only possess incredible methods of dealing with my enemies; I am also analytical. It is not necessary to find The Shadow. There is a simpler way."

"What's that?"

"Let him try to find us."

"How?"

Professor Ulrich smiled. He shook his head as he studied Larry Ricordo. The gang leader's bewilderment was proof that his ability lay with guns and not with strategy.

"There is a cause for everything," observed Ulrich. "We must, therefore, seek the cause of The Shadow's appearance to-night. In some fashion, The Shadow learned that Alfred Sartain's life was in danger. How did he gain cognizance of that fact?"

"I can't guess," returned Ricordo. "Only The Shadow knows."

"He did not learn of it through observing you, myself, or Jocelyn," continued Ulrich. "If he suspected any one of us, he would have struck in our direction before to-night."

Larry Ricordo tightened his fists as he heard this theory. The gang leader did not relish the thought of being tracked by The Shadow.

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"Had he suspected Duster Brooks," analyzed Urlich, "The Shadow could easily have counteracted Duster's activities as Sartain's butler. This, therefore, eliminated all possibilities but one."

"Slips Harbeck?"

"Exactly. Your unwarranted efforts to cover Sartain were the element which led to the failure of my perfectly-planned scheme."

"Slips wouldn't have let anything out," objected Ricordo. "I just talked to him by telephone and he's a wise bimbo. I can't figure that, professor."

"You lack analysis, Ricordo. Slips Harbeck, at your order, assembled a squad of gangsters. I assume that all of them were reliable men. However, your lieutenant must necessarily have done some talking in order to obtain his underlings.

"You speak of The Shadow as a constant deterring factor in the underworld. It is quite obvious that he learned of Harbeck's activities, and promptly covered your lieutenant."

"That would be The Shadow's way!" blurted Larry Ricordo. "You've hit it, professor! Maybe he didn't get onto Slips at first; he might have spotted one of the gorillas getting ready for a job."

"Two men," stated Urlich, "alone knew of your connection. One was Duster Brooks now dead. The other is Slips Harbeck still alive. I need you, Ricordo, and I need the services of your men. I intend to employ them in the trapping of this man you call The Shadow.

"There is a limit to the amount that any person can know. At present, The Shadow knows that Slips Harbeck is engaged in unusual crime. If we use some one in place of Slips, The Shadow may be clever enough to cover your new lieutenant. Slips is capable; we do not want another."

"You're getting me twisted," inserted Larry Ricordo. "I can't quite figure it, professor."

"Wait until I have finished," remarked Urlich. "We have one purpose at present: to end the career of The Shadow. Our way, then, will be clear. The Shadow, on the contrary, is seeking to prevent death. He succeeded by covering Slips Harbeck; therefore, he will continue to cover Slips."

"And then –"

"He will seek to destroy any plot in which Slips is concerned. Therefore, I will plan an apparent trap like the one I had for Alfred Sartain which The Shadow will investigate."

"Getting wise to it by watching Slips?"

"Exactly. But on this occasion, the trap will be set for The Shadow himself!"

A GLOATING grin appeared upon Larry Ricordo's evil face. He saw the purpose now. Once again, Slips Harbeck would be summoned by his ganglord chief. But this time, Slips would be a cat's-paw, the agent who would lead The Shadow into one of Professor Folcroft Urlich's subtle snares!

"But if The Shadow is covering Slips," said Ricordo, voicing a momentary doubt, "he's liable to bump off Slips at any time –"

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"Not a bit of it," interposed Ulrich. "He knows by now that Slips is merely a tool in the game. Why should he end the link that may lead him to those higher up?"

"To you and me," growled Ricordo, in a troubled tone.

"To you, first," stated Ulrich. "But have no fear on that score. You have kept out of sight very effectively, Ricordo. You will continue to do so in even better fashion. You will remain with me. You will be safe here.

"Even if Slips Harbeck should reveal your name, it would prove to our advantage. I would like nothing better" the scientist's venomous smile proved his words "than to have The Shadow visit me here. That, however, should prove unnecessary.

"Your first duty is to give Slips Harbeck instructions by telephone. Tell him to wait frequently at the place where he hears from you. Within a few days, the time will be ripe. You will be forced to leave here long enough to plant the trap; but no one will be the wiser, for you will do that work alone.

"Slips Harbeck knows nothing of Jocelyn. We need not fear that link. Furthermore, Jocelyn's valet, Grewson, is secretly in our employ; and we can question him regularly regarding matters there."

"If Slips is being watched by The Shadow," declared Ricordo, "we might take a long shot and let Slips try to get him with a mob –"

"No," stated Ulrich decisively. "That shows your error, Ricordo. You lack tactical experience. Such action would not only reveal our purpose; it would also be futile. We can be sure that when The Shadow covers Slips Harbeck, he is prepared for emergency. Furthermore, we have no proof that The Shadow, himself, is the one who is observing Slips."

"That's a good point," admitted Ricordo. "I've heard it noised about that The Shadow has some smart guys working for him. If one of his stool pigeons is on the job, we'd be wasting our time. You've got the right idea, sure enough. We've got to put a smooth one across on The Shadow, using Slips to do it."

Professor Folcroft Ulrich smiled and nodded as the gang leader voiced this final approval of the plan. He watched Ricordo's face. He saw a perplexed expression come upon the hardened features. Calmly, he voiced the question that was in Ricordo's mind.

"You are wondering," said Ulrich, "what method I intend to use to eliminate The Shadow."

"I was thinking that," admitted Ricordo.

"I shall show you," smiled the professor. "Come with me, to the laboratory. After that, you can communicate with Slips Harbeck."

The professor led the way down the spiral staircase. Larry Ricordo followed, still wondering. Bewilderment was within the gang leader's brain. Tonight, he had seen The Shadow act. Now, he was to see plans prepared for The Shadow's doom!

Silent death! How did Professor Ulrich intend to loose it now? Larry Ricordo wondered; and through his evil mind ran the thought that at last The Shadow would encounter a superman who would prove his equal!

CHAPTER VII. THE SHADOW LEARNS

SLIPS HARBECK'S favored underworld resort was a notorious dive known as Red Mike's. This place, which gained its name from its proprietor, was a meeting place for gangsters that existed under police tolerance. It was an underground speakeasy frequented by those members of the bad lands who were temporarily free from trouble with the law.

"Red Mike," the owner of the dive, was not a gangster. On the contrary, he did not side with the police. He knew his customers, and let them come and go, provided that they watched their actions while on his premises.

Hence the police preferred to let Red Mike run his joint; for it served as a constant attraction to mobsters who were wanted by the authorities; and on more than one occasion, observant detectives had picked up known criminals in that vicinity.

Slips Harbeck had chosen Red Mike's as his hangout because it made an ideal headquarters for the work that he was doing. Slips knew Red Mike, and had access to the telephone that was tucked away in a side room. This enabled him to receive frequent messages from Larry Ricordo.

Furthermore, at Red Mike's, Slips had picked up the gorillas whom he had chosen as his henchmen; and now that his old squad was gone, he was in a position to assemble a new crew of workers.

Immediately after the encounter at Alfred Sartain's, Slips had scrambled for the security of Red Mike's. Well did Slips know the narrowness of his escape. Although he congratulated himself on having evaded The Shadow, he still felt great alarm because he had incurred the enmity of the dread being who terrorized the underworld.

The telephone call which he had received from Larry Ricordo had calmed Slips somewhat. A further message the same night also had a lulling effect.

Since then, two days had passed; and Slips, once more within Red Mike's portals, was feeling a sense of security and relief.

Fearless though The Shadow might be, Slips knew that the enemy of crime would hardly start a pitched battle in the heart of gangdom. Slips realized a thought that Larry Ricordo had suggested: namely, that he Slips Harbeck was certain of security because The Shadow knew he was nothing more than a minor player in the tragic drama that had occurred in Alfred Sartain's penthouse.

In fact, Slips Harbeck had another worry which troubled him as much as his fear of The Shadow. He had read the newspaper reports of the affray at Sartain's, and had learned that Duster Brooks had been identified. There was a chance that Detective Joe Cardona might trace Slips as a former pal of Duster's. If so, Slips could expect arrest.

ORDINARILY, Slips would have dived for a hide-out under the circumstances. But the complex factors now involved kept him here. He was living in a room above the speakeasy, quartered with Red Mike. The fact that he never left the premises gave him a feeling of security from The Shadow.

The fact that neither Alfred Sartain, nor Hunnefield, the secretary, had been slain in the penthouse broil, made him belittle the detectives. Only gangsters had died that night. The police were not after a murderer.

Besides these reasons, Slips had another cause for remaining at Red Mike's. He was still in the secret employ

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of Larry Ricordo, and the big shot was paying him well. To show a yellow streak and run for cover would automatically end his source of income.

Slips preferred to stay. But he wisely refrained from telling Larry Ricordo of his fears particularly those which concerned the police.

Larry knew that Slips had been a former pal of Duster Brooks; but the gang lord did not know how close that friendship had been. Slips could see no reason for informing Larry of it.

On this night, slouched at a table in a corner of the speakeasy, Slips was playing the part that had been allotted him.

Larry Ricordo had assured him that he would not encounter trouble with The Shadow if he obeyed instructions. At the same time, the gang leader had warned his lieutenant that he might be under observation of an agent appointed by The Shadow.

Slips had two jobs to do: to mislead that agent, and also to learn the man's identity.

This was a task that Slips had forced himself to accept. He had managed to quell the growing notion that perhaps The Shadow and not an agent was watching him. Slips thought of his position, and had gradually convinced himself that he was reasonably safe from The Shadow's dreaded toils.

Where was Larry Ricordo? Slips Harbeck did not know; moreover, he did not care to know. Ignorance, at times, might prove a protection.

What was Larry's scheme? That was something which Slips was anxious to learn. He was hoping to hear from Larry to-night.

The patrons of Red Mike's establishment were constantly under Slips Harbeck's inspection. It was no breach of speakeasy etiquette to glance at those who entered and left. At the same time it was poor gangland policy to pay too much attention to the business of other people. Therefore, Slips was furtive and somewhat superficial in his observations.

Among the habitués of Red Mike's, there were more than a dozen who might be there with the sole purpose of watching some one. Slips knew that he could remember most of them by sight; and Red Mike could probably supply the names, if needed. The game was set by instructions which Slips had received over the telephone from Ricordo.

FINISHING a drink, Slips settled back in a chair and lighted a cigarette. He puffed the smoke through the corner of his mouth, and squinted through the white cloud as he saw Red Mike emerging from the door of the side room. The proprietor was headed toward the spot where Slips was seated.

Red Mike stopped at the table and leaned over to whisper in the gangster's ear. Slips nodded as he listened; then, with a shrug of his shoulders, arose from his chair.

"Phone call for me, eh?" he asked aloud. "O.K., Mike. I'll take care of it."

He started toward the other end of the speakeasy; paused, and returned to gulp the last imaginary drops from his empty glass. He started again in the same direction. Slips was accustomed to wearing a wise grin; hence his face did not betray a fact that he had noticed anything wrong.

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While his back had been turned, a man several tables away had risen, and had started for the outer door. The man was stopping to speak to Red Mike. Evidently he intended to order another drink. Slips noticed his back as he took a chair near the door that led to the inner room. He also observed the man's face as he passed.

Slips knew that he could remember those features. This man, although hard-visaged and forceful in appearance, seemed of a type superior to the usual gangster. His face was more the countenance of the trained athlete than the physiognomy of a thug.

Slips reached the inner room and closed the door behind him, taking care that it did not latch. The telephone was on the wall beside a tumble-down desk. Slips picked up the receiver and spoke. He recognized Larry Ricordo's voice.

"We're ready, Slips," came the gang leader's words.

"O. K.," responded the lieutenant.

"Is anybody spotting you?" was Ricordo's question.

"I think so," returned Slips. "A guy just outside the door –"

"Great. Repeat things that I tell you. Let him hear you. Use your bean and don't mention my name."

"O.K. Shoot."

Reaching toward the door, Slips gave the knob a slight pull. The door swung slowly inward, as though by accident. Slips was back at the phone; apparently unconscious of what had occurred.

"To-night?" Slips Harbeck's voice carried to the edge of the outer room. "Sure. I'm all set... Sure thing. Give me the lay, and I'll be there... Yeah, I can dig up three gorillas to go with me... Wait a second. Let me give that name back to you, so I've got it straight... J. Wesley Barnsworth. Apartment 636... Langley Court. Yeah, I got that... Seventieth Street, eh? O.K."

A pause; then Slips laughed coarsely. He began to speak again, paraphrasing words that came from Larry Ricordo.

"Theater, eh? Won't be back until midnight? That makes it jake for me... Three hours to go... Sure... You know me on the lock stuff... I'll fix a key before he gets there. We'll get the lay. Bump him quick... Not a chance after he gets in there... Sure, it's better inside... Don't worry about a fracas in the hall. We'll wait fifteen minutes, anyway, before we go in to plug him... Yeah, I'll remember that... Pick up any papers that are loose... O.K. We will wait until close to midnight before we blow in..."

Slips hung up the receiver. He paused a few moments; then sauntered out into the large room. He stopped to view the door with a frown. He looked around to see if any one was close by. No one was near, at present. The firm-faced man who had moved over by the door had finished his drink, and was again bidding Red Mike good night.

Slips strolled about the speakeasy and looked over some of the men there. He finally stopped at the end of the room and spoke to the proprietor.

"Say, Mike," he questioned, "who was that guy that you was just talking to?"

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"You mean the poker-faced bird?" responded Red Mike. "Say you ought to know him, Slips. That's Cliff Marsland. He was in stir for a couple of years. Mixed up in a big bank job. Comes in here often."

"I thought I remembered him," recalled Slips. "Marsland. Sure. I've heard of him."

Ricordo's lieutenant sauntered back to a table. His face wore a smile more cunning than before. He was sure that he had something now to tell the gang leader provided that action took place to-night. Slips Harbeck suspected that Cliff Marsland might be an agent of The Shadow.

Slips stayed at the table for several minutes. Then he left the speakeasy. He did not go far. He doubled back through an alley and came into a side door that led upstairs.

Slips was going to his quarters. He did not intend to be abroad to-night. His work was done. That was in accord with Larry Ricordo's order.

IN his conjecture that Cliff Marsland served The Shadow, Slips Harbeck was correct. The reason for Cliff's departure was that he had overheard the conversation on the telephone, exactly as Slips had intended. By the time Slips had reached his room, Cliff was three blocks away, headed for a spot where he could telephone the information without observation.

Cliff Marsland, to date, had been a useful under-cover man for The Shadow's activities in the underworld. Red Mike had spoken the truth when he had stated that Cliff had served time in prison. What Red Mike did not know what no one in the bad lands knew was that Cliff had gone to jail for another man's crime.

Outside of Cliff himself, only The Shadow knew that fact. He had sworn Cliff Marsland into his service.

With a reputation as a criminal and a killer, Cliff was an ideal man for service in the underworld. Gang leaders had taken him into their service; later, those same big shots had come to grief.

No mob leader had learned Cliff's secret. A free lance in gangland, Cliff was still an ace in The Shadow's hand. It had required the perceptive, scheming brain of Professor Folcroft Ulrich to bring about the discovery of The Shadow's agent.

Completely unaware that he had been spotted by Slips Harbeck, Cliff reached his destination and went to a telephone. He called a number and waited until he heard the sound of a quiet voice. Cliff knew the identity of the man at the other end of the wire. It was Burbank, The Shadow's contact man.

"Marsland speaking," said Cliff in a low tone.

"Burbank speaking," came the reply. "Report."

Briefly, Cliff told what he had learned. Slips Harbeck, whom Cliff had spotted as a trouble maker some time before, was intending a new foray like the one he had made on Alfred Sartain's penthouse. To-night, the intended victim was a man named J. Wesley Barnsworth.

Cliff gave the address; the details; and finally explained how he had learned the news. Burbank responded with quiet questions, and finally told Cliff to await a return call. It came, within ten minutes.

"Off duty," was Burbank's order.

Cliff smiled as he left the telephone. He knew what this meant. Burbank had relayed the information to The

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Shadow. That was Burbank's duty. Sequestered somewhere in New York, often changing his location, the quiet-voiced man was constantly in touch with both The Shadow and The Shadow's agents.

Cliff had never seen Burbank. He knew him only by his voice. But Burbank, despite his passive part, was an important cog in The Shadow's machine that ground budding crime to atoms.

On the occasion of Slips Harbeck's excursion to Alfred Sartain's penthouse, Cliff Marsland had followed Ricardo's lieutenant, and had reported to The Shadow. To-night, the job had been more simple. Cliff had been lucky enough to overhear the plans. No more was necessary.

As at Sartain's, so at Barnsworth's. Destiny lay in the hand of The Shadow. Again, Cliff was positive, crime would be defeated. Murder would fail due to the presence of The Shadow.

The master of the night would need no aid. Well did Cliff know that The Shadow, alone, could battle a squad of gangsters more easily than with the help of others.

Victory for The Shadow. That was Cliff's thought. To-night's adventure would be simple for the black-garbed battler. Not for one minute did Cliff suspect a trap.

For Cliff Marsland knew nothing of Professor Folcroft Ulrich, the scientist who had turned his cunning brain to crime. Silent death lurked to-night. The Shadow was facing it unwarned!

CHAPTER VIII. INTO THE TRAP

THE corridor outside of Apartment 636 in Langley Court was amply illuminated by ceiling lights. Yet the glow was not sufficient to reveal the living form that passed along that corridor.

The only token of a strange visitant was a blotched mass of darkness that moved silently beside the wall of the passage. Thus did The Shadow effect his mysterious approach as he advanced to the scene where crime was set.

Only when the moving darkness paused, did it reveal itself as the figure of a person. A tall shape, shoulders covered with a flowing cloak, head obscured beneath a black slouch hat, stood before the door of 636.

Burning eyes were focused upon the lock. Black-gloved hands produced a small steel instrument. Softly, easily, deft fingers worked at their appointed task. The lock yielded. The door opened inward.

Shrouded in the darkness of the room, The Shadow paused before he closed the door. A tiny spot of light glowed upon the lock which he had picked. The keen eyes observed tiny scratches. A low soft laugh resounded in the gloom. The door closed.

The Shadow was inside Barnsworth's apartment.

It was not yet ten o'clock. A full hour remained before Slips Harbeck and his gangsters might arrive. Barnsworth was not due back until midnight. A switch clicked, and the living room of the apartment was bathed in a glow from a floor lamp in the corner.

The Shadow began an inspection of the place. There was no mistaking his purpose. To-night, according to accurate information gained from Cliff Marsland, Wesley Barnsworth would be allowed to enter here unharmed. Later, mobsmen would break in to slay him.

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The living room afforded hiding places. One of these would serve The Shadow. From it, he could emerge to strike down the minions of crime.

If they entered before Barnsworth, the stroke could come then. If they entered later, they could be met before they had a chance to kill.

But murder was not the only purpose mentioned. The leader of the intended slayers Slips Harbeck had been instructed to pick up any documents that might be loose. Why had he been so ordered? That, The Shadow intended to learn.

The black-cloaked figure stopped by a table near the floor lamp. One finger touched the polished surface. It made a slight smudge in a fine, thin layer of dust. That fact did not escape The Shadow's eye.

The cloak swished slightly as The Shadow swung across the room. He opened a door. The light showed a small room, evidently intended as a bedroom, but equipped with desk, table, and chairs. There was a lamp suspended above the desk in the corner. The Shadow pressed the switch.

THE illumination was thrown directly on the desk. There, beneath the lamp, rested an envelope, The hand of The Shadow reached forward. The black fingers carefully approached the envelope to lift it with exactitude.

They stopped suddenly, and one finger touched the surface of the desk. This time there was no smudge of dust.

Wheeling, The Shadow moved to the table in the corner of the room. His tiny flashlight threw its silver-dollar beam upon the wood. A finger touched the table and made a slight smudge.

The flashlight disappeared. The black gloves peeled away. Long, white hands, with tapering fingers, came in view. Upon a finger of the left hand glistened a strange gem that glittered with amazing hues as the hands came beneath the light above the desk.

The Shadow seated himself. He produced pen and paper from beneath his cloak. He rested the paper on the desk, away from the envelope beneath the lamp. The left hand was still. The jewel sparkled in mystic colors.

Deep crimson; then flashing purple; finally a dull, changing blue these were the shades of light from the strange stone. This gem was The Shadow's girasol, a variety of fire opal. It seemed to glow with the life of an undying ember, flashing forth sparks of light. Like the eyes that watched it, this talisman symbolized mystery.

The eyes of The Shadow studied the desk. They roved to the table. They glanced into the outer room. Hidden lips laughed softly. That sound, despite its gentleness, was sinister. It seemed like the mirth of a being from another world an uncanny, foreboding tone that human lips could not have uttered.

Sighing, whispered echoes made the laugh still live as they responded from the walls. A horde of invisible demons had seemingly responded to their master. The right hand of The Shadow moved, inscribing words that were written thoughts.

Scratches on the lock. Some one has entered.

Dust on the tables. The owner has been absent.

No dust on the desk. It does not correspond with other furniture. It has been inserted since the owner's

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departure.

The writing was in bright-blue ink. It remained for several seconds; then, letter by letter, word by word, it disappeared. No traces remained upon the blank sheet of paper. Pen and paper disappeared. Once again, The Shadow laughed.

THERE was a telephone beside the desk. It was resting on a book. The Shadow picked up the directory, and found the number of J. Wesley Barnsworth.

The name was listed twice: a business address in Wall Street; the residence at Langley Court. The latter number corresponded with the one on the telephone itself.

In the front of the book, The Shadow found a list of names and telephone numbers evidently persons with whom Barnsworth had close acquaintance or business associations. The Shadow picked two names one from the top of the list; the other from the bottom. The one at the top was Joseph Harrison; the one at the bottom was that of Graham Gorson.

Placing the phone at the extreme corner of the desk, The Shadow dialed the number of Joseph Harrison. A voice responded. The hidden lips of The Shadow spoke in an ordinary tone, rather briskly and away from the mouthpiece.

"Hello... Is this Mr. Harrison?... Mr. Joseph Harrison?... I am Graham Gorson friend of Wesley Barnsworth..."

The receiver crackled as the man at the other end made his reply:

"Hello, Mr. Gorson... Yes, I remember you. Wesley introduced us at the Raffle Club... Surely. What can I do for you?"

"I am anxious to get in touch with Mr. Barnsworth," came The Shadow's assumed tones. "I have not been able to reach him..."

"Don't you know that he went to Florida?" inquired Harrison, over the wire. "He's been gone ten days now."

"I knew he intended to go," answered The Shadow, "but I was not sure when he planned to leave. I shall have to wait until he returns."

"That will be nearly a month," informed Harrison. "Sorry I don't have his address, Mr. Gorson. If you call his office..."

With call concluded, and book and telephone replaced upon the floor, The Shadow arose and stood beside the desk. His keen eyes had detected scarcely noticeable factors that had warned him of hidden danger. The telephone call had assured him that this apartment had no occupant at present.

Some mystery lay here; and The Shadow knew that it centered about the envelope upon the desk which did not belong to this room.

Moving into the living room, The Shadow plucked a thin book from a trough beneath a side table. He carried it into the small room, and set it upon the envelope.

Holding the book with one hand, The Shadow raised it imperceptibly; with his other hand, he whisked the

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envelope out from beneath the book, which he left upon the desk.

The deft fingers carefully peeled open the flap, so neatly that the envelope remained intact. From within, they drew a heavy folded paper. Spread out, the paper revealed nothing. It was blank.

The Shadow replaced the paper and put it in the envelope. He did not seal the wrapper. He merely inserted the envelope beneath the book, and worked it neatly back into place. Carrying the book to the place where it belonged The Shadow returned to the desk.

THE black gloves slipped over the white hands. A tiny reel came from beneath The Shadow's cloak. The gloved hands stretched out a length of thread from within the reel. The fingers dabbed the end of the thread upon the envelope. It remained there, thanks to a tiny button coated with a sticky wax.

The Shadow moved across the room, paying out thread as he drew away. He reached the living room and closed the door behind him. The reel was close to the floor; the thread passed beneath the door. A draw upon that thread would pull the envelope from the desk.

Holding the reel and standing close beside the wall, The Shadow pressed a knob in the center. The thread responded, drawing rapidly inward as a spring was released within the reel. This action caused a startling effect in the closed room beyond the door.

Simultaneously with the withdrawal of the envelope, a mighty, sighing puff sounded on the other side of the barrier. It was a gigantic, muffled gasp that made the door quiver and shift outward; then inward. The sound of tinkling glass followed.

That was all.

The Shadow opened the door. The little room was no longer illuminated, but its interior was vaguely plain in the light from the living room.

The place was a mass of wreckage. The desk was completely collapsed. The table and the chairs were broken. The light above the table, shade as well as incandescent, was shattered. Only the telephone rested on the floor; the envelope that had come from the desk lay near the door.

The withdrawal of that envelope had caused a weird, silent explosion. A filmy haze of smoke was settling to the floor of the room. As it cleared away, The Shadow entered, and his flashlight ran about the room. It rested upon a broken metal object that lay on the floor.

The Shadow laughed. That article was a photo-electric cell. Beside it was a fragment of flat glass. It did not come from the window, although the panes had broken there, adding to the tinkling which The Shadow had heard. This bit of glass had come from the desk itself.

The Shadow knew the answer. That desk had been a death device. Loaded with a chemical bomb, it had awaited the unwary action which would spring the detonator.

That had depended upon the photoelectric cell, set in the top of the desk. Covered with a layer of glass, the envelope resting above it, a shaft of light had alone been needed to make the cell respond.

The hanging light the tempting envelope. To remove the envelope meant that the light would strike the cell planted in the desk. The Shadow had sensed the danger. He had gone to a place of safety before letting the death trap operate.

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The book upon the envelope had enabled him to withdraw the latter with impunity; to learn what he had so cunningly suspected that the envelope was there to bring death to whoever might take it away.

THIS was no plot of an ordinary gang leader. The intended death of Alfred Sartain had shown the working of a scientific brain; this discharged trap brought more intensive proof of the same fact.

The photo–electric cell was in itself ingenious. The use of a new and remarkable explosive showed still greater craft. Silent death by a sighing, puffing combustible had awaited The Shadow here to–night.

The instructions which Cliff Marsland had heard Slips Harbeck repeat had been carefully arranged. Their subtle point was the mention of documents. That envelope had rested as a sure temptation that would lead any ordinary investigator to his doom.

The Shadow had divined the danger. He had opened the envelope to find it messageless. He had avoided the menace; he had let the almost noiseless explosive wreak its damage upon furnishings alone.

Professor Urlich's snare had failed. The Shadow, the master who had spoiled the scientist's scheme of death for Alfred Sartain, had himself avoided the subtle doom set here tonight.

It had been defensive action. Nothing concerning the enemy's identity had been revealed. But it placed The Shadow one step nearer his goal a meeting with the perpetrator of crime whose hand The Shadow had previously discovered.

A few minutes later, the apartment in Langley Court was empty. The secret visitor had departed. The Shadow had met the challenge of silent death!

CHAPTER IX. THE NEXT MOVE

THE next day found Professor Folcroft Urlich seated at a little desk in the small office above his laboratory. The cunning–faced scientist was reading a newspaper.

Larry Ricordo, sullen in demeanor, was standing by the window, looking out toward the old deserted mansion that obscured all view of the round–shaped building in which the two men were located.

"Well," remarked Urlich, "it appears that something caused our trap to fail. This report speaks of the damage wreaked by a mystery explosion in Barnsworth's apartment. It tells of no casualties, however."

"The Shadow is too smart, professor," growled Ricordo. "It's a sure bet he went into that place. Maybe the works blew before he got there."

"Impossible," responded Urlich. "If you followed instructions as I gave them, Ricordo, there could have been no premature results. You are right when you attribute cleverness to The Shadow. Something must have made him suspect that envelope."

"I fixed the place the way you told me," asserted Ricordo. "The Shadow is a fox that's all. I don't see how we can get him unless we gang him. That isn't such a hot idea, either. Others have flopped when they tried it."

Professor Urlich chortled. He turned again to the newspaper report, and finally laid the sheet aside.

"At least my explosion showed the power that I anticipated," he said. "It was the noise of the glass from the breaking window that attracted people to the spot shortly after the event occurred. The police, as usual, are

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baffled. They probably did not see any significance in the fragments which were left from the photo–electric cell."

"That was a great idea, professor," admitted Ricardo. "I was sold on it when you gave me the demonstration in the laboratory. I figured that if anything could get The Shadow, that would be it. But the thing flivved, just the same. Where do we stand now?"

"Exactly where we were before," responded Ulrich, "but with more to our credit. We have proved my theory of how The Shadow learned of the plot on Alfred Sartain's life. We have learned conclusively that Slips Harbeck is being watched."

"Yes," blurted Ricardo suddenly, "and I figure I know the guy that was watching him. I called Slips this morning, professor."

"Ah!", exclaimed Ulrich. "What did he have to say?"

"He told me that a gazebo named Cliff Marsland was sticking near the room where he was listening on the phone."

"Who is Cliff Marsland?"

"A tough baby who works pretty much on his own. Did a stretch up in the Big House Sing Sing, you know and since then he's been playing a pretty smooth game. I've met the guy; always wondered why he was flush with plenty of dough. I've got the answer now."

"You think he may be The Shadow?"

"No. He couldn't be. The Shadow was operating while Marsland was still in stir. But I figure he's working for The Shadow. If we have to give The Shadow the works in a big fight, we'll look out for Cliff Marsland, too. It might be a good plan to bump off Marsland now."

"Again you are wrong," interjected Ulrich. "This discovery merely puts us on a better footing. The Shadow is watching Slips Harbeck, our agent. Very well; we, too, can watch Cliff Marsland. The Shadow hopes that through Slips he may reach us. We can plan to reach The Shadow through Marsland."

"That sounds good, professor. But you've got me buffaloed. What's the next move?"

"To again snare The Shadow. Consider this, Ricardo. The Shadow may believe that we were ignorant of the fact that Wesley Barnsworth was not in New York. He may think that he discovered the trap that was set for Barnsworth. Obviously, The Shadow departed after the explosion. He knew that Slips Harbeck and his men would not approach while the police were there. Therefore, I intend to repeat my experiment."

"You mean with the same kind of a trap?"

"No. A different one. I would not use the same plan twice. There will be work for you again, Ricardo; but it will be more simple. Since I observed Alfred Sartain in his studio, I have been perfecting a new device. I shall show it to you and explain its purpose later."

"But if you miss out again –"

"I do not expect to miss. Nevertheless, I am prepared. You understand the subtlety of my methods, Ricardo."

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You are gradually learning their diversity. My ways are legion. We are getting closer to The Shadow with each move. His death will be the ultimate result. Come."

THE scientist led the way down the spiral stairway. The two men entered the laboratory. The round room was illuminated by daylight that came through the ample skylights around the outer circle. Two men were at work by high benches.

"My experiments always continue," remarked the professor. "These men obey every instruction that I give them."

"You can trust them?" inquired Ricardo.

"Why not?" asked the scientist. "They are foreigners. They do not speak English. Each of them Sanoja and Rasch are their names is a criminal. I brought them to America after a trip abroad. They are wanted by police in Europe. They are forced to rely entirely upon me."

Urlich approached the man whom he had called Sanoja. The professor spoke in a foreign tongue, and the workman answered him. Urlich turned to Ricardo.

"Sanoja is not quite ready with the device that I invented," said the scientist. "We shall have to wait a short while. In the meantime, let us go below. I have not shown you what I have downstairs."

Larry Ricardo repressed the curiosity that immediately seized his mind. He knew that there must be a large chamber beneath this one a round room within the circular passage that they had followed upon their arrival at Professor Urlich's domain. He wondered if it could be another laboratory.

This upstairs room, with its collection of huge crucibles, cauldrons, and giant test tubes, was amazing enough to Larry Ricardo. The gang lord had not been able to imagine what lay below. Now he was to observe.

They went down the spiral staircase at the end of the room. They did not stop when they reached the level of the ground floor. Still moving downward through the metal cylinder, they reached an inner doorway a dozen feet below. Professor Urlich pressed the barrier, and brought Ricardo into a dimly lighted room.

LARRY RICORDO blinked and looked about him. The illumination came from indirect lights. It showed that they stood within a large round pit, like the center of a coliseum. The analogy was more pronounced, due to the presence of a balcony that circled entirely around the room.

A low rail, with metal posts supporting it, made the balcony a gallery. Here people could stand and view the pit. Professor Urlich pointed across the room toward the front of the building.

"One enters the balcony from there," he explained. "Coming through the outer doors, one sees a door ahead. It leads to the balcony. A very natural course to follow."

Urlich cackled as he spoke. Larry Ricardo felt uneasy. His feet were upon metal plates a peculiarity he had noticed on the first floor. But it was not this factor, nor the presence of the balcony, that troubled him the most. The gang leader's eyes were attracted to the center of the room.

There he observed the strangest device that he had ever seen. It was a huge machine, different from anything that Larry believed could exist. The odd device, which measured a dozen feet in each direction, was mounted upon a heavy base, and was supported by posts fitted with rubber insulators. From it extended insulated wires that disappeared into the metal floor.

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Glistening wheels, flat disks of shiny metal, together with large glass tubes and other pieces of mechanism, gained the gang leader's full attention. Ricardo noted a control box at the side of the machine.

"What is it?" he questioned, in an awed tone.

"An electric-ray device," responded Ulrich, with a smile. "Designed to deliver death."

"You mean it's like the hot seat up at the Big House –"

"If you are referring to the electric chair at Sing Sing prison, I can assure you that your analogy is partly correct. The electric chair is designed, however, to kill only its occupant. This invention of mine will slay at a distance."

"How far?"

"Within the radius of its electrified circles. At present, it will kill only those who are within the circular corridors or who are close to this building. The metal plates receive the current. Watch."

The professor went to the control box. Ricardo stood beside him. Ulrich swung a switch. The big machine began to crackle. Long, snapping flashes of miniature lightning jumped back and forth across the top of the complicated machine.

Ricardo, nervy though he was, shrank away and stared at myriad sparks that flashed along the balcony rail.

Professor Ulrich swung back the switch. His cackling laugh replaced the buzz of the machine. Larry Ricardo sniffed the ozone with which the atmosphere was now charged.

"When I first designed the machine," explained the professor, "I had a small platform mounted beside it. The only sphere of influence was the floor on which we are now standing. I placed cats dogs other animals upon this floor. They were killed instantly.

"Then I extended the zones. The balcony the outer corridor finally the portico. These colored lights" the speaker pointed to a row of unilluminated incandescents "are for each zone. They tell which portions of the ground floor happen to be occupied."

"But we are standing on metal," objected Ricardo. "You say you used this floor. Why are we safe?"

"Each zone is separate," explained the professor. "There are strips of insulation between. When I extended my experiments to the outer circles, I merely disconnected this one."

"You have three circles now –"

"Yes, and I shall tell you why. I learned that each circle threw a killing power outside its boundaries. The greater the circle, the greater the effect. It was only a few feet at first; now the sphere of influence extends a dozen yards beyond this building!

"With a machine much larger than this one; with a circle a thousand feet in diameter, I estimate that I could slay all persons within a radius of one mile!"

"It would be a big job to rig up an arrangement like that."

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"Of course. But in the meantime" the scientist's eyes gleamed wickedly "this building is completely protected by silent death. Should an enemy venture here –"

"You mean if The Shadow should try to attack you!"

"Yes. He would come to his certain doom. I have other lights upstairs. We watch them constantly. That is why I have said that I would welcome a visit from The Shadow. But do not look for it, Ricardo.

"Sanoja is ready for us now. I shall view the device that he has made for my approval. If it is exactly as he designed it, we shall be ready to lure The Shadow to another trap of doom."

THE professor wheeled and walked back toward the cylinder which housed the spiral stairway. Larry Ricardo shuddered. Hardened criminal that he was, the amazing schemes of death designed by Professor Folcroft Urlich frightened him.

One last look at the glittering electric-ray machine; then Ricardo ascended at the professor's heels. Until now the gang leader had not realized the stupendous power of dealing death that Folcroft Urlich possessed.

Doom to The Shadow! It would be a certainty should the black-garbed visitant attempt to penetrate the heart of Professor Urlich's domain. Yet Larry Ricardo still digested the scientist's final words.

A new trap for The Shadow. Another subtle scheme in the making. Again, it would be Ricardo's part to lay the snare that Professor Urlich had designed.

The gang leader grinned. He was confident now. He had a hunch that The Shadow would never even learn of this strange place where Professor Urlich lived.

Some subtle device would soon accomplish an effective result against the one being who blocked the scheme of widespread murder.

CHAPTER X. CARDONA INTERPOSES

EVENING had arrived. Detective Joe Cardona was seated at his desk. He was studying reports on the explosion which had occurred at the apartment of J. Wesley Barnsworth. He also had a pile of data referring to the episode at Alfred Sartain's penthouse.

Completing his survey, Cardona arose with a satisfied smile. He went from the office and entered another room where he accosted a bluff-faced man who was sitting at a desk. This was Inspector Timothy Klein.

"Hello, inspector," greeted the detective. "Thought I'd better let you know that I'm going out on this explosion case. I may get somewhere with it, to-night."

"You'd better, Joe," responded Klein. "You know how boiled up the police commissioner is about it. He'll have you on the carpet first thing you know."

"I've got a hunch it's linked with the trouble that took place up at Sartain's."

"A hunch?" Klein snorted. "That's no hunch, Joe. The commissioner has the same idea. That's why he's steamed. He knows both of those men personally."

"I know all about that," answered Cardona. "I also know that the commissioner is keeping quiet only because

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neither of his friends were killed. He's got a hunch like I have that there's going to be a third mess soon."

"If there is," warned Klein, "you'll be up against it, Joe. If the same people have tried to kill a big millionaire and an important man in Wall Street, it's bad enough. It leaves it up to you to block them before they murder somebody."

Joe Cardona smiled. He understood Klein's apprehensions. He knew that the inspector had talked with Commissioner Ralph Weston. Joe also knew that he, himself, rated highly with the commissioner except when failure was involved. That was the secret of Cardona's smile. The detective intended to get results to-night.

"You say that the commissioner has my hunch," remarked Cardona. "Maybe he has but the commissioner don't know what I know. I'm going after a bird that may sing a song when I get him. I've been looking for him, and I've spotted him."

"You mean you know who is responsible?"

"I don't say that. I merely believe I can find a man that's mixed in it."

"Why haven't you grabbed him? Who is he?"

"LISTEN to me, inspector," argued Cardona quietly. "When we landed at Sartain's penthouse, we found a dead man whom we identified. Duster Brooks a smart crook. He had been working as Sartain's butler. He tried to kill Hunnefield, the millionaire's secretary.

"What was the logical answer? I'll tell you. It looked like Duster's job. He didn't get away with it. Two of his men were dead. Hunnefield said there were others. Naturally, we wanted to get them; but it wasn't a murder charge.

"I looked over the records. I found out that Duster Brooks was tied up with another gunman named Slips Harbeck. There was a chance of a connection. So I put a stool pigeon out to look for Slips Harbeck. He found him yesterday. Slips is hanging around a joint called Red Mike's."

"You let him stay there?"

"Sure. We had nothing on him. I was looking for other evidence before I grabbed him. Just wanted to know where he was that was all. I figured the trouble was all over. I couldn't implicate Slips Harbeck.

"Then bang! Along comes this explosion at Barnsworth's. That told me that Duster Brooks wasn't the fellow in back of all the trouble. He was just working for some one else. Who pulled the job at Barnsworth's? How was it done? I don't know. But I figure that maybe Slips Harbeck does."

"Very good, Joe," commended the inspector. "It's too bad you don't have some evidence. You could grab this fellow Harbeck and make him talk."

"I'll get evidence," stated Cardona grimly. "The stool is watching Slips Harbeck like a hawk. More than that, I'm going to be around Red Mike's tonight. I figure that there may be another job in the offing. That's why I'm having Slips watched. If he starts out to make trouble, I'll be in on the ground floor."

"You're using your head, Joe," was Klein's comment. "That's the ticket. Get something on Harbeck. Then he'll have to talk."

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"I'll do more than that," returned Cardona. "I don't figure Harbeck as the big shot in this game. I think he's the same as Duster Brooks a little guy. I'm going to land the topnotcher!"

With that final promise, Joe Cardona stalked from the office, leaving Inspector Timothy Klein tapping the desk in thoughtful satisfaction.

JOE CARDONA had gained the right information when he had learned that Slips Harbeck was hanging around Red Mike's. An hour after the detective had talked with the inspector Slips was at his accustomed table in the speakeasy. He was cautiously watching a man near the end of the room. Cliff Marsland, too, was there again, tonight.

Little did Slips realize that there was a third player in the game. A furtive, rat-faced prowler of the underworld was also in evidence. This was "Gawky" Tyson, a dopy character who was no more than a lesser pawn in the affairs of gangdom.

No one ever bothered the pitiful creature who now sat within the door of Red Mike's speakeasy. But Gawky Tyson's life would have been in jeopardy had gunmen realized the role which he played. Gawky Tyson was Joe Cardona's stool.

To-night, Gawky was watching Slips Harbeck closely, and with confidence. For the stool pigeon had received assurance from his boss, Joe Cardona, that detectives would be in the offing. He was to learn what Slips Harbeck intended to do, and to give the tip-off in case trouble was brewing.

Red Mike came sauntering through the speakeasy to talk to Slips Harbeck. His message was the usual one. Slips was wanted on the telephone.

With a grin, Slips went to the inner room. He heard the voice across the wire. He performed his former ruse that of letting the door rest ajar.

Once again, Slips Harbeck was getting instructions which he was not to conceal. But to-night, there were two listeners on the other side of the door men who paid no attention to each other. One was Cliff Marsland; the second was Gawky Tyson.

"Sure thing." Slips was talking in a tone that carried, despite its feigned caution. "Yeah... Yeah... I won't slip up to-night... One-man job, eh? A little later? O.K... Office of Gardner Joyce... 2020 Sharon Building... Wait till I get that straight... Signed contract in the desk drawer... Inner office... Grab it and wait there for a phone call... That'll be you calling?... No? What's the idea?... I say 'Nothing doing'... I see; if I want to have this straight. You've got a fellow fixed to call that number. Right?... Then I just tell him O.K., if I've found the contract. If I haven't, I say 'Nothing doing'... I see; if I haven't found it, it's because the contract must be in the safe. I wait there then... Yes, until you show up to crack that box... Right-o. I'll be ready to grab the phone as soon as the guy calls up... Bring you there if I need you..."

Just as Slips Harbeck sauntered from the inner room, Cliff Marsland was reaching the outer door of the speakeasy. Slips caught a glimpse of the disappearing figure. He grinned.

There was no doubt about it now; Cliff was an agent of The Shadow. He had probably left to relay his information to his mysterious chief.

Once again, Slips had bluffed. He was not to go to that office to-night. The whole affair was a blind. Slips could not figure the game; but that did not worry him. He decided to follow his previous policy; to wait a few minutes; then leave the speakeasy and double back into his upstairs quarters.

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WHILE Slips Harbeck was planning thus, Gawky Tyson arose and left Red Mike's. The furtive little gangster was accosted in the darkness before he had gone a dozen yards. He saw three men looming before him. One was Joe Cardona.

"What did you get?" demanded the sleuth, in an undertone.

In quick, breathless tones, the stool pigeon gave the information that he had received. Joe Cardona grunted and spoke to his men.

"Lay here, boys," he told them. "Grab this bird Harbeck as soon as he comes out. You hang across the street, Gawky. Give the whistle when Slips shows up. Then beat it. I don't want you around."

"I don't want to be around," yapped Gawky. "I'll scam quick enough. They'd get me if they knew I was tippin' youse guys off."

Cardona stood a short distance away while his men moved close to the speakeasy. The ace detective was thinking. He had two objectives to-night. One was the capture of Slips Harbeck; the other was the spoiling of crime. By taking Slips, he was eliminating the gangster's visit to Gardner Joyce's office.

As Cardona mulled over the situation, he began to take the natural reaction to the details which Gawky Tyson had obtained. Slips Harbeck had a mission to-night. He was to enter Joyce's office and there await a telephone call.

If no answer came, the call would probably be repeated. But that would not go on indefinitely. The word would get to Slips Harbeck's chief that the gangster was not there.

Cardona specifically remembered that Gawky had said the call would come from some one whom Slips did not know. "O.K." would be the answer, meaning that the job was done. "Nothing doing" would signify that the contract had not been found.

Then what? Harbeck's chief would arrive! If the police were there when he landed, he could be captured on the ground! This was opportunity.

Joe Cardona quickly formulated his plan. He needed no help right away. His two men must remain here to grab Slips Harbeck. That was essential to Cardona's present scheme. It would obviate the possibility of communication between Slips and the man above.

The detective turned and walked rapidly along the street. His mind was set. He would visit Gardner Joyce's office in the Sharon Building. He would receive the message and summon Harbeck's chief. There would be time then to call other detectives and have them stationed outside the office building. They could follow the visitor in; Joe himself could make the capture.

Cardona reached a side street where his police car was parked. He leaped to the wheel and drove away. He was confident that his men would do the work at Red Mike's. In this belief, Cardona was right.

AT that very moment, Slips Harbeck was sauntering from the speakeasy. The gangster never reached the alley where he intended to go. The detectives dropped upon him as they heard Gawky Tyson's low whistle.

Slips fell under the attack. His mad swing brought a stunning blow to the back of his head. The detectives dragged him away.

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Slips Harbeck was in the hands of the police. No one was the wiser. He was being taken to headquarters. It was there that Joe Cardona expected to find him later on. The ace detective had planned well.

Cardona was heading for another goal, satisfied that all would be well tonight. He thought that he knew all the plans involved. He, alone, could know the situation that existed.

Little did Cardona suspect that Slips Harbeck's plans had been purposely broadcast for listening ears; that they had been heard by another man than Gawky Tyson. Not for a moment did Cardona suppose that a man who had sauntered from the speakeasy prior to Gawky's appearance had been an agent of The Shadow!

Cliff Marsland was performing a duty to-night; and nothing had interfered with him. The situation that lay ahead was planned as a battle of brains between two master minds Professor Folcroft Ulrich and The Shadow.

Joe Cardona, confident of his own shrewdness, was nothing more than an unexpected factor that had come into the field. Unsuspecting, he was entering the battle ground. What would the outcome be?

The answer to that question was coming. It would occur after the ace detective arrived at the office in the Sharon Building!

CHAPTER XI. THE SILENT OFFICE

THE tiny beam of a little flashlight appeared upon the surface of a glass-paneled door. It revealed the number 2020. The light swung downward. A concentrated circle shone steadily upon the lock. A black-gloved hand appeared with a tiny pick of steel.

Deft fingers used the instrument to probe the lock. Under The Shadow's touch, the door of Gardner Joyce's office yielded. It opened inward and closed. A soft laugh sounded in the darkness.

Finding his way with the shaft of light, The Shadow reached the door of the inner office. He stopped to make a careful inspection.

All was well. The Shadow entered and let his light range across the desk. The beam showed inkstand, large blotter pad, calendar, and telephone.

There were no signs of a trap tonight. Why should one exist? At Barnsworth, the intention had been to take a life. Slips Harbeck and gangsters could not have been summoned there to serve in case the death snare failed.

Here, in Joyce's office, the intention was theft. Slips Harbeck was coming there alone. Unless The Shadow knew that the explosive desk at Barnsworth's had been prepared for him, and not the Wall Street man, he could suspect nothing here. Thus had Professor Folcroft Ulrich reasoned.

The inspection of the probing light showed that all was serene. Nevertheless, The Shadow was exacting as he examined the drawers of the desk. His pick enabled him to open them, and he used his light to glance through the papers that he discovered. All were arranged in orderly fashion. There was nothing that resembled a contract among them.

Still, The Shadow waited. It was evident that he, like Cardona, had evolved the plan of luring Slips Harbeck's chief to this spot. No telephone call had come as yet. The light glimmered on the telephone, going over the instrument carefully. Suddenly it went out.

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The keen ears of The Shadow had detected a sound in the outer office, despite the fact that the secret investigator had partly closed the inner door behind him. With no sound other than a swish, The Shadow reached the outer office and lingered there.

Some one was working on the outer door. A man was trying to remove the glass panel, which was held in place only by a molding. The Shadow waited. He could not see through the frosted glass. His natural assumption was that Slips Harbeck was attempting this mode of entry.

The work went on. The panel began to waver as the worker pried one side loose. Then, apparently fearing that he would break the glass, the man started anew upon the molding. At last, the glass came free. It was set upon the floor; a hand came through the door, and turned the inner knob.

WHEN the door opened, The Shadow was drawing back into the darkness. In a far corner of the room, his tall figure waited, invisible. The man at the door was replacing the glass panel. This was short work. Finishing, he strode across the office.

Had he turned on the light, he probably would not have seen The Shadow, for the strange being who had come there before him was in a position of total obscurity. But the entrant's objective was the inner office. Reaching it, he half closed the door behind him, and turned on a light.

It was then that The Shadow moved, advancing to a spot where he could view the scene within, and still stay in the cover of the darkness formed by the outer room. Through the opening by the door, burning eyes spied the man who had entered.

It was not Slips Harbeck. Detective Cardona was at Gardner Joyce's desk!

The sleuth was going over the same ground that The Shadow had covered, searching every drawer in hope of discovering the contract. Failing, Cardona stood thoughtfully beside the desk.

He was wondering whether or not some one had come here in Slips Harbeck's place; but as he reviewed events, he was satisfied that no one could have come.

It had been a considerable trek from Red Mike's to the Sharon Building. But Joe was sure that he had made the journey in less time than Slips Harbeck could have accomplished it. The absence of the contract pleased the sleuth. It reminded him of the signal that would bring Slips Harbeck's chief rushing to this spot.

Cardona reached for the telephone. His intention was to call headquarters and summon other men to be on hand.

He stopped before he grasped the instrument. That course would be inadvisable. Suppose that the call should happen to be made while he was phoning? The busy signal might scare off the man who was communicating with this office.

No; the call to headquarters could wait. Mumbling half aloud, Joe repeated the reply that he intended to give to the unknown caller:

"Nothing doing."

The detective smiled. That would bring the big shot. The door was unlocked; ready for his arrival. He would enter to find Joe Cardona instead of Slips Harbeck. Arrest would result; the impending chain of crime would be ended. Credit to Joe Cardona; commendation from Commissioner Ralph Weston. The situation seemed

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certain as the detective considered it, standing in the silent office.

MINUTES drifted by, and Cardona began to feel uneasy. He had a sensation that eyes were watching him. He turned and peered through the door into the outer office. He saw nothing but blackness.

Swiftly, the detective stepped to the door. His flashlight was in his left hand, his revolver in his right. He turned on the glimmer, pushed open the door, and let the rays sweep the walls. He saw no sign of a hidden watcher. Long, shadowy blotches appeared as the light circled. They revealed no person.

Cardona laughed and returned to the lighted inner office. Once more he closed the door only partially, so he could listen as he waited. Sure that no one lurked in the other room, the detective gained new confidence. He had seen no more than shadows. But sometimes shadows lived!

Joe Cardona was a man of hunches; to-night, he was on ground where hunches failed. He had imagined a menace in the other office, and only safety here. In both instances, Cardona was wrong. The hidden being whom Cardona's fleeting light had failed to uncover was not there to thwart the law. The Shadow's only enemies were those who sponsored crime.

Why did The Shadow wait? Had he planned the same course that Cardona was taking; and did he know the detective's thoughts? Did he still expect Slips Harbeck to arrive? What was going on within that mind that dwelt in darkness?

Only The Shadow knew!

At last came the signal that Joe Cardona awaited. The bell box of the telephone, stationed beside the wall, gave forth the expected ring. Joe Cardona reached out and gripped the telephone. He repeated the words that he would utter:

"Nothing doing."

The telephone rang again. Cardona lifted the receiver. As he held it to his ear, he nonchalantly seated himself upon the desk. The action turned Cardona's back to the door.

It was then that motion occurred in the darkness. The door opened a trifle farther. A projecting mass of black moved slowly into the inner office.

Joe Cardona was listening for a voice over the wire. Then it occurred to him that he must respond first. He spoke in a low, cautious tone.

"Hello... Hello..."

There was no answer. A look of chagrin came on Cardona's face. As he clutched the telephone in his right hand and held the receiver in his left, he realized that his own stupidity might have caused the man to hang up at the other end.

So keyed had the sleuth been to give the certain message, that he had overlooked this minor detail. Now, with the receiver pressed closely to his ear, he still hoped that the connection had not been broken.

"Hello... Hello..."

As Cardona spoke again, The Shadow was approaching. Fully revealed, a tall, amazing phantom cloaked in

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black, this being had neared Cardona.

He stood directly in back of Cardona now, so close that he might have been the detective's own shadow! Yet Cardona, intent upon the telephone, did not sense the presence of the sepulchral being who had advanced behind him.

THE SHADOW'S hands were moving. They hovered above Cardona's shoulders. Sinister fingers nearly touched the detective's arms. Had The Shadow changed his purpose? Did he intend to overpower the detective and to receive the call himself?

"Hello... Hello..."

Cardona again spoke futile words. Impatience flickered on the detective's countenance. He raised his right thumb and pressed the hook to jiggle it, and possibly restore the connection. Down went the hook; the thumb released it.

At that instant, The Shadow struck. His hand came forward with a swift blow. It landed squarely upon Cardona's left arm, and knocked the detective's hand forward with the receiver at the very moment when the sleuth released the hook with his right thumb.

A hissing sound came simultaneously from the telephone receiver. It was accompanied by a terrific puff of smoke. A bullet whistled by Cardona's face, and shattered a large water bottle that stood upon a stand by the wall.

Joe Cardona tumbled from the desk, telephone and receiver still in his grasp. He caught himself and staggered backward.

As his head turned so that his eyes could view his mysterious assailant, Cardona caught a fleeting glimpse of a tall form that had swung to the half-opened door. Burning eyes met the detective's quick, startled gaze. A cloak swished, and the mysterious figure was gone.

"The Shadow!"

The cry burst from Cardona's startled lips. The detective had recognized the personage who had struck the receiver down in time to save his life. The telephone clanked upon the desk. Bewildered, Cardona seized his revolver and his flashlight.

The tones of a strange, whispered laugh came to the detective's ears. Cardona reached the outer office, and threw the beams of his light toward the outer door, just as it closed. The detective hurried to the hall. He was too late. The Shadow was gone.

After a long interval, Cardona weakly returned to the inner office. The floor was soaked with water from the cracked bottle. The detective picked up the telephone from the desk. His eyes ran along the wire that connected it with the box.

Joe Cardona's backward stagger had brought that wire free. The sleuth made an examination. He discovered that the cord was a dummy. He picked up the telephone. It, too, was a faked article.

Some one had removed the genuine phone and its wire. This instrument had been installed in its place. It was not a telephone. It was an ingenious death machine. Quickly, Cardona unscrewed the parts. He found himself possessing a remarkable device.

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The receiver contained a short, stubby pistol barrel. Behind it was the hammer; out dropped a large, empty cartridge. Filled with a special charge of explosive powder, this deadly weapon had discharged its bullet with a sharp pung, accompanied by the puff of smoke.

There was a dry battery in the post of the telephone. This, connected with the receiver hook and the wire between base and receiver, had supplied the current that released the hammer of the pistol. Down and up Cardona went through the motion with the hook. Both actions were required; the hammer rose and fell.

Certain death silent death! Cardona had escaped it to-night. The fiend who had designed this instrument had planned well.

CARDONA did not know that the idea had occurred to Professor Folcroft Ulrich when the scientist had seen Alfred Sartain's actions with the telephone within the studio where doom had been slated to strike.

The detective knew only that the vigilance of The Shadow had saved him from certain death. Vaguely, the detective realized that The Shadow might have been the one for whom this fate had been intended. A man, jiggling the hook, would surely have the receiver to his ear.

The conjecture was correct. The Shadow, scenting a death trap, had finally centralized upon the telephone. He had watched Cardona's actions, and had acted when the crucial moment had been reached.

Other thoughts were buzzing through the detective's mind. This deadly instrument could well be accepted as a device intended to slay Gardner Joyce, the occupant of this office. That made a third intended crime.

Alfred Sartain had escaped death; so had J. Wesley Barnsworth. Now Gardner Joyce was on the list.

Cardona's perplexity faded. He knew the charm that had acted on all three events. The Shadow!

To Cardona, The Shadow was a living being. On other occasions, the master of the night had intervened to save the ace detective from doom. Where The Shadow's hand had entered, success had followed the affairs of Joe Cardona. Yet there was a reason why the detective preserved silence on that count.

Technically, The Shadow was nonexistent. Police Commissioner Ralph Weston had passed that order. Until the identity of The Shadow was known, the being in black could not be regarded as a subject for the records.

Joe Cardona shrugged his shoulders. Once again, he had observed The Shadow only as a living phantom. He could not include to-night's intervention in his report. He must state that he, himself, had discovered the secret of the false telephone.

Taking the death device with him, the detective strode from the office. He had proof of crime. He had connected Slips Harbeck with it; and the gangster was a prisoner. Cardona was pleased with his accomplishment; and he grinned as he thought of the effect his report would have on Commissioner Weston.

Yet Cardona did not lack gratitude. He would have been pleased to extend his thanks to The Shadow, had he been given the opportunity to do so. Although ignorant of Professor Folcroft Ulrich's part in crime, Cardona knew well that a battle of brains must now be under way between The Shadow and some supermind that plotted death.

Silent death! It had failed to kill. Not only had The Shadow avoided it; he had saved Detective Joe Cardona also.

Another scheme of Professor Folcroft Ulrich had been thwarted. Again, The Shadow had prevailed!

CHAPTER XII. THE QUIZ

"COME on, Slips. Open up."

Cardona's challenging voice brought a feeble grin from Slips Harbeck. The captured gangster was standing the ordeal of a constant grilling by Cardona and other detectives.

"What do you know?"

Slips shrugged his shoulders.

"Nothing," he drawled.

Cardona paced the little room where the quiz was taking place. He studied Slips Harbeck's strained face. The gangster was slouched in a chair, in a state of exhaustion. He had managed to hold out for hours.

"Look here, Slips" Cardona's milder tones denoted a change of tactics "we've got the goods on you. You were hooked up with Duster Brooks. We know you were with those gorillas at Sartain's penthouse."

"Never heard of the place," protested Slips.

"You were in on the job at Barnsworth's," continued Cardona. "That's why we put the clamps on you. But we didn't do it until we got the goods. My man heard that phone call you got at Red Mike's. That's how we queered the job at Joyce's office. You can't get out of it, Slips. Understand?"

"You've got nothing on me," drawled the gangster.

"We don't want anything on you," announced Cardona quietly. "We want to give you a break. You were at Sartain's. All right. You beat it. We've got no proof that you even fired a shot.

"Somebody planted a death trap at Barnsworth's place. We aren't laying that on you. Last of all, you were to go to Joyce's office, to get a phone call. That's correct, isn't it?"

"I don't know."

"You'll know when I tell you what happened," asserted Cardona grimly. "That phone call came through. I took it. I'll show you what I nearly got."

He motioned to one of the detectives. The man produced the fake telephone. Cardona exhibited the parts to Slips Harbeck.

"See?" quizzed the detective. "Right up against my ear like that. It would have got me, if I hadn't turned wise all of a sudden. Say, Slips" Cardona spoke as though he had a sudden idea "I think you're all right, after all. Lucky, I call it. You were going to that office. You were going to answer the telephone. Maybe this was meant for you."

Slips grinned derisively. Cardona snapped at the opportunity. It was exactly what the detective had wanted.

"So you don't think it was meant for me, eh?" questioned Cardona. "Then I guess you knew about it. Knew it

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was a plant, eh? All set to bump somebody off. That looks bad for you, Slips!"

A WORRIED expression registered itself upon the gangster's face. Slips realized that he had put himself in a predicament. He saw the flash in Cardona's eyes and feared the consequences. Slips knew that Cardona had the facts regarding that last call which the gangster had received from Larry Ricordo.

"Lay off me," pleaded Slips. "You've got me all mixed. I didn't know nothing about that phony phone. Maybe you were right, Joe. It might have been meant for me."

"Somebody double-crossing you, eh?" quizzed Cardona derisively. "Fine guy for you to stick up for. Come on it's your only chance. If you were double-crossed, you've got a right to squeal. If you don't talk, it proves you knew the game. That's sure enough, isn't it?"

Confronted by this dilemma, Slips tried to play a middle course. He licked his lips and blinked his eyes as he tried to face his inquisitor.

"You said you'd give me a break," he protested. "Honest, I wasn't in on any lay like this. I guess you're right about the double cross."

"You see it now, eh?"

"Yeah. Somebody wanted to get me, I guess. I'm sort of mixed up, Joe, but I guess you're right. A double cross, but I didn't know it. I guess Larry did want to —"

Slips Harbeck stopped suddenly and bit his lip. He realized his mistake. Joe Cardona glared triumphant. The detective, unwearied, was quick on the job.

"Larry, eh?" he questioned. "You're talking about Larry. Larry what's the rest of his name?"

"I don't know nothing!" snarled Slips.

"Larry," checked Cardona, in a speculative tone. "There's a lot of Larrys who pack guns, aren't there, Slips? I'm trying to think of some who would be in on this."

The detective turned to question one of his subordinates. His eyes were away from Slips Harbeck.

"Say, Mayhew," questioned Cardona, "what's become of Larry Ricordo. You know the guy that was going to be a big shot, but got cold feet."

"I don't know," responded Mayhew. "He took out to the sticks, so they say."

A momentary smile flickered on Slips Harbeck's sullen face. Cardona's turnabout had given the gangster a momentary respite.

But that was part of Cardona's game an old trick which he frequently worked with Mayhew. The other detective was watching Slips from the corner of his eye.

"You've hit it, Joe," said Mayhew, with a grin. "Hit the bull's-eye. Larry Ricordo's the one we want!"

This, too, was a follow-up in Cardona's game. Mayhew had learned his part from experience. Cardona's pretended lack of vigilance; Mayhew's sharp observation; then Mayhew's comment. These were three steps.

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Cardona provided the fourth. He swung back to Slips Harbeck, and loosed a sweeping volley of denunciation.

"So it's Larry Ricordo, eh?" demanded Cardona. "You know why he beat it out of town, don't you? Because he double-crossed Louie Muth. You didn't know that, did you? Didn't know who Muth's mob was gunning after? Well, you know now! You'd better be glad we pinched you, Slips. If that mob had ever found you out _"

CARDONA'S outburst was well calculated. His statements were fictitious. He knew that some mystery surrounded the death of the mob leader whom he had named. He also was subtle when he introduced the suggestion of a double cross. That was the very element that he had been building up in Slips Harbeck's mind.

"Come clean," added Cardona, after a pause. "You asked for a break. I'm giving it to you. Come clean, Slips!"

Cardona had driven the wedge. It was all that he had needed. Slips Harbeck, exhausted, no longer possessed the strength to battle back after Cardona had gained a definite point. The naming of Larry; the logical guess that it might be Larry Ricordo these had given Cardona a step toward the fact he wanted.

The ace detective followed up his advantage. He purred smooth questions, and guided Slips Harbeck toward the answers. Easing the gangster's mind as he went along, Cardona turned everything his own way.

Slips resorted to uncertainty, licking his lips as he went along. He admitted that he had opened negotiations with a man who purported to be Larry Ricordo. He was not sure that it was Larry; for he had conducted all transactions over the telephone.

Cunningly, Slips denied all connection with the affair at Alfred Sartain's, and the explosion at Wesley Barnsworth's apartment. He suggested that Duster Brooks must have given his name to Larry Ricordo – or whoever it was that pretended to be the big shot.

All that Slips claimed to know was that a package of cash had been delivered to him at Red Mike's as advance payment for a job, with orders to follow telephoned instructions. He stated that he had intended to avoid a visit to Gardner Joyce's office.

"I was going to scam," he protested. "Honest I was, Cardona. You can't blame me for picking up some loose cash, can you? It was soft. I figured if it was Larry Ricordo who was giving me the dough, he wouldn't come after me if I beat it out of town. I knew he was laying low."

Slips Harbeck's plea was a shrewd one. He told his story convincingly, by using enough truth to support his fabric of doubts and lies.

Joe Cardona saw the game and took advantage of it. The detective knew that it would be difficult to convict Slips Harbeck of any crime, for the only actual testimony referred to the telephone call at Red Mike's; and Gawky Tyson, the stool pigeon, had been the only listener.

But Cardona, by concentrating upon the story that Slips told, was establishing the most important point: namely, that Larry Ricordo was behind the crimes that had been attempted. To prevent further criminal activities and Cardona feared murder the arrest of Larry Ricordo would be a logical step.

If Slips was as important an underling as Cardona supposed, the capture of this lieutenant would embarrass Larry Ricordo, and put the big shot at a disadvantage. It was best for Slips to be absent for a while.

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"We're going to hold you, Slips," announced Cardona. "We'll need you later on. I'm out to get Larry Ricordo and you're not going to be loose to queer it. See?"

Slips nodded. He submitted weakly to Cardona's decision.

The detective was somewhat surprised. He attributed the gangster's lack of spirit to a fear of Larry Ricordo's wrath. In that surmise, the detective went wide of the truth. Slips Harbeck did not mind a period behind the bars, simply because he was thinking of The Shadow. He knew that he had been treading dangerous ground. He was glad to get away from his predicament.

AFTER Slips Harbeck had been removed, Joe Cardona went to his office. He classified facts that he had learned; then rested at his desk. The detective had worked since early in the morning, quizzing Slips Harbeck. The tedium of several hours was beginning to tell. It was ten o'clock now. Cardona prepared to leave.

A man entered the office to interrupt. Cardona found himself facing Clyde Burke, reporter on the New York Classic. The newspaperman was the last person whom Cardona wanted to talk to at the present moment.

"Hello, Burke," he growled. "I can't talk to you now. Going out to get some shut-eye."

"Been up a while, eh?" questioned Burke. "Who've you been grilling, Joe? Slips Harbeck?"

Cardona glared at the reporter with challenging air. Clyde Burke grinned. Cardona laughed gruffly.

"Beats me," he said, "how you news hounds guess things. Why don't you apply for a job on the force? We could use some smart detectives like you."

"Not for me, Joe," laughed Burke. "I can find out more without a badge than with one. What did Slips have to say?"

"You ask me? Why didn't you come around to grill him yourself?"

"I wouldn't have minded it, Joe. But I prefer sleep during the early-morning hours."

"Well, you slept through it then. Come around to-night. Maybe I'll have something for you."

"The old stall. That makes it the usual story. Third degree failed –"

"Listen here, Burke." Cardona's interruption was a challenge. "Lay off that heavy stuff. Get me? I'm tired out, and I'm impatient. Beat it I'm leaving."

"Hm-m-m." Burke seemed thoughtful. "Guess you did find out plenty from Slips Harbeck. Tell you what, Joe. Suppose we make it a compromise. Just a nice story that the police are holding Slips Harbeck as a possible suspect."

"That's all right."

"And in return for it" Burke's tone was smooth "you give me an idea of what he really did say."

Cardona stared squarely at the reporter. He went back to his desk and motioned Burke to sit down. Tapping thoughtfully upon the woodwork, Cardona talked terms.

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"Just as I get through quizzing a prisoner," he remarked, "you come along and quiz me. Well, I can't blame you. But you know what I'm up against, Burke."

"Yes, and you know me, Joe," returned Burke. "You know what I'm up against. If I don't get the news, somebody else may get it. I just want to protect myself, that's all, and I know you'll give me a break."

"That's right. You've always played fair, Burke. Here's the terms. I'll tell you what I've found out but you're to keep it out of the columns. I'll count on you to bluff the rest of the news hounds after I duck out of here. In return, you'll get a real story later on but you can't bust it until I give the word."

"Absolutely, Joe. I've worked that way before."

"I know you have. I never figured out why. The paper's paying you, but you use discretion which makes you different from every other reporter that I've ever met."

"That's agreed," said Burke quietly. "Leave it all to me, Joe. I can figure why you're holding Slips Harbeck. He knows something about these would-be murders."

"He knows plenty."

"And the man in back of it?"

Cardona leaned across the desk and whispered the name in Clyde Burke's ear.

"Larry Ricordo," said the detective.

"The bird that was going to be a big shot?" questioned Burke. "I thought he had cleared out."

"He's come back," asserted Cardona. "We're going to arrest him when we find him. You see how I stand, Burke."

"I'm with you, Joe. A story now may mean no pinch later. No pinch means I never get the real story that may be coming."

"You've got it, Burke. I'm counting on you, old man. What are you going to tell the rest of the reporters when they show up?"

"Leave that to me, Joe. All right if I stick around here a while?"

"Sure."

"Well, the boys will be in. I'll tell them you went out long ago. No grilling nothing. Slips Harbeck is just another gunman."

Cardona grinned as he rose from the desk. He shook Burke's hand, and left the office. The reporter took the desk and called the Classic to state that there was nothing new on the case that he was covering.

OTHER reporters arrived while Burke was phoning. The Classic reporter told them the same story, and left with the crowd. But when Burke had separated from his companions, he went directly to a cigar store and entered a telephone booth.

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It was not the Classic office which he called this time. Instead, Clyde Burke telephoned to an office in the Badger Building, and conversed with an investment broker named Rutledge Mann. Briefly, Burke gave the facts concerning Larry Ricordo.

Clyde Burke was smiling when he left the store. His phone call had been an answer to Cardona's puzzlement concerning the reporter's connection with the Classic. The detective did not know that Burke, as a reporter, was an agent of The Shadow.

Through Rutledge Mann, who served as contact man by day, as Burbank served by night, the name of Larry Ricordo would be forwarded to The Shadow. What Cardona knew, The Shadow would know also.

Joe Cardona had quizzed Slips Harbeck. Clyde Burke, in turn, had quizzed Joe Cardona. Another of The Shadow's agents had served his master well.

CHAPTER XIII. THE VILLAINS MOVE

LARRY RICORDO was seated in the office above Professor Folcroft Urlich's laboratory. The gang lord was perturbed. Before him lay a copy of the New York Classic. The arrest of Slips Harbeck was mentioned with the account of Joe Cardona's discovery of a death trap in Gardner Joyce's office.

The door opened, and Professor Urlich entered. The evil-faced scientist smiled. He had been conducting experiments in the laboratory while Larry Ricordo had remained upstairs.

"Excellent progress," remarked the professor, "excellent progress, Ricordo. Do not be disgruntled because of last night's failure. I have evolved a plan for sure success. Do you remember how Alfred Sartain lay face upward upon the desk in his studio –"

"Ready for the end?" interjected Ricordo. "Yes, I remember. But he didn't cash in his checks. That was when The Shadow dropped in through the skylight. I've got plenty to worry about, professor. I'm thinking of what's coming; not what's gone."

The scientist's brow furrowed. Urlich noticed the newspaper in Ricordo's hands. He looked quizzically at the gang leader.

"They've pinched Slips Harbeck," announced Ricordo.

"Well?" inquired Urlich.

"That means trouble for me," asserted the gang leader. "If Slips squawks, the dicks will be on my trail."

"And then?"

"That will mean The Shadow, too. He's wise enough to find out anything that they learn at headquarters."

Professor Urlich shrugged his shoulders. The gesture annoyed Larry Ricordo.

"That's not all," added Ricordo. "I called Grewson the guy we've got watching Jocelyn. He tells me the old man is all upset."

"Over what?"

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"Over this stuff in the newspapers. I know why, too. Jocelyn heard me mention Slips Harbeck as my chief gunner. The old gent had cold feet all along now he's probably getting worse."

PROFESSOR URLICH pondered. A cunning gleam showed in his wicked eyes.

"Just what did Grewson say?" he inquired.

"He said that Jocelyn has been ill," responded Ricordo. "Sick in bed doctor coming in and giving him prescriptions. Grewson is taking care of him. Grewson was glad I called. He don't know what it's all about, but he's got a hunch that Jocelyn has something on his mind."

"He has," commented Urlich dryly.

"Sure he has!" blurted Ricordo. "He's got us on his mind! Look here, professor. Jocelyn was in on our first deal, and it flivved. Since then, he's been laying low. He's wise enough to know that we must be mixed up in these new jobs."

"Proceed, Ricordo," mused Urlich, with a smile. "You are becoming analytical. It is an excellent sign."

"Well," continued Ricordo, "the way I figure it is that old Jocelyn may be thinking we've ditched him. That sort of lets him out, doesn't it? With all this hokum in the papers, he's getting worried. He's liable to do something about it, isn't he?"

"What, for instance?"

"He's liable to squeal."

"Certainly. That is why we have placed Grewson with him. I am pleased to learn that you called Grewson, Ricordo. It shows intelligence on your part."

"Suppose Jocelyn does squeal?" insisted the gang leader. "What good is Grewson then? I tell you, professor, I'm worried."

Professor Urlich closed his eyes. A meditative smile appeared upon his ugly lips.

"Ricordo," he said thoughtfully, "I do not suppose that you are familiar with the game of chess. The pieces on the board are like tiny human beings. The object is to checkmate the opponent. In doing so, one frequently finds it wise to sacrifice a major piece.

"So far, we have dealt chiefly with pawns. The opening game is ended. We have passed the period of conventional tactics. My early attempts at a checkmate failed. The time has come for more startling strategy."

Larry Ricordo gaped. He wondered if the scientist had lost his mind. Then he saw the professor's eyes open and the brilliance of their gleam reassured the gangster.

"Tell me" Urlich's tone was firm "what led the police to Slips Harbeck? How did they learn of the trap I had you place in Joyce's office? The underworld is your ground, Ricordo. Slips Harbeck is your man. Give me your theory."

Ricordo's puffy lips spread in evil satisfaction. This was his turn to analyze. Professor Urlich was asking his opinion. The gang leader was pleased, especially as he was sure he had the answer.

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"There must have been two guys listening in at Red Mike's," asserted Ricordo. "One was Cliff Marsland, The Shadow's stool. The other must have been Joe Cardona's stool. That's why Cardona grabbed Slips and went to Joyce's office himself. I know the way those dicks work."

"An agent of The Shadow," laughed Ulrich, "and an agent of the police. What do you suppose those two will do now, Ricordo?"

"They'll hang around Red Mike's," returned the gang leader promptly. "For a while, anyway. They'll be looking for a new guy to watch some one instead of Slips Harbeck."

"Excellent," remarked the fiendish scientist. "We shall give them some one else."

"You mean another guy like Slips?"

"One better than Slips."

"Who?"

"Yourself!"

RICORDO leaped up from his chair. His eyes were wild. He began an incoherent protest. Professor Ulrich smiled and waved the gang leader back.

"Hear me out, Ricordo," said Ulrich. "I am planning a perfect thrust. I must rely upon you."

"But suppose that Cardona has made Slips squawk?" protested the gang lord. "Maybe he hasn't done it yet; maybe he will, though."

"That does not matter," declared the scientist. "In fact, it is essential that you should make it apparent that you are Slips Harbeck's successor. You must play the part that Slips has played. You are the one who will lure The Shadow to certain doom."

"Yeah? And suppose the police –"

"Let me question you once more, Ricordo. You speak of underlings whom you call stool pigeons: one belonging to The Shadow; the other to the police. You know that one is named Cliff Marsland. Do you think that you could recognize the other?"

"Sure. I could spot him if I was looking for him."

"Since there is no evidence that Cardona has learned that you are Slips Harbeck's chief, do you suppose that he would have detectives in the vicinity of the place called Red Mike's?"

"No. Cardona would keep them away. He'd be waiting for some guy that looked suspicious. He'd leave that to the stool. If I showed up there, and the stool spotted me, Cardona would hear about it. My next trip to Red Mike's would be just too bad for me."

"Excellent," expressed the professor. "We can assume that The Shadow, too, will utilize the same system."

"Sure," agreed Ricordo. "He can't know that Slips Harbeck tipped us off about Cliff Marsland."

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"Very, very good," smiled Urlich. "My scheme will be to your liking, Ricardo. We are dealing with the underworld. There, violence is useful. How quickly could you assemble a squad of gunmen, Ricardo?"

"A mob of gorillas?" Ricardo laughed coarsely. "I can get them quick. No trouble in that, professor."

"Excellent. Obtain such men. Take them with you to Red Mike's. Play the part of Slips Harbeck's successor. Simply call a false phone number and repeat certain information."

"And the mob?"

"Your men will serve two purposes. First, to eliminate the police spy, so that he cannot carry information back to headquarters. Second –"

"To get Cliff Marsland!"

"To capture him; not to kill him. They must not touch him until after he has communicated with The Shadow and informed his master of your plans."

"But if The Shadow gets on my trail" Ricardo's voice was doubtful – "I'll be in a jam, professor!"

"The Shadow will not follow you," announced Urlich. "He will find much to occupy him at the destination which you name. There will be work there for The Shadow. Work, with unexpected consequences. If my new plan prevails, the career of The Shadow will be terminated."

"What'll I do? Scram?"

"You will return here. If your men capture Cliff Marsland, they will carry him to a designated point. There you will meet them, dismiss them, and bring Marsland here alone!"

"I get you, professor. We'll make him squawk!"

"If necessary, yes. Only if The Shadow, through some freak of chance, should escape our snare. Then, and then alone, Marsland will prove useful. Otherwise, I shall eliminate him in my laboratory."

PROFESSOR URLICH arose. He beckoned to Larry Ricardo and conducted the gang lord down the spiral stairway to the laboratory. Urlich led the way to a table in the corner. He pointed to two bottles of liquid: one green, the other red.

Into a test tube, the scientist poured a few drops of each liquid. The mixture became colorless. Urlich held the tube in the light. Ricardo watched. A few minutes passed. The colorless liquid began to effervesce. Bubbles appeared upon its surface. The scientist smiled as he raised a warning hand.

In a low voice, he began to explain the purpose of the experiment. With his free hand, he pointed to dead rats and mice that lay upon the table. Larry Ricardo listened in astonishment.

Professor Urlich droned on in the voice of a lecturer. He spoke of the past: of Thomas Joselyn's connection with the first scheme of murder; of failures and why they had occurred. He spoke of The Shadow; and finally of silent death.

As the bubbling liquid ceased its action, Professor Urlich smiled and tossed the test tube in a sink. The breaking glass tinkled ominously.

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"As I have destroyed that tube," remarked the scientist quietly, "so can I destroy the lives of those who block my path. I have told you the perfect plan, Ricordo. Go and do your part."

LARRY RICORDO descended the spiral stairway to the floor below. As he walked around the circular passage, the gang leader shuddered at the clanking of his footsteps upon the metal floor. He was thinking of the terrible machine that lay within the circular wall.

Death was Professor Urlich's motto. Death to all who blocked his path. Larry Ricordo, in his evil heart, dreaded the man whose will he now was serving. He realized that at this very moment, he was walking within a zone where death could strike at Folcroft Urlich's bidding.

Even now, Ricordo realized, a signal light must be gleaming upon the glittering machine within the inner pit. That light was caused by Ricordo's treading on the metal plates. A swing of the switch the gang leader shuddered again.

He did not feel at ease until he had passed the outer door, and passed the range of the metal-floored portico. Beyond the zones of death, Larry Ricordo stepped into his sedan. Late afternoon had come. It was time to head Manhattanward.

Death! Silent death! It lurked in Professor Folcroft Urlich's strange, circular abode. Death would strike The Shadow, should even he venture thither. Doom would be the welcome to any intruder who passed within those sinister portals.

The Shadow! Larry Ricordo sneered as he started the sedan. The time would never come when The Shadow would visit this menacing spot. The master of darkness would learn the taste of death without ever discovering the hand that dealt it.

Stowed within the pockets of his coat, Larry Ricordo was carrying the bottles of red and green liquid. The gang leader knew their potency. Death to The Shadow silent death!

Larry Ricordo was setting forth to arrange the trail to doom!

CHAPTER XIV. MOBSMEN STRIKE

ANOTHER night had come. Denizens of the underworld had begun their assemblage in Red Mike's den. The proprietor of the speakeasy, noncommittal as was his wont, cast no more than a casual glance toward those who thronged his dive.

The capture of Slips Harbeck had created no great stir in gangdom. The detectives had effected it quietly outside of Red Mike's. There had been no witnesses other than Gawky Tyson, Cardona's stool pigeon.

Red Mike, himself, was not perturbed by Slips Harbeck's fate. In fact, he had come to consider Slips as a liability. Ricordo's lieutenant, fomenting schemes, had been too closely clinging to Red Mike. The speakeasy proprietor was glad that the mysterious phone calls had ended.

Nevertheless, Red Mike regarded Slips Harbeck as a pal; and in the back of his head, Red Mike was ready to bring discomfort to any one concerned with Harbeck's capture. Contrarily, Red Mike did not trouble himself to seek the culprit who had brought about the arrest of Slips.

There were two men in the speakeasy this night who could have given Red Mike information concerning Slips Harbeck's doings. One was Gawky Tyson; the other was Cliff Marsland.

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Cardona's stool pigeon was seated near the door that led to the little side room. Cliff Marsland was across the speakeasy. Besides them, there were perhaps twenty typical habitués of the bad lands, ranged about the big room.

Two hard-faced gangsters entered. They said nothing. They sat at a table not far from the little room. Both Cliff and Gawky eyed them; Cliff with a casual glance, Gawky with a furtive sidelong stare.

Minutes passed; another pair of mobsmen came in. They paid no attention to the first ones. They, too, seemed occupied with their own business.

"Gorillas getting together," mused Cliff. "Good idea to watch them."

Cliff's thought was a usual one. It was just such an assembly that had given the final tip-off to Slips Harbeck's activities, the night that Ricordo's lieutenant had set forth to Alfred Sartain's apartment house.

ANOTHER man entered the speakeasy. Cliff Marsland's gaze narrowed. He was sure that he recognized these hardened, evil features. Larry Ricordo!

Cliff had seen the gang lord in the past. Moreover, he was here to watch for any sign of Ricordo, even though the chances of the missing gang leader's visit had appeared quite remote.

Another pair of eyes spotted Larry Ricordo. Gawky Tyson, too, was interested in the gang leader's arrival. He had been planted here by Cardona in hopes of this very visit. Thus the gorillas were forgotten. Both Cliff and Gawky became concerned with Ricordo.

The gang leader stopped to talk to Red Mike. As he glanced about the room, Ricordo scarcely noted Cliff Marsland. But he did let his eyes pause mildly upon Gawky Tyson, who happened to be the nearest person to him.

As a spotter, Ricordo lived up to his claims. It required only a second glance to assure him that Gawky was the stool pigeon the police had posted here.

Ricordo caught the eye of one gorilla. The gang leader's gaze shifted back toward Gawky Tyson. That was the sign that meant suspicion. The gorilla nodded. Ricordo went on talking to Red Mike.

There was no occasion for Ricordo to mark Cliff Marsland. Among the gunmen whom he had gathered in dives other than Red Mike's, were two who knew Cliff by sight. Larry Ricordo repressed a leer as he talked with Red Mike. The stage was set; now for action.

"So they grabbed Slips Harbeck, eh?" Ricordo spoke in a less guarded tone. His words reached both Gawky and Cliff. "Well, don't talk about it, Mike. I'll tell you why I'm picking up where Slips left off. Where's the telephone?"

Red Mike nudged his thumb toward the inner room. He was anxious to please Larry Ricordo. He had never heard Slips Harbeck mention the gang leader, but he was willing to take Ricordo's say—so.

"Sit down," offered Red Mike. "Have a drink on the house, Larry. I'll let you know when a call comes for you."

"Can't wait, Mike," returned Ricordo. "I know the number. I'll call it myself. I was intending to wait that's why I came here. But with this crowd here I —"

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"Somebody may recognize you, eh?"

"Sure. I've been keeping out of town, you know. I'll chance a call – if I don't get an answer, I'll wait but I'll stick in the little room."

WHEN he concluded, Larry Ricordo went to the door that Red Mike had indicated. Both Cliff Marsland and Gawky Tyson were intensely interested. They were anxious to learn the number that Ricordo was calling. The closed door prevented them. But it was not long before that door, which had a habit of not staying completely closed, opened inward, as though by accident.

Ricordo was talking, and the tones of his voice were audible to both listeners. As successor of Slips Harbeck, the gang leader was apparently receiving important instructions.

"Thomas Jocelyn?" Ricordo's tone denoted surprise. "Sure... I'll go there... Afraid he'll squawk, eh? Well, he knows too much... Sure... I know where old Jocelyn's apartment is... Leave it to me... Easy. I'll go there right away. I can make it in half an hour..."

The receiver clanked. Larry Ricordo stalked from the inner room. The expression on his face was plain. One could see that it boded ill for Thomas Jocelyn. Larry Ricordo stopped in the outer room.

"I'll have that drink, Mike," he said to the proprietor. "Then I'll start along. Thanks for letting me use the phone."

While Ricordo's back was turned, Cliff Marsland arose quietly from his table. The Shadow's agent had shifted before. He was apparently seeking a new place. Instead, he changed his mind and sauntered toward the door of the speakeasy.

Cliff had just reached the door when Gawky Tyson hunched himself upward and began a furtive progress in the same direction. He had not gone three paces before one of the gorillas leaped to his feet. At that moment, Larry Ricordo was finishing his drink.

"Well, so long, Mike," said the gang leader.

A cry sounded through the speakeasy. It was directed toward Gawky Tyson, by the gangster who had leaped forward to block the stool pigeon's path.

"Get this guy!" shouted the gorilla. "He's a stool; that's what he is! Get the squawker!"

From the door, Cliff Marsland caught the flash of revolvers. He also saw Larry Ricordo approaching the door. As the gang leader stopped to view the action, Cliff ducked out into the night. Larry Ricordo, looking over his shoulder as he went, reached the door.

Gawky Tyson was screaming denials. Like a frightened rat, he was squirming away from the mobsman who had accosted him. The other gorillas were on their feet, covering the suspect with their revolvers. Red Mike was bellowing out threats. He wanted no disturbance in this place.

Other customers were on their feet. None were friends of Gawky Tyson, but they all knew Red Mike. Larry Ricordo watched grimly, knowing that his men must not delay. They could act now and explain afterward.

Two revolvers roared. Other shots followed. With almost one accord, the gorillas loosed their lead into the form of Gawky Tyson. The stool pigeon uttered a piercing shriek and toppled to the floor.

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Red Mike, with clenched fists, was trying to put the blame on the proper man. But the gorillas had acted with the precision of a firing squad. Backing away, they held their revolvers in menacing hands, as though challenging any one who might call them to task.

LARRY RICORDO stepped through the door. He walked away, glancing back as he went. He saw the murderers come hurrying from the speakeasy. Their work was done. Larry laughed as he sauntered along and ducked through a side alley.

These men were half of his corps. The others had remained outside. They had gone; and Larry knew where. They had taken up the trail of Cliff Marsland.

Hurrying his pace, Ricordo kept on for several blocks and finally stopped at a little restaurant. He entered, went through to a back room and picked up a telephone. He called the number of Thomas Jocelyn. He recognized the voice that came over the wire.

"Hello, Grewson," said Ricordo. "All set? Good... Listen now. You've got the bottles... Do the job right... No, I'm not coming there, but there's a guy that thinks I am... He'll be there later. You're to be gone when he gets there... Well fifteen minutes will be all right; but move in a hurry after that... Yes... Yes... Scram; keep going clear out of town... You've got the dough I slipped you. There'll be more waiting when you reach Chicago..."

Larry Ricordo left the restaurant. He laughed in a pleased manner. It rested with Grewson now; and Grewson was capable. Furthermore, Grewson did not know that The Shadow was concerned in this episode.

As for Thomas Jocelyn's apartment Larry Ricordo had no reason for going there now. That was part of Professor Urlich's scheme. A new trail for The Shadow; another duty for Ricordo. Half a dozen blocks to go; and Larry would learn if the rest of his plot had succeeded.

The gang leader neared the appointed spot. He was back in a secluded district of the underworld, far from Red Mike's establishment. A man came out of the darkness to meet him. It was one of the gorillas who had been set to trail Cliff Marsland.

"We got him, Larry," whispered the gangster. "Laid outside the place where he was phoning and nabbed him when he came out. Knocked him cold."

"Is he in the car now?"

Larry put the question as they stalked along. He saw the gangster nod.

"Yeah," said the underling. "Him and another guy. This bird jumped us while we were grabbin' Marsland. One of the gang socked him with a rod."

"Who is he?" demanded Ricordo.

"Some reporter," explained the gangster. "Found his cards in his pocket. Name's Burke Clyde Burke. We didn't want to bump him off because the noise might have made trouble. We can drop him somewhere or take him for a ride —"

They were at the spot where the car was parked. Three mobsters emerged from the side of an old sedan. Larry Ricordo used a flashlight to study the two men who were bound and gagged in the back seat. He recognized Cliff Marsland. He did not know the other.

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THE gang leader pondered. He wondered if this reporter was an acquaintance of Cliff Marsland or whether the man had chanced to happen by during the attack of the gorillas. Ricardo knew that it would be a mistake to deal with a newspaperman as one would handle a member of the underworld.

To take Clyde Burke for a one-way ride was the first suggestion that Ricardo ignored. He considered the results that might occur should Burke be freed. They looked bad also. Ricardo wondered what Professor Urlich would have to say about the capture of two men instead of one.

That thought gave the answer. There was no time to lose. The sooner Ricardo reached Long Island, the better. The quickest, surest course was to take Burke along with Marsland. Professor Urlich could decide what to do.

Larry Ricardo paid off his mobsters. He took the wheel of the sedan and pulled away. As he rode along, he was more than satisfied with his decision regarding Clyde Burke. It was no greater risk to carry two bound men than one. Burke could be freed if Urlich insisted; if the scientist decreed death, it would be more certain and effective in Urlich's laboratory than at the hands of the cumbersome mobsters whom Ricardo had just discharged.

The gang leader had a hunch that both prisoners would soon experience the sensation of silent death. The thought turned his mind to The Shadow. Larry Ricardo laughed as he guided the car toward the twinkling lights of an avenue.

Silent death! The Shadow! The two were interlocked. The Shadow was on his way to silent death at this very moment. Cliff Marsland had certainly sent word of Ricardo's plans. That, alone, was necessary.

The subtlety of Professor Folcroft Urlich's present scheme surpassed all that had gone before it. Larry Ricardo saw certain doom destined for The Shadow!

CHAPTER XV. THE HAND OF DEATH

THOMAS JOCELYN was lying in bed, half asleep. The financier's face was drawn. His closed eyelids were dark and heavy. His expression showed weakness and worry.

The illness that had brought Jocelyn to this state had been the result of a troubled mind. Thomas Jocelyn had reached the zenith of his fiendishness when he had seen Alfred Sartain about to die. The sight of The Shadow had shattered the financier's confidence.

Given respite by Professor Urlich, told to let his plans rest for a while, Thomas Jocelyn had experienced a slight recovery after that strange night in the office across from Sartain's penthouse.

Gradually, the old financier's fears had increased. Newspaper reports concerning J. Wesley Barnsworth and Gardner Joyce had made Jocelyn sure that Professor Urlich was proceeding. The terrible burden upon Jocelyn's mind was irresistible.

Living alone, with Grewson as his sole attendant, Thomas Jocelyn had succumbed to nervousness and had failed to respond to a physician's care. At times, the old financier mumbled incoherent utterances which only Grewson heard. The servant had been Jocelyn's constant companion during this period of distress.

In his fevered mind, Thomas Jocelyn was battling with the desire to confess his part in attempted crime. He was afraid to speak; he was afraid to preserve silence. The grim face of Professor Folcroft Urlich haunted him fiendishly in his dreams; and always, behind that face, loomed the spectral figure of a being in black The Shadow.

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It was only indecision that had prevented Thomas Jocelyn from calling the police. Had either Barnsworth or Joyce been murdered, Jocelyn would probably have broken down. The arrest of Harbeck had been a final blow that had shattered all resistance. Jocelyn's condition was rapidly approaching a critical stage.

The old financier managed to open his eyelids as he heard a sound at the door of the room. He saw the portal open. Grewson, a hard-faced man, entered and stared toward the bed. The servant smiled in disarming fashion when he saw that his employer was awake.

"Time for your medicine, sir," announced Grewson.

"Which medicine?" asked Jocelyn querously.

"A new prescription from your doctor," responded Grewson. "You were half asleep when he spoke about it, sir."

THE old financier watched the attendant take two bottles from the corner. One contained a greenish liquid; the other a red solution. Using a large glass, Grewson mixed the contents. Jocelyn blinked as he saw that the result was colorless.

"Here you are, sir," announced Grewson, approaching with the glass. "The doctor said to take the entire dose."

Thomas Jocelyn began to gulp the liquid. Its taste was not unpleasant. Grewson reached out with a strong arm and propped the financier up in bed. Jocelyn finished the draft and sank wearily back upon his pillow. His eyes then showed a sudden sparkle.

"It is like an elixir, Grewson!" he exclaimed. "What a strange sensation! I can feel my heartbeats quicken!"

Grewson stood beside the bed, smiling. Of his own accord, Thomas Jocelyn sat up. He clenched his fists; the seemed ready to spring from bed. Suddenly, a convulsive shudder shook his frame.

"Grewson!" Jocelyn's voice came in a whispered gasp. "Grewson! What – what is happening –"

Tremors followed. Jocelyn retained his new-gained strength, but terrific spasms continued. Grewson backed slowly away. He saw Jocelyn drop back upon the pillow, his breath coming in long, hoarse gasps.

Grewson reached the door. His face bore an evil expression that marked him for what he was the tool of fiends who plotted death. Grewson knew that he had done his part. Thomas Jocelyn would die at the order of Larry Ricordo.

The false servant reached to close the door behind him. In a few seconds he would be gone, leaving no trail behind him. He had stayed his action for the appointed time; now his work was through. The door began to close; then stopped.

A noise beside the bed had attracted Grewson's quick attention. Turning, the servant saw Jocelyn clutching at a table that stood beside the bed. Before Grewson could spring back to stop him, the financier had grasped the telephone and had lifted the receiver.

Pouncing in tigerish fashion, Grewson sought to wrest the instrument from Jocelyn's clutch. The financier toppled forward. He flung the telephone from him and his clawing hands knocked over the table. The empty glass which had contained the terrible potion shattered on the floor.

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Fiercely, Grewson caught Jocelyn's shoulders and threw the financier back in bed. The alarmed servant picked up the telephone and listened at the receiver. He could hear the voice of the operator inquiring the trouble; he could also hear Jocelyn's long, coughing gasps.

"Hello?" The operator was speaking. "I am calling the police. Do you understand?"

"Hello," growled Grewson. "Never mind. It's all right."

"Were you on the wire a moment ago?" challenged the operator.

"No... No..." Grewson tried to be convincing. "It was an accident. The telephone fell that was all."

Jocelyn's harsh sighs came audibly. The girl must have heard these belying sounds. She expressed her doubts of Grewson's statement.

"I am calling the police," she asserted, "unless you put the other person on the wire."

Angrily, Grewson hung up the receiver. He realized then that it was the worst thing he could have done. He raised the receiver; jiggled the hook, finally hung up once more. He looked at Jocelyn.

The financier had lost all strength. His lips were moving feebly; his eyes, alone, seemed to have the power to rove. Apparently those spasms of terrific strength had ended in almost total paralysis.

An angry snarl came from Grewson. The false servant glared venomously. He knew that he had been successful so far, but he recalled the rest of Larry Ricordo's plans. The gang lord had said that some one was coming here; that that person should find Thomas Jocelyn alone.

WHAT if the police arrived first? Grewson knew that such a happening would injure whatever scheme Ricordo had evolved.

For a moment the gangster-servant hesitated, then he realized that he could do nothing to prevent the outcome. He could trust to luck that the visitor would arrive considerably before the police reached the apartment.

That thought gave Grewson a new consideration: his own safety. He had overstayed the time that he had intended. He must depart at once.

He paused only to throw a last derisive glance at the gasping form of Thomas Jocelyn. Grewson held no regard for the man whom he had pretended to serve. He had accepted Ricordo's order to slay with a malicious relish. Thomas Jocelyn was dying now, and Grewson had guided the hand of death.

"Cash in your checks," jeered Grewson. "Good-by, you old mug. Let the bulls find you coughing out. Sorry I won't be here to see it. Try to tell 'em who did it!"

The false servant backed across the room. His gangster identity had come to the surface. Thomas Jocelyn understood and tried to reply to the villain's challenge, but his lips, although they moved, could do little more than cough.

Backing to the door, Grewson grinned and made a burlesque of the bow which he had been accustomed to use when doing Jocelyn's bidding. The gangster-servant intended it as his last action before he left that room where death was working. But as he inclined his head, Grewson saw something upon the floor that made him

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stiffen.

Stretching out in front of him, cast from a spot behind his body, lay a strange, blanketing shadow of blackness. Long, sinister and spectral, it seemed a living creature of ominous import. It represented the shape of a tall being garbed in flowing cloak and broad-brimmed hat.

Grewson's tense form relaxed. Dazed and affrighted, the killer turned slowly toward the door. As he made that slow revolution, Grewson heard a terrifying sound a weird noise far more incredible than the gasping breath of Thomas Jocelyn.

A low, mocking laugh rang in Grewson's ears. Its gibing tones reechoed in hollow tones from the walls of the room. The laugh was audible proof of visible fears. Without completing his turn, Grewson cowered away from the door, staring wild-eyed past his own shoulder.

A scream came from his trembling lips. Before him, Grewson saw the enemy of all gangdom the being of whom he had heard The Shadow.

Tall, sinister and unyielding, The Shadow surveyed the shrinking gangster with burning, brilliant eyes. Beads of sweat glowed on Grewson's paling forehead. The man understood Larry Ricordo's admonition now the reason why a quick departure had been urged.

The Shadow was the one whom Ricordo had expected here to-night! He had known that this terrible being would come to the room of doom. Grewson realized the consequences of his delay, but all too late.

Surprised beside the dying form of the man whose death he had furthered, Grewson stood openly condemned as the tool in the plot against Thomas Jocelyn. He had guided the hand of death; now he had met the avenger of death.

Helpless before the tall black-garbed being that threatened him, Grewson crouched upon the floor a murderer in the power of The Shadow.

CHAPTER XVI. THE DEATH THAT LURKED

TOTALLY unnerved by the terror which now confronted him, Grewson stared upward into the blazing eyes of The Shadow. The master of darkness stood with folded arms. His brilliant gaze seemed to pierce the pitiful coward who crouched before him.

At last, the inscrutable eyes raised slightly and looked toward the bed against the wall, where Thomas Jocelyn, his breath coming in long, heavy sighs, was slowly coughing out his miserable life. Grewson, momentarily released from the stern gaze of The Shadow, rose slowly, as though to spring upon his enemy.

One folded arm moved. A black-gloved hand swung promptly into view. It clutched a huge automatic. Staring into the wide, round muzzle of the powerful weapon, Grewson quailed and sank back toward the floor.

Slowly, The Shadow approached. Instinctively, Grewson retreated with crawling pace. At last, the gangster crouched beside the foot of the bed. The Shadow, standing above him, surveyed his pitiful prisoner.

"Speak." The Shadow's words came in an ominous whisper. "What part have you performed in this crime!"

The sentence was a command, not a query. Grewson, trapped, could give no answer other than the right one.

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"I gave Jocelyn the poison," the gangster admitted, in broken tones. "It came in bottles and I mixed it in the glass the glass which Jocelyn broke."

"Who gave you the liquids?"

Grewson cringed at the sound of The Shadow's sardonic voice. He tried to restrain his answer, but failed. He could not struggle against the terror cast by The Shadow.

"I got it" the man's voice broke "got it from from Larry Ricordo."

"When?"

"A couple of days ago. He called me to-night on the telephone to tell me to use it."

"Where is Ricordo now?"

"I don't know. That's straight! He hadn't told me anything I don't even know why he wanted Jocelyn bumped off –"

The Shadow's gaze turned toward the pitiful figure on the bed; still, the menacing automatic covered Grewson. Thomas Jocelyn, his face deathly white, was staring toward The Shadow. He had recognized the form in black. Amid his long, sweeping sighs, his moving lips were trying to speak.

IT was plain that Jocelyn intended to convey facts that Grewson could not give; to reveal the purpose of those who had brought him to this plight. The effort seemed futile, for the motion of the dying man's lips brought nothing but wavering echoes to his sighs.

With hawkish gaze, The Shadow watched for any sign that might reveal the financier's thoughts. Slowly, the black-hatted head began to incline, then suddenly it turned. The Shadow's eyes glared once more in Grewson's direction. They saw the cringing gangster starting to rise.

Instinctively, Grewson slumped back to the floor. At the point of the automatic, he pleadingly blurted the reason for his action.

"The bulls are coming!" he groaned. "Jocelyn got at the telephone. The operator turned in the call."

A ray of hope kindled in the crook's eyes. He thought that this bit of important information might alarm The Shadow or else cause the weird avenger to soften. The Shadow's derisive, reverberating laugh was the answer that only brought new dread to Grewson. The bold visitant had no fear of the police.

Nevertheless, Grewson's words did inspire The Shadow to swifter action. Once again, the black-clad watcher noted Thomas Jocelyn. The dying financier was living only by virtue of tremendous gulps. With wide-open mouth, Jocelyn took in a breath, then expelled it with his peculiar, wheezy sigh, in one long exhalation. The action was repeated. Again, still again.

Those powerless lips could not frame words; but perhaps, in those long sighs could be heard a coughed utterance. To listen closely, one would have to lean close to the mouth of the dying man. To perform that action, The Shadow would be forced to cease his vigilance with Grewson.

The sparkle of The Shadow's eyes showed that this thought was within The Shadow's mind. A glance at Grewson told The Shadow that the cowered gangster would no longer be a factor, even though given

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opportunity. But that pause caused a new light, as The Shadow surveyed Thomas Jocelyn.

The prolonged, mechanical breathing of the financier had become a continued monotone.

Why did it persist? Why had not the potion which had produced this result taken its toll of life? There was something ominous in Jocelyn's lingering death.

The Shadow drew away from the bedside. He turned to Grewson. The automatic in the black-gloved fist described a slow arc from the gangster toward the dying financier. The voice of The Shadow spoke a stern command.

"This is your work," declared The Shadow solemnly. "Now you shall make amends. Jocelyn is trying to speak. Learn what he has to say. Tell me every word."

Grewson nodded. He knew that his only hope was to obey The Shadow's bidding. The police were coming. The one chance of escape lay in quickening this scene.

Grewson sensed that Jocelyn knew vital facts concerning Larry Ricordo. By learning them and repeating them to The Shadow, Grewson might curry favor with his captor.

The Shadow, in turn, had solved the problem of watching Grewson while Jocelyn tried to speak.

As Grewson half arose and crouched toward the head of the bed, his body came directly in front of the blackclad master. Grewson was to listen while The Shadow covered him.

Still, The Shadow could glimpse Jocelyn's upturned eyes. The financier was looking toward The Shadow with a pleading expression in those optics. It was evident that he had heard all that The Shadow had said.

"Tell what you can."

The Shadow's whispered words were addressed to Jocelyn. The dying man understood. As Grewson leaned above him, Jocelyn imbibed a long draft of air. Grewson's face was close to that of the man whom he had so treacherously served. With head half turned, the gangster listened.

Thomas Jocelyn gave an incoherent gargle as he expelled a long, sighing breath. Grewson could not make out the word; that was impossible. The poison had done its work too well. The fetid odor of the sigh filled Grewson's nostrils.

Again, Jocelyn breathed inward; once more came the throat rattle, accompanied by reeking breath. Grewson was leaning closer to the dying man. The gangster's head was swaying slightly.

Thomas Jocelyn made another effort. The intake of air was followed by a long exhalation, a sign that Jocelyn had tried, with all his remaining strength, to speak. Grewson's head moved from side to side. The gangster's fingers clawed feebly at the bedspread.

The dying man was seeking to deliver another effort. Before he succeeded, Grewson's fingers lost their hold. The gangster's body tumbled to the floor and rolled over on its back. Grewson's eyes gazed upward in a glassy stare.

The Shadow stood like a statue. His keen eyes studied the weird result that had occurred. Thomas Jocelyn was breathing on, with long, wheezy sighs. Life still was lingering within his frame. But Grewson, the

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treacherous servant, had succumbed to a more sudden fate.

Grewson was dead!

THE SHADOW'S laugh echoed eerily through the room. There was no mockery in its sound. It was a laugh of understanding. The secret of Thomas Jocelyn's peculiar breathing was apparent to The Shadow now.

Death lurked in every exhalation that came from the dying financier's lips!

The chemical compound that Jocelyn had taken, was, itself, a death trap for whomever might approach the victim!

An effervescent fluid, caused by a strange, secret mixture, had poisoned Thomas Jocelyn and had paralyzed his limbs. It had destined him to a lingering death, a long, continued spasm during which he could only breathe with great and constant effort.

With each gasp, Jocelyn breathed out the fumes of a poisonous vapor. He, a dying man, had been transformed into a potential killer!

Only by amazing intuition, only through his capture of Grewson and his orders to the gangster, had The Shadow evaded the most fiendish of Professor Folcroft Ulrich's snares.

Silent death! It had awaited The Shadow surely to-night; yet silent death had failed again. Grewson, the man who had administered the fatal potion to Thomas Jocelyn, had gone to a deserved doom slain by the breath of the man whose death he had assured!

Grewson lay dead upon the floor. Thomas Jocelyn still breathed his sighing, dying gasps. The death that lurked had gained an unintended victim.

Grimly, The Shadow laughed.

CHAPTER XVII. THE LAST WORDS

HORROR had no effect upon The Shadow. The tragedy which had befallen Grewson did not deter the black-garbed observer from his single purpose. Grewson's death was merely the test that proved the presence of insidious death designed by a fiend.

More than that, it told The Shadow a fact that he already suspected; that a mind much greater than Larry Ricardo's lay in back of this subtle crime. The hand of Professor Folcroft Ulrich had left its mark before; but never so graphically as upon this occasion.

Through Thomas Jocelyn, perhaps, could be found a clew to the potent murderer. Still breathing forth his fetid breath of doom, the financier lived on. The prolonged state of his agony was further proof of a scheming master mind.

The death potion had been devised to produce a long-lingering condition. Many minutes had passed since the dose was administered; more than time enough for an investigator to have come and died from Jocelyn's exhalations.

The Shadow, however, was not deterred by thoughts of the fate which he had so narrowly escaped. His keen brain was devising a means whereby he could learn what Jocelyn had tried to say. One word was all that The

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Shadow sought: the name of the supercriminal who dealt in silent death.

Jocelyn could not utter it; that seemed plain now. It was impossible to avoid death if one leaned close to the dying financier.

The Shadow's gloved hand, extended to Jocelyn's face, felt the trembling lips and learned that they could not frame a motion which might be understood and interpreted.

There was still one opportunity. Jocelyn's eyes were open and staring with a vivid glare. The man could hear. He would listen to any instructions that might enable him to throw his last effort against the fiend who had brought him to this horrible fate.

Slowly, in quiet, whispered tones, The Shadow spoke to the dying man. Jocelyn watched the form above him. The financier's eyes glistened as his ears gained the significance of The Shadow's plans.

"You must name the one who caused this," declared The Shadow solemnly. "Letter by letter, I shall seek his name. Indicate, with all your strength, the letters that tell it."

BREATHING in long heaves, Jocelyn watched and listened. The Shadow's ominous voice droned the letters of the alphabet. One by one they came until the letter "U."

At that point, a change occurred in Jocelyn's expression. With all his might, the dying man did his best to prove that The Shadow had reached the important letter. The glow and barely visible motion that showed in the financier's eyes caused The Shadow to stop.

Without hesitation, the black-cloaked watcher began another intonation of the alphabet. Jocelyn, stiff as a corpse, still heard and watched with glaring eyes. His effort, this time came upon the letter "R."

The third recital by The Shadow ended with the letter "L." Once again, The Shadow noted Thomas Jocelyn's supreme effort to aid in the gaining of the name.

"A" The Shadow's whisper came slowly "B C –"

A noise sounded from the front door of the apartment. Some one was pounding there. The Shadow did not stir. His voice kept on its low drone:

"– D E F –"

Men were crashing at the barrier. The Shadow watched Jocelyn's eyes with steady, focused gaze. His voice recited the letter "I." The sign came from Jocelyn.

"A B C –" The Shadow stopped on the third letter. He had gained another signal. Pandemonium was breaking from without. The door was yielding to crashing blows. With total disregard for the attack, The Shadow began a new series of letters.

"H." As The Shadow named that letter, Jocelyn's eyes glimmered with dying frenzy. The Shadow stood with folded arms, oblivious to the fact that voices were sounding through the half-broken outer door.

"Urlich," announced The Shadow.

Jocelyn's intake of breath paused. The financier emitted a tremendous gasp. His eyes were fixed in a hypnotic

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stare. The man was at the verge of death; but the mention of that name gave him a last burst of strength.

"Urlich," repeated The Shadow. "I know his name. I shall meet him soon!"

The outer door came down with a terrific, loud smash. Hoarse shouts resounded as men tumbled into the apartment. The commanding voice of Joe Cardona sounded above them.

"Hold it, men! Hold it! There may be some one in that inner room!"

The Shadow's eyes were still upon Thomas Jocelyn. The dying financier no longer moved. His whole form was rigid, as though petrified by the final effort of hatred. A hissing sound sizzled through those drawn lips. The face now dead, was ghastly.

Thomas Jocelyn's prolonged strain had brought a sudden end to his sighing death. No longer did he exhale fumes that menaced all who might approach. The venomous potion's power was exhausted.

The Shadow's cloak swished, and its spreading folds revealed a crimson lining. With swift stride The Shadow was turning toward a door at the end of the room. He reached it while the detectives were approaching from the outer room.

The door closed behind The Shadow's departing form. Moving through the darkness of a smaller room, The Shadow gained a window that opened into a courtyard. A few moments later, a weird, phantom form was moving slowly down the wall of the building.

IN the meantime, a squad of men suddenly burst into the lighted room where the two dead bodies lay. Detective Joe Cardona, his swarthy face grim and his sharp eyes moving quickly, surveyed the inert forms of Thomas Jocelyn and the pretended servant, Grewson. Cardona saw that they were dead.

"Try that door over there," he ordered.

Two detectives followed the direction that The Shadow had taken. They reported that the next room was empty. Cardona ordered a thorough search.

While his men were busy, he studied the bodies more carefully. Swift, silent death had struck here to-night.

While Cardona was awaiting the arrival of the police surgeon, another officer suddenly appeared at the door of the room. It was Detective Sergeant Mayhew. Cardona saw that the man was bringing important news.

"Gawky Tyson has been killed!" announced Mayhew. "They ganged him down at Red Mike's!"

"Yes?" questioned Cardona. "Why?"

"Some one passed the tip that he was a stool pigeon. That was the end of him. The killers made a get-away. Not much chance of trailing them. But listen, Joe I found out something important. Larry Ricordo was there tonight."

"At Red Mike's?"

"Yes. Red Mike admitted it. Says that Ricordo talked over the telephone and –"

"That proves it!" interposed Cardona. "It proves my hunch, Mayhew. When word came down to headquarters

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that there was trouble here, I came up to this place myself. I figured Larry Ricordo might be in it.

"Gawky probably got the lay and was going to tip us off, like he did the other night, when he watched Slips Harbeck. Larry Ricordo is in back of this, Mayhew. It's murder this time; double murder!"

Cardona picked up the telephone and called Inspector Timothy Klein. The detective was anxious to release all possible mechanisms that would aid the law in a widespread effort to capture Larry Ricordo. Through radio patrol, the order would go out to arrest all suspects who might prove to be the wanted gang leader.

THE arrival of the police surgeon brought new food for thought. The appearance of the dead men was perplexing to the physician. He pointed to the bodies as he gave the detective a temporary explanation.

"This one" the surgeon indicated Grewson "appears to have succumbed quickly to the effects of some poison fumes. The other" the doctor motioned toward Jocelyn "was given poison in a liquid state. His death was prolonged. He must have been alive up to the time you entered."

Joe Cardona stared at the pitiful form of Thomas Jocelyn. He noted the sealed lips thin and drawn in death.

What could those lips have said? What could Jocelyn have known?

Cardona regretted that he had not arrived in time to question the dying man. Little did the ace detective realize that had he been there to make such a quiz, it would have meant his own demise!

The glassy eyes of the dead financier were toward the ceiling. Their vacant stare was eloquent. They showed the traces of a fury that made Cardona continue to wish that he could have heard Jocelyn's last words. That was impossible now. No one had heard them, Cardona decided.

The detective was correct in his assumption; but as he studied Jocelyn's lips again, he forgot the dead man's eyes. Cardona did not realize that where lips had been futile, eyes had managed. Cardona would have been amazed had he known that Jocelyn's eyes had aided in the delivery of a final message.

Larry Ricordo! The gang leader was the man that Joe Cardona wanted. The detective's thought did not go beyond; Cardona had not yet reached the stage of searching for a supermind higher than Ricordo.

Such consideration had been undertaken only by The Shadow. He was the one who had looked beyond Larry Ricordo. The Shadow, ignoring Jocelyn's dying words, incoherently gasped amid exhalations of deadly fumes, had gained the name he sought.

The Shadow was gone, with no trace of his mysterious presence behind him. The Shadow had seen both Grewson and Jocelyn die. The Shadow had learned of Professor Folcroft Urlich, through the single name which he had gleaned from Thomas Jocelyn.

The master of darkness had departed, to wage combat with the master of silent death.

The Shadow knew!

CHAPTER XVIII. IN THE LABORATORY

Two men lay huddled at the side of Professor Urlich's laboratory. Propped against the wall, their hands bound behind them, Cliff Marsland and Clyde Burke stared wearily at the scientist and the gang leader who stood beside him.

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Both of The Shadow's agents had taken hard bumps in their encounter with Larry Ricordo's gorillas. Clyde Burke, in particular, showed signs of genuine grogginess. Cliff had been overpowered by a swift attack; Clyde had gone down from a single sharp blow.

It was Clyde's condition that gave Cliff Marsland a cue. Knowing that his companion was actually in a state of inertia, Cliff feigned the same condition. Thus both were able to avoid some of the questions that Larry Ricordo was pumping at them: questions which pertained to the activities of The Shadow.

Clyde Burke's presence at the spot where Cliff Marsland had been taken was not merely coincidence. The Shadow had foreseen the possibility of some one following Cliff when he left Red Mike's. Through Rutledge Mann, Clyde had been instructed to remain in the vicinity of the place where Cliff put in his regular phone calls.

As a reporter who handled crime news, Clyde Burke made frequent excursions into the bad lands. His duty had been a simple one; failure had occurred partly through his own lack of vigilance and partly through a surprising display of stealth on the side of Ricordo's mobsters.

Now was no time for regret. The present objective Cliff was the one who saw it clearly was to avoid all troublesome questions. Thus Larry Ricordo's ugly threats and his imprecations, directed chiefly at Cliff, brought nothing more than indifference and evasion.

"So you're The Shadow's stool, eh?" queried Ricordo. "What about this other mug your buddy who carries a reporter's card. What was he doing when we grabbed you?"

Cliff Marsland half opened his eyes and shrugged his shoulders. No reply was the best way to deal with Ricordo's questions. The gang leader spat a series of oaths, and swung to face Professor Ulrich.

"See what you can get out of him!" growled Ricordo. "You wanted me to bring him here. Maybe you can make him squawk!"

"There is no need for haste," returned the scientist, with a calm, evil smile. "As a matter of fact, Ricordo, questioning is hardly necessary."

"Why not?"

"We may consider two assumptions," remarked the professor, in tones that came coldly to Cliff Marsland's ears. "One: that these men can give us no information of consequence. Two: that if either of them does know facts, they will give them voluntarily, under proper treatment.

"If they know nothing, they are useless. Therefore, it would be best to destroy them. If they know something, they will cry it forth as the only hope of life when they see the fate that is planned for them."

Professor Ulrich's gleaming smile widened in wicked proportions.

HIS statements worried Cliff Marsland. The Shadow's agent realized that he and his fellow prisoner were being classified as biological specimens suitable for some experiment. Cliff sensed a terrible menace ahead.

"Furthermore," added Professor Ulrich, "I am confident that there has been no failure in the plan which I devised for to-night. At this present minute, Thomas Jocelyn is probably dead; and The Shadow with him.

"In fact, I am so positive of my success that I see no reason why I should not destroy these trouble-makers

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without further delay. Nevertheless, I enjoy experimental killing. The time may come when I shall choose to make dying men talk. If I can produce such result with these victims, I shall add another page to my book of scientific research."

"It's up to you, professor," grinned Ricordo. "You're the guy that can do it."

"Human life," remarked the professor, staring toward Cliff Marsland as he spoke, "means nothing to me. I have equipped this laboratory for the purpose of experimenting with such life.

"When persons block my path, when the human element seems dangerous to my plans, removal is the one solution. You realized that" Ulrich had turned, and was speaking to Ricordo "when I sacrificed Thomas Jocelyn. In my first important experiment, The Shadow intervened. After that, I twice led him on a blind trail. To-night, however, I felt that the original course would be best.

"The Shadow leaned above Alfred Sartain that night in the penthouse studio. I am confident that he must have leaned above Thomas Jocelyn tonight. You know the answer, Ricordo. I was removing Jocelyn, because he had become dangerous. Jocelyn was breathing death. Thus I arranged for one victim to take another with him."

"A great stunt, professor," commented Ricordo. "I don't see how The Shadow could have slipped out of it. Grewson had a soft job. Maybe you've got it all O.K. But how are you going to get rid of this pair of mugs we've got here?"

"Very simply," said the professor. "Here in this laboratory. There will be no trace of death, Ricordo. No trace whatever."

"Just one thing," remarked Ricordo. "What are you going to do about the big plans, now that Jocelyn is finished?"

"I still deal silent death," replied Ulrich coldly. "It will be simple to gain the assistance of another financier. Leave that to me, Ricordo."

"With The Shadow blotted out," said the gang leader, "we can start right where we quit. There's only one thing, professor I'll have to lay low for a while."

"Yes? Why?"

"Well, the coppers have still got Slips Harbeck. He may squeal. That's bad enough. But I made it lots worse tonight, going into Red Mike's. I didn't think there'd be such a big mob there. It's all around by now that Larry Ricordo is back in town."

"Ah!" Professor Ulrich pondered long. "That is unfortunate, Ricordo. It will temporarily deprive me of your useful services. Perhaps it will mean a long period of inactivity."

"It probably will, professor. I can hang out here –"

"That is hardly wise, since a matter of many weeks is involved. It would be better, Ricordo, for you to actually leave town."

"The sooner the better, professor."

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"Yes?"

"Sure. The bulls may already be out to spot me. If I scam in a hurry, they'll still keep looking, and they won't find me."

"Where would you go?"

"West. Chicago. Maybe Milwaukee."

"Go upstairs to my office," suggested Professor Urlich. "You will find a railway schedule there. It is not quite midnight. Find out if a train is still available to-night."

LARRY RICORDO headed for the spiral stairway. Professor Urlich stood in deep thought. Cliff Marsland, watching him, saw a shrewd, wicked gleam appear upon the scientist's face. Cliff wondered what thoughts were passing within that evil brain which evolved its schemes of death.

Larry Ricordo returned. He announced that a Limited was leaving at one o'clock. Professor Folcroft Urlich nodded.

"Take that train," he said. "But be careful. Go by subway to the Grand Central Station. It would be best to enter the terminal by the Lexington Avenue side."

"Don't worry about me," grinned Ricordo. "That's just the way I will go in; and there's no smart dicks going to spot me, even if they do have the word out to grab me."

"We must always consider the element of uncertainty," responded the scientist. "It would be unfortunate, Ricordo, should you fall into the hands of the police."

"Listen, professor" Ricordo's tones were harsh "I pack this gat. See it?" The gang leader produced a large revolver as he spoke. "While I'm on the subway, while I'm going into the station, while I'm on the train all that time I'll have my mitt on this smoke wagon. If any dumb bull tries to get me, I'll give him the works."

"And then –"

"I can duck out plenty quick. I've done it before. Don't forget that."

"But if you should be outnumbered surrounded –"

"They'd never get me, professor. I'd shoot my way through them. Even if I did get plugged, I'd keep blazing. They'll never take Larry Ricordo alive! That's certain."

There was a positive tone in the ganglord's growl. Professor Folcroft Urlich smiled in a pleased manner.

"Excellent, Ricordo," he said. "I feel sure, now, that your departure will be wise. Come. I shall accompany you downstairs. You have just the right amount of time to reach the Grand Central."

Leaving Cliff Marsland and Clyde Burke still helpless upon the floor, Urlich went with Ricordo to the ground floor. Together, the two men circled the outer corridor. Ricordo had little thought of the death machine tonight. This zone of danger meant nothing when Professor Urlich trod it with him.

After Ricordo had departed, Professor Urlich returned to the laboratory. His first action was to glance at the

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row of lights that were placed above the spiral stairway.

Those lights indicated the three zones below: red for the outer portico; green for the inner corridor; white for the balcony about the pit that housed the grim machine of death.

Those lights corresponded with a similar row upon the machine itself. Connected by wires of low, harmless amperage, they served as signals. Here, in his laboratory, Professor Urlich could learn the approach of an intruder in time to reach the powerful electric device that lay below.

The lights were all out, at present; the absence of the red gleam showed that Larry Ricordo had departed from the portico where Professor Urlich had left him.

The scientist smiled. He emitted a low call. His two solemn-faced assistants, Sanoja and Rasch, appeared.

The scientist spoke to each man in turn. The assistants nodded and went to appointed tasks. Cliff watched them. He noticed that one kept his eyes upon the lights, while the other was keeping close tabs upon Cliff and Clyde.

Professor Urlich stalked across the floor of the laboratory. The room was illuminated only in spots, with darkness toward the back of the building. Professor Urlich, however, did not again continue toward the staircase that led downward. Instead, he ascended the spiral to the third floor.

The scientist entered the little office a few moments later. Seated at his desk, he became immersed in thought. His evil lips began to mutter words that were barely audible.

"The Shadow!" Urlich's murmur was scornful. "Bah! He has been ended to-night unless" the scientist's shoulders shrugged "unless But what of it? I do not fear him. Let him come he is only one. But the police they are many –"

A pause; then Urlich muttered two names, repeating the second one several times:

"Jocelyn Ricordo Ricordo Ricordo –"

FIENDISHLY, the scientist smiled. His evil brain was reverting to the past, to his statements regarding the uselessness of those who blocked his path. He was considering Larry Ricordo as he had considered Thomas Jocelyn.

Men of different caliber; yet men who both were pieces in the game that Professor Urlich played. He had chosen both of them by a process of selection. He had considered a suitable replacement for each, should occasion demand it.

Professor Urlich was thinking of his own strength; the security which he possessed in this isolated building. Little of his work was known to the world. If it were, what could matter? Urlich was a scientist; his laboratory was filled with the beginnings of useful inventions and beneficial experiments blinds that would surely cover all devices of death.

Thomas Jocelyn had become a menace, for Jocelyn, his usefulness ended, had known too much. Jocelyn had been eliminated, serving as a snare of silent death for The Shadow.

Larry Ricordo remained. He, too, was a menace to security, for his usefulness had ended, and he knew far more than Jocelyn had known.

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Professor Urlich had brought Ricardo here only because necessity had compelled it. He had sent the gang leader away because that had been the only alternative.

But in his shrewd brain at the time when Cliff Marsland had noted the scientist's expression of evil Folcroft Urlich had considered another course.

Those questions to Larry Ricardo had been well designed. The gang lord's replies had sponsored Urlich's new decision. The scientist picked up the telephone upon his table. He smiled as he realized that a call from this blind line would be untraceable.

A few minutes later, a voice sounded through the receiver. Professor Folcroft Urlich smiled. He responded, in a low, steady tone.

"Hello," he said. "Detective headquarters?... Very well. I wish to speak with Detective Cardona –"

CHAPTER XIX. ZONES OF DEATH

DARKNESS enshrouded the circular edifice that housed Professor Folcroft Urlich and his devices of death. Only a slight glow came from the skylights above the circling outside roof of the second-story laboratory.

None could see into that strange room, whither the scientist had now returned. Even from above, the frosted windows blocked all prying eyes, should any have existed in the sky above. Huge, bulky barriers, those skylights were as firm as a solid roof.

The third floor now was dark; and it showed dimly as the top tier of the circular pyramid. There were windows there: one, in the scientist's office, was the opening through which Larry Ricardo had sometimes stared at the gloomy mansion which hid the circular structure from the outside world.

A tiny light glimmered amid darkness. It shone within the recesses of the old mansion. Its rays disappeared. Something swished as an invisible figure crossed the space between the mansion and the circular building.

When the tiny, disklike ray again appeared, it was close beside the outer portico of the queer edifice. Its gleam moved blinking through the darkness. The Shadow was circling Professor Urlich's domain.

After a complete, stealthy tour of inspection, the flashing light stopped near the front of the building. Its rays shone upon the double door that barred entrance. The light ran along the base of the portico, and shone on plates of metal.

Probing beams searched the space beneath the extending roof and flashed upon metal strips, placed beneath the sheltering projection.

A low, soft laugh came from hidden lips. An eerie whisper seemed to float through the spaces of the portico the iron-posted cloister which The Shadow had not entered. The light went out. The Shadow, completely veiled by darkness, knew that some trap awaited any who might enter that inviting shelter.

What was the menace? That, The Shadow intended to learn.

Guided by amazing intuition, warned by his knowledge of the master plotter's power, the phantom of the night cautiously avoided the luring trap.

Another investigator would surely have advanced to the wall within the portico; would surely have gone to

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examine the double door that afforded entrance to the building. The Shadow did not do so.

Instead, the weird visitor withdrew a dozen paces from the building. With keen eyes, The Shadow studied the dim projection of the portico roof.

That outer rim was approximately ten feet above the ground; perhaps a trifle less. The Shadow's perceiving gaze picked a spot midway between two iron posts.

A rapid stride; a series of long, swift steps: The Shadow sprang upward with a mighty leap. His powerful hands caught the projecting edge of the portico roof. The black cloak swished as The Shadow's form swung back and forth like a pendulum.

Had the grasp failed, The Shadow would have landed upon the metal flooring of the portico. Instead, he dangled from a spot that was free from the signal-equipped zone.

The Shadow's form moved upward as the powerful hands retained their hold. Gradually, The Shadow gained the roof above the portico.

A LOW, circular wall lay ahead a rising circle that indicated the top of the first story. The Shadow raised himself above that tier, and continued to a higher surface the outer wall of the laboratory floor.

The tall shape worked its way up this obstacle. The fingers within the black gloves clutched the top. A few moments later, the form of The Shadow was silhouetted by the glow that came through the skylights. The master of darkness was poised upon the edge of the second roof.

To reach the third floor its walls looming with darkened windows, The Shadow must cross the wide space that held the skylights. There were heavy braces in between; yet they were hardly broad enough to allow the passage of a form without a betraying patch of darkness.

This offered small worry to so weird a prowler as The Shadow; nevertheless, it caused the black-garbed visitor to pause in search of an alternative.

A low laugh was scarcely audible. The Shadow had found a plan. With catlike stride, balanced upon the very edge of the circular roof, The Shadow began to travel around the building.

His objective was a break in that series of skylights. One blocked sheet of glass was all that he needed. It was at the rear of the building that The Shadow found the spot he wanted. There, a metal-sheeted space appeared in place of a skylight.

The Shadow paused. There was no haste in his action. He had come here directly from the episode at Thomas Jocelyn's. It had required but short investigation to learn that a Professor Folcroft Urlich lived at this spot on Long Island. The uncommonness of the name had enabled The Shadow to choose the logical destination.

In one brief call to Burbank, The Shadow had gained no knowledge of Cliff Marsland's disappearance. In his report, Cliff had assured Burbank that all was well. He had been ordered off duty. Hence The Shadow had yet to learn that two of his henchmen lay prisoners within these walls.

Clyde Burke, instead of watching and informing Burbank of Cliff Marsland's capture, had also bungled. His precipitous attack had been an impulse.

Soon, Burbank would know that ill had befallen Clyde Burke, because of the agent's failure to report. But

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when would Burbank again gain communication with The Shadow?

It seemed to matter nothing at this moment; for The Shadow was at the den of the monster who had captured his men. Straight ahead lay a path to those third-story windows; from there, the course lay down the spiral into the laboratory. The Shadow was a rescuer at hand!

THEN, a chance discovery by The Shadow changed all course of action. The metal-sheathed frame which broke the row of skylights trembled slightly beneath the pressure of The Shadow's touch. The black-clad form moved slowly backward. Firm hands worked with the barrier. They found it loose.

A blocking slab with weakened fastenings. This could be turned to good use by The Shadow! It formed a new and unexpected mode of entry into the second story of the circular building. Handling the sheathed portion of roof as though it were a trapdoor, The Shadow slowly pried it upward.

Powerful strength, applied with superb skill, caused the barrier to yield noiselessly. An opening gained, The Shadow lay along the edge of the roof and peered into the space beneath.

The tiny rays of the flashlight broke the darkness. The Shadow was gazing down at the spiral staircase within the hollow cylinder the route that led from the laboratory to the floor below.

The barrier raised still farther. The lithe form of The Shadow slipped through the space, and dropped noiselessly to the spiral staircase. The flashlight glimmered toward the door that led into the laboratory the door at the head of the stairs.

Before entering that room, The Shadow had another purpose. His object was to explore the downward path; to gain full knowledge of this stairway's purpose.

With the light beaming upon each succeeding step, The Shadow continued toward the ground. He stopped as he discovered the sliding door on the floor below. A brief inspection enabled him to open it.

The Shadow peered into the dim circular corridor that followed the interior contour of the first floor. The Shadow closed the door as he noted the metal flooring of the corridor.

The steps still led downward. The Shadow reached the bottom. He found the final door and opened it. His discerning eyes beheld the dim, high-vaulted pit. They studied the huge, glittering machine that stood in the center of this great chamber. The Shadow looked toward the balcony that surrounded the pit.

A hollow laugh, chilling in its vague tones, sounded through the silence of that deserted room. The broken air waves caught the echoes which reverberated with a demoniacal cry from the walls where the balcony circled.

The Shadow's gaze turned toward the metal floor. Here was the same danger that he had sensed before. Then the master's eye perceived the row of unlighted incandescents upon the huge machine. Red, green, and white, those bulbs had differing significance.

The portico the inner passage finally the balcony. Did The Shadow recognize those circles as the danger zones? The Shadow's action was the only answer.

With firm stride, the tall figure moved from the cylinder that housed the spiral staircase. He crossed the pit and stood beside Professor Ulrich's massive contrivance of human destruction.

Again, The Shadow's weird laugh shuddered through the pit. Not one of those three bulbs was illuminated.

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The Shadow knew that he had passed the zones of death.

Mysteriously, he lingered beside the huge machine, his gaze turning from the wheels and levers down toward the floor, where the current wire appeared.

Within the zones of death, The Shadow laughed. His hollow mockery was foreboding. Yet he made no move to return toward the hollow cylinder. He seemed to regard this place as the destination which he had sought as the end of the trail.

On the floor above, Professor Folcroft Ulrich still held The Shadow's agents captive. While the master of darkness remained below, the master of silent death was planning the doom of The Shadow's aids.

Who held the balance: Professor Ulrich or The Shadow? Were their cross-purposes to meet before the victims died?

The scales of fate were trembling, while master minds prepared their methods.

CHAPTER XX. CARDONA ENTERS

WHILE strange events were occurring on Long Island, Larry Ricordo was making all haste toward Manhattan. The gang lord, fleeing town at Professor Ulrich's request, had neared his destination. He was mounting the steps from the East Side subway at Forty-second Street.

As a natural procedure, Larry Ricordo turned up Lexington Avenue to enter the Grand Central Station from the east. It was scarcely later than half past twelve. Plenty of time remained to catch the Chicago Limited.

Larry Ricordo seldom liked haste when it was unnecessary. As he moved leisurely through the midnight crowd along the avenue, his lips twisted scornfully. Even if the police were out to capture him, they stood little chance of getting him now.

Nevertheless, Larry Ricordo fondled the revolver in his coat pocket. One challenging word: the challenger would get the works. This was the attitude that the gang leader held as he entered the wide passage from the street.

Larry's eyes were keen and cautious. Even in this thronged entrance, the gang lord did not trust entirely to his inconspicuous appearance. He prided himself upon his watchfulness. His boast to Professor Ulrich was still strongly in mind.

The crowd spread as it reached the huge central concourse. Larry Ricordo, as he walked across the great expanse of floor toward a ticket window, was no longer one of a large throng. He was in the open – a single figure that could easily be spotted by watching eyes.

A man swung from the wall and walked swiftly after the gang leader. Larry Ricordo was not aware of the man's approach until the stranger was close beside him. It was then that Larry turned to recognize a face that seemed familiar.

The man made a sudden leap upon the gang lord. That action meant more than recognition. Larry Ricordo knew his assailant for a detective. Wrestling free, Ricordo whipped his big revolver from his pocket.

Another man had sprung up behind the gang leader. The second detective made a quick grab for Ricordo's arm. Larry fired once, his shot aimed upward as a hand seized his wrist. The detectives were flashing their

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own guns. Two more men were springing to their rescue.

Shouts of men; screams of women these were heard as people scattered for shelter.

LARRY RICORDO'S revolver roared again. A detective went down with a bullet in his shoulder. The others struggled ferociously. They were trying to get their man alive, to prevent gunfire in this open space, where hundreds of people stood in danger of stray shots.

But Larry Ricordo was a fiend who balked all capture. He sent one detective sprawling on the floor; another after him. One of the downed men fired upward and missed. Larry, an evil snarl on his lips, dropped the fourth, who still struggled with him.

Spinning across the floor of the concourse, the murderous gang leader leaped to meet a fifth, who blocked his path. He swung his huge revolver to deliver a death shot. This time the gang lord failed.

The last antagonist did not falter. His revolver was in his hand, and before Larry could shoot to kill, this detective fired point-blank into Ricordo's body.

The gang leader staggered on; a second shot, delivered coolly at close range, sent him sprawling to the floor.

Rolling upon his back, clutching at his wounded side, Larry Ricordo saw the face of Joe Cardona above him. The ace detective had stepped in where the others had failed. It was the swarthy sleuth who had finally felled Larry Ricordo.

With futile clutch, Ricordo grasped for his revolver, which had fallen beside him. True to his boast, the gang leader intended to go out fighting. His weakening fingers fumbled; a moment later, Cardona had kicked the weapon out of reach.

Detectives came to aid Cardona. Other persons rushed up to help the wounded men whom Ricordo had dropped. Through it all, Joe Cardona never desisted from a purpose which had steadfastly filled his mind for the past half hour.

There was a reason why he had sought to capture Larry Ricordo alive, rather than dead.

"Ricordo!" Cardona was staring squarely into the gang lord's face. "Ricordo! Who's the guy in back of this!"

Ricordo coughed. Blood appeared upon his lips. An evil leer followed the crimson. Coughing, gasping, Larry Ricordo spat defiant words at his questioner.

"Try try to find out!" he challenged, in a broken snarl. "Try to – to make me squeal. You you got me but that's all!"

Cardona pressed back those who were crowding around. He knew that Ricordo was dying. In the last minutes of life, the gang lord would have to talk. Cardona, acting on a hunch, played his final trump.

"You know why we got you?" he demanded. "I'll tell you why! We were tipped off that you were taking the Chicago Limited. Tipped off half an hour ago. We want the bird who gave the tip-off. Do you know him?"

Ricordo's eyes were glassy. Now they opened wide.

On the verge of death, the gang lord forgot his wounds, forgot his enmity toward the police. All that he could

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sense was the tone of Joe Cardona's words—cold utterances that sounded plainly amid the muffled murmur of the concourse.

LARRY RICORDO forgot the excited cries about him. He could hear only Cardona's voice, repeating the same theme in steady demand:

"We were tipped off. We want to know just where the tip-off came from."

"I'll tell you where!" coughed Ricordo. "I'll tell you where! It came from the guy in back of this game!"

In a spasm of dying fury, the gang leader had gained a tremendous hatred for the man who had betrayed him. Bewildering thoughts were racking Ricordo's brain. Only one man could have played the traitor. That man was Professor Folcroft Urlich.

Why not? The scientist had brutally disposed of Thomas Jocelyn. Similarly, he had decided to get rid of Larry Ricordo. To go out fighting all because of a double-crosser! With failing strength, Ricordo gave the answer that Joe Cardona wanted.

"Urlich!" gasped the gang leader. "Professor Folcroft Urlich! Place on Long Island. Go there. He he is the one—"

"He tipped us off?" questioned Cardona.

"He he must have," blurted Ricordo. "He he told me to scam. Get him out on Long Island place called Philbrook—"

Cardona was nodding. He saw Larry Ricordo close his eyes. The gang leader gasped no longer. But his dying brain responded suddenly to a wild thought. A tremor shook Ricordo's frame as he remembered the death trap which Urlich had prepared for all comers.

"Cardona" Larry's lips snarled as his eyes opened for the final effort. "Look out when you get when you get—"

The effort was too great. Ricordo's twisted lips spat out a dying sigh. The gang leader's body nearly rolled from Cardona's grasp. The detective could feel it go limp. He knew that the final spasm had arrived. Larry Ricordo was dead!

Cardona let others hold the body. He arose to see Mayhew close beside him. Quickly, Cardona ordered the other detective to take charge of Ricordo's removal. A dozen sleuths were here. Cardona growled orders.

Two minutes later, the ace detective was striding from the terminal with a squad of men at his heels. They piled into a waiting car, and Cardona gave the driver quick, tense orders. The car shot from the curb. Shrieking along Lexington Avenue, it turned eastward toward a mammoth bridge that led to Long Island.

Detective Joe Cardona had worked speedily to-night. Less than an hour after Thomas Jocelyn's death, he had received the tip-off concerning Larry Ricordo. Half an hour later, the gang lord had spoken before he died from Cardona's shots. Half an hour from now, Cardona and his men would be at their new objective.

Joe Cardona was on the trail of silent death. He did not know that one had gone before him that The Shadow was already at the spot where such death lurked.

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The ace detective was pleased because he had forced those words from Larry Ricordo's dying lips. He did not know that the gang lord had tried to give a warning also, but had failed!

Cardona and his men were heading for a fiendish trap. Soon they were to know the power of silent death that Folcroft Urlich wielded!

CHAPTER XXI. TUBES OF DOOM

IN Professor Urlich's laboratory, a fiendish plan was nearing its completion. Cliff Marsland and Clyde Burke, still bound beside the wall, were watching preparations that they knew would mean their doom.

All the lights in use within the room had been concentrated on this side of the laboratory, which was near the front of the building. Sanoja and Rasch, the scientist's willing servants, had fitted gleaming incandescents with reflectors so that a vivid glare pervaded this limited field.

Professor Urlich was seated in a folding armchair, with the air of a director in charge of a rehearsal. His orders, barked in foreign tongues that the attendants understood, had brought forth prompt obedience. Yet the forthcoming experiment had required considerable time for preparation.

Cliff Marsland had ceased to feign grogginess. Clyde Burke, beside him, was also fully conscious. Despite the cold terror which Professor Urlich's presence caused, both of The Shadow's agents were strangely fascinated by the details of the work which now seemed completed.

Directly in front of the two men stood a huge tripod, mounted on a circular base. This was a skeleton structure that ran on wheels, and its three legs gave it the grotesque appearance of a lonely gallows. At the top of the tripod were extended arms that supported a rim of metal.

This upper circle supported a huge carboy. The glass vessel, incased in wickerwork, gleamed with greenish hue. Its stopper, which had been inserted in place, was a glass plug from which extended two flexible pieces of shining hose.

As Sanoja pressed a little lever beside the rim that supported the carboy, the large container rocked slightly, showing that it was on a pivot that would enable it to be inverted. Sanoja readjusted the lever and the big vessel ceased to sway.

On either side of the central tripod stood a low skeleton base with upright rods that terminated in rings. There were two of these, both large and massive.

Each pedestal held a container of thick glass, shaped like a mammoth test tube. Neither of the prisoners had ever before seen such tremendous cylinders of glass. The tubes were more than eight feet in height, and more than two feet in diameter.

As final preparation, Urlich's men had brought forward two caps of metal large enough to fit over the large tubes. They had attached a hose to each cap. Professor Urlich cackled joyously as a signal that everything was ready.

CLIFF MARSLAND studied the face of the fiend. A demoniacal glee illuminated Urlich's features. The scientist had watched the work of his servants with increasing interest.

In spite of that fact, Cliff had noticed that the professor never failed to note the three unlighted incandescents that projected above the spiral stairway at the center of the laboratory. Those bulbs were scarcely visible in

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the darkness beyond the concentrated illumination; but had one suddenly commenced to gleam, the professor would have spied it on the instant.

"We are ready, now," remarked Professor Ulrich, his eyes focused upon the silent prisoners. "Inasmuch as you are to be the subjects of my experiment, I shall explain its operation to you."

He beckoned to Rasch, who appeared with a small tube that contained a tiny white mouse. The servant, a grin on his dull face, held the tube in the light. The prisoners noted that it was capped with a metal cover that had a round hole in the center.

Professor Ulrich babbled in a foreign language. Sanoja passed a glass bottle to Rasch. The man held the tube in one hand, the bottle in the other, and poured a greenish fluid from bottle into tube.

A sizzling, smoky mixture manifested itself. The green was tinged with white and fumes slowly came from the hole in the cover. Slowly, the liquid cleared.

Simultaneous gasps of amazement came from Cliff and Clyde. The white mouse had vanished. The tube contained nothing but a watery fluid!

"It has always been my wish," proceeded the professor, "to attempt this experiment on a larger scale. The greenish fluid which you observed the same liquid which is in the large carboy is virtually a universal solvent. It has no effect upon glass; but that is about the only substance which it does not dissolve with rapacious power.

"The pieces of hose which project from the carboy are my own invention a flexible material which possess certain properties found in glass. It has been used to withstand the power of the solvent.

"Perhaps it is unkind" Ulrich's eyes were gleaming with irony "to discuss the details of this experiment with my subjects. Perhaps you would prefer to be as the white mouse was: ignorant of what is to come. However, I have already given you a very complete inkling, so I may as well proceed.

"Your lives mean nothing to me. Your deaths, however, would be advisable. In order to leave no evidence of my experiment, I find it most convenient to destroy you as I have done with the mouse.

"These large test tubes were made for such an experiment as this. One tube for each of you. After that, we shall attach these lengths of hose, invert the carboy and let the solvent do its work."

CLYDE BURKE chewed his lips. Cliff Marsland stared steadily ahead. Each man realized now the fiendishness of Professor Ulrich's cunning, scheming mind. More horrible death could scarcely be imagined. To be dissolved, while totally helpless, within a mammoth tube of glass!

Both of The Shadow's agents could feel the terrible sensation of that vitriolic fluid that was to come!

Professor Ulrich cackled wickedly. He saw the consternation on the faces of his intended victims. He was joyed by the thought of the swift, silent death that was to be theirs.

Even more did he relish the cunningness of his scheme. To reduce these living men to nothing but a slimy sediment; then to pour out the remains that could leave no vestige of a clue to the crime that he had perpetrated!

This was death supreme; crime raised to the level of scientific achievement. Professor Ulrich had no desire to

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question his victims. Let them call out for mercy if they would; babble secrets of The Shadow. If their words seemed important, the experiment could be delayed. If not, it would go on.

The Shadow meant little to Professor Urlich now. The very fact that he held one possibly two of The Shadow's agents in his power meant that The Shadow must have died from the fumes of Thomas Jocelyn's sighing death.

Clyde Burke was staring hopelessly at the merciless countenance of the professor. Cliff Marsland was looking beyond, toward the distant rear of the laboratory. His eyes blinked suddenly. Had he seen a motion by what appeared to be a doorway? Had he seen a barrier open; then close?

Was it imagination, or did Cliff catch a glimpse of a moving form that glided along the hazy wall, unseen by any of the others present? The thought, at least, offered a ray of hope.

Cliff heard a nervous gasp from the man beside him. He spoke in an undertone, without moving his lips:

"Steady, Clyde. Steady. Stick it out, old man."

The reporter nodded. The test tubes were swinging forward, on swivels from the tripod pedestals. Professor Urlich's servants approached and lifted Cliff Marsland.

The Shadow's agent offered no resistance. His body slid into the tube; it swiveled upright, and Cliff could see the attendants going to get Clyde Burke. Helpless, he watched them slide the reporter into the other tube.

BOTH containers were upright now. Professor Urlich and his minions seemed grotesque shapes through the curved walls of the tube. Clyde Burke, inspired by Cliff's bravery, was staring at them also. Professor Urlich was pointing toward the caps.

Suddenly, the scientist stopped. He was staring upward toward the row of lights above the central stairway. The red incandescent had become suddenly illuminated.

Some one was within the outer zone of death the portico that surrounded the circular building!

Harsh orders burst from the professor's lips. Sanoja and Rasch nodded as each caught the message intended for him. They were to proceed with the experiment. Their master had other work to do.

Hastily, Professor Urlich crossed the laboratory, and opened the door that led to the hollow cylinder. Rasch brought forward a ladder and mounted it. He stood beside Cliff's tube and motioned to Sanoja to pass him the first cap.

Clyde Burke groaned within the mammoth test tube that held him prisoner. This was the beginning of the end. One cap; then the other; after that death that would be terrible despite its rapidity.

Then, suddenly, Clyde's eyes opened wide. Coming into the realm of concentrated light was a mass of blackness that bore only the grotesque semblance of a human form, when viewed through the curving glass.

Clyde emitted a cry of exultation. It escaped his lips despite his effort to restrain it. The shout caused a hollow echo from the huge test tube. Sanoja turned; so did Rasch. Terrified gasps came from Professor Urlich's henchmen.

Standing before the tubes of death stood a tall figure clad in black. Menacing eyes glared from beneath the

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broad brim of a slouch hat. From the folds of a black cloak extended a gloved hand that held a powerful automatic, ready for action.

Rasch cowered, with upraised hands, as he stood upon the ladder. The metal cap clattered from Sanoja's fists as the man on the floor also raised his arms. Steadily, The Shadow approached. His mocking laugh came in clear, fantastic tones of triumph.

Professor Folcroft Urlich would find no victims here when he returned; nor would he find tubes of colorless liquid where living men had come. The Shadow had arrived to foil the scheme of silent death!

The Shadow's glowing eyes brought terror to the enemies who viewed them. Those eyes were glaring now. They knew all; they saw all. Not only did they observe the cowering minions of Professor Urlich; they also perceived the cause of the scientist's sudden departure.

The Shadow had seen the red light that still glowed above the central staircase! Again, his laugh reechoed through that laboratory where death had been frustrated!

CHAPTER XXII. THE SWITCH OF DEATH

PROFESSOR FOLCROFT URLICH stood beside the huge death machine in the pit beneath his laboratory. His hand was on the control switch; his eyes watched the row of glowing incandescents.

Not yet did the cruel scientist intend to loose the terrific shock of death. Only the red bulb was lighted. It meant that invaders had come no farther than the outer portico.

Well had the professor designed his three zones of death. He did not intend to use the power at his disposal merely to dispose of some prowler; nor did he choose to employ it indiscreetly.

So long as the first zone alone had been entered, there could be no danger. Perhaps these intruders would go away. If they sought to enter, they could be allowed to do so, if they came as friends.

That was the reason why the scientist had ordered his men to proceed with the experiment that would bring death to the captives in the laboratory. If merely harmless investigators had come to this coliseum of doom, Urlich could welcome them with clean hands.

The muffled thuds of heavy battering suddenly impressed themselves upon the professor's ears. A frown furrowed the evil brow. That sound meant enemies. The scientist's hand wavered upon the control switch. It paused.

This was not the time to kill. If death were dealt now, some watchers beyond the range of the hidden portico might be clear; they might witness the end of their companions.

Urlich grinned wickedly. He would let these invaders enter. Once inside, within the second zone; yes, even in the third, he could pull the switch of death!

Silent death! The death that Urlich had longed to deal. This coming upon the heels of his laboratory experiment caused the fiend to chortle with glee.

The Shadow was dead; his agents were on their way to destruction; and other enemies were entering the door to meet their end.

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WHO could these foes be? Professor Urlich nodded as he thought. The police? Yes! Somehow, they had trailed the path of Larry Ricordo.

Urlich scowled; he was striking the right solution. Something had gone wrong at the Grand Central Terminal. That might be the trouble.

What did it matter? Death lay at his hand. The fiend cackled forth his challenge to the thumping that still persisted beyond the outer doors. His eyes went back to the incandescents. The green bulb became lighted as he watched.

The green!

That meant that some one had reached the circular corridor the second zone of death! It could not be the men from outside, they were still trying to burst down the heavy doors. It could only be Sanoja or Rasch who now trod that silent hallway.

But why had one of them come down? Why, even if one had descended, had the man not come completely to the bottom of the hollow cylinder, to enter the pit where Urlich now stood?

It could not be possible that one of the servants had gone to admit the intruders. Professor Urlich laughed at the very thought. He continued to watch the telltale bulb of green. It remained illuminated.

A sound came from the front end of the room, beyond the balcony. It was at the unused door which led from the circular passage into the balcony itself.

Professor Urlich did not hear the sound as the door opened; but the sudden increase of the thumping surprised him.

Yet it was not this that made him turn his head. The sign that came as a warning was the sudden lighting of the white bulb the signal that a person had reached the metal flooring of the balcony!

With hand still upon the death switch, the scientist wheeled to look at the door.

There, in the dim light, he saw a figure that he recognized; a spectral shape that he had viewed once before the being that had dropped through the skylight into the studio of Alfred Sartain's penthouse.

The Shadow!

Professor Urlich's glaring eyes encountered the blazing gaze of the black-cloaked master. The Shadow had let the door swing shut behind him. With one hand resting upon the rail of the balcony, he held an automatic in his other fist, the round muzzle of the weapon directed squarely toward Professor Urlich.

The scientist's fingers trembled on the switch; then they grasped it with a firmer hold.

Cunning beyond all measure, the scientist now held an advantage which even The Shadow could not destroy. Should a bullet from that automatic fell Professor Urlich, his hand would draw the switch also. It would mean death to the man who killed him!

Silent, The Shadow saw the situation. His laugh came eerily through the vaulted pit. Professor Urlich cackled nervously. He did not like the chilling tones of that uncanny mockery; nevertheless, his awe was not sufficient to make him yield the hold that was his hope.

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Urlich faced destruction; he knew that The Shadow could also see the hand of doom. The black-garbed master who had brought about this stalemate made no comment other than his laugh.

Slowly, to the cadence of the muffled beats at the outer door, The Shadow circled the balcony, still holding Urlich in abeyance with his automatic. The cunning scientist, in turn, kept tight grip upon the lever and watched The Shadow constantly.

ONE moment of inattention on the part of The Shadow; Urlich would spring the switch. On the contrary, should the scientist's grip loosen for a single instant, a shot from the automatic would spell his doom.

The Shadow completed a semicircle that brought him opposite the door. Professor Urlich clutched the lever tensely. He sensed a purpose. By diverting his attention away from the door, Urlich could not see the others enter. Still, the old man laughed. A shot from behind him could not change the situation. If he fell, no matter how, his hand would still grip the switch.

"Professor Urlich," came The Shadow's sudden whisper, "I have come to end your fiendish schemes. You can no longer thwart me."

A sneering chortle was the scientist's reply.

"Three lights are illuminated," whispered The Shadow. "Does that not tell you how your plans have failed?"

Professor Urlich did not even glance toward the bulbs to see that The Shadow had spoken the truth.

"Red: the portico," went on The Shadow weirdly. "Green: the corridor. White: the gallery in which I stand. Does that signify anything to you, Professor Urlich?"

The professor made no reply. He was puzzled, but he did not show it. His fiendish scowl persisted. He could still hear the pounding at the outer door. He wondered why. Men had entered. Why were others still trying to get in?

"The white light," declared The Shadow, in sinister tones, "is evidence of my presence. The green light tells that I have visited your laboratory. Your men are prisoners. My agents are released. It is they who are waiting in the corridor. They expect me to return.

"The red light tells of men beyond the outer door. The law is striking at your portals. You have no escape. Remove your hand from the switch and await your capture. It is the one chance I offer you!"

Professor Urlich snarled. He raised his voice in sarcastic words a challenge to The Shadow.

"Remove my hand?" laughed the fiend. "This hand holds you at my mercy. You and your men alike. You, your men, and the police. Shoot me if you dare; it will mean your end! You and the others are within the circles of silent death!"

"Do not draw that switch," warned The Shadow coldly. "I promise you – it will mean your death!"

"My death?" And Professor Urlich sneered. "Like Samson, I may die, but my enemies will perish with me! It is not within your power to prevent me!"

"It is within my power," returned The Shadow, with a sinister laugh. "One bullet from this automatic would achieve that result. Not your black heart, Urlich, but your trembling hand would be my mark. Hand and lever

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both would break, did I decree it!"

The challenge made the scientist tremble. He did not deem such perfect marksmanship possible; but his recollection of The Shadow's deeds, as recounted by Larry Ricordo, caused his mind to waver.

The Shadow had made the statement as a simple fact. Nevertheless, Urlich gained courage to ridicule The Shadow's words.

"Try it!" he snarled. "One shot will be your end. Aim at my hand and miss. See that hand respond the moment that your automatic no longer covers my body! It will be your last sight in life!"

"I warn you once again," returned The Shadow. "To press that switch will mean your doom! The invaders are here" a clanging fall of the outer doors proved the words "but I shall remain. They will see only you; but you will know my presence. The choice is yours. Press that switch or yield. My last warning tells you that death will be yours alone. I have spoken."

THE tall form shrank beside the rail as men pounded at the door of the balcony. Cardona and the invading detectives had spotted the second entrance. Professor Urlich stared at the spot, where The Shadow had been. He saw only two gleaming eyes and the muzzle of an automatic.

The door swung open on the balcony. It had been left loose by The Shadow. The squad of detectives swarmed into the gallery and stopped beside the rail. Dazed expressions were on their faces. They waited for Cardona to act; but the leading detective was dumfounded by the sight before him.

The red light had gone out upon the machine. All had come in from the portico. The white, which signified these men and The Shadow, was still illuminated. The green, which came from the circling corridor, denoted the presence of The Shadow's agents in that passage.

Urlich's eyes went from the lights toward the detectives. The men did not move. They could not understand the situation. Cardona gave no order to attack; he did not realize the danger. He saw only a fiendish maniac beside a strange machine a raving, laughing man who was powerless before the revolvers that now covered him.

Cackling wildly, Urlich stared once more at the lights. The white one went out. The red came on. The reason burst through the evil scientist's brain. The Shadow's agents were escaping! They had fled to the portico immediately after the advent of the police squadron.

Heedless of a whispered echo that came from the spot where The Shadow crouched, contemptuous of the detectives who gawked without suspecting the trap that they had entered, Professor Urlich tightened his hold upon the switch. He expected a shot from The Shadow. He grinned as he prepared for it.

At that instant, the fiend's eyes lowered to the floor. They saw that the heavy insulated wire from the machine had been spliced. A sudden tremor shook the villain's body.

In that terrible instant, his eyes realized a fearful truth; but his hand, inspired by instinctive determination, did not falter in its work or heed the warning from the staring eyes.

Down came the switch. No report from The Shadow's automatic accompanied it. The staring, wondering detectives leaped back toward the door as a terrific sound came from the huge machine.

Long crackles of lightning leaped from pole to pole. Disks whirred and wheels revolved. But another and

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more terrible phenomenon accompanied that mighty outburst. From every section of the metal floor within the pit leaped blazing, snapping sparks.

A terrific flash enveloped the form of Professor Folcroft Urlich. With it came a swift, sweeping puff of whitish smoke that seemed to burst like a cloud from nether regions.

The white fumes swirled away. The machine crackled on, and sparks sallied about the floor.

At the spot where the fiend had stood, a man remained no longer. Instead of a human, form, a mass of smoldering bone and ashes were piled in a grotesque pyramid. These were all that remained of Professor Folcroft Urlich, scientist and fiend of evil.

Well had The Shadow planned this dynamic finish, during his sojourn in the pit beneath the laboratory. His keen mind had seen the purpose of this terrible machine. By sure but simple process, The Shadow had disconnected the huge feed wire that led to the three outer zones, and had attached it to the floor of the pit that metal base upon which Urlich had first conducted his electrical experiments.

The master of silent death was no more. The Shadow had given him true warning. The pressure of the switch had brought a deserved end to the murderer who had sullied science to serve his evil designs.

CHAPTER XXIII. THE STORY

CLYDE BURKE wrote the story for the Classic. The reporter received it in detail from Detective Joe Cardona. The so-called suicide of Professor Folcroft Urlich created a great sensation in the columns of the New York newspaper.

The public learned that schemes of terrible death had failed except on one occasion that was when Thomas Jocelyn had died. Thrice had planted snares gone wrong: with Alfred Sartain, Wesley Barnsworth, and Gardner Joyce.

When Thomas Jocelyn had died by subtle poisoning, with his servant, Grewson, by his side, Joe Cardona had already been upon the trail of the murderers. Slips Harbeck, quizzed, had named Larry Ricordo. The gang lord, shot down in the Grand Central Terminal, had squealed on Professor Folcroft Urlich.

Pictures portrayed the laboratory where Cardona and his men had gone. There, the scientist, apparently choosing his own killing current in preference to that of the electric chair, had swung a suicide switch to take his own life before the very eyes of the men who had come to capture him.

It had taken some time to find the outside wire that had supplied the power for the big machine. When that had been cut off, the detectives had invaded the floor above the pit. There they had encountered two foreigners evidently aids of the dead professor. The battle that had followed brought death to Sanoja and Rasch, and wounds to two detectives.

A point over which Cardona passed lightly was the fact that the servants of Professor Urlich must have been bound at the time the police had arrived. Possibly the scientist had overpowered them so that they would not deter his suicide escape.

The trapped men had managed to loose their bonds before the detectives had accosted them. Remnants of cords upon the floor accounted for the fact. But they had been unable to escape because the detectives had barred the one way to safety.

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Clyde Burke smiled as he wrote the story. Nothing was known of two prisoners whom the fiendish scientist had doomed to die. No mention had been made of the part played by an unknown visitor from the night.

There were other facts that Clyde did not know, yet which he, with his extra knowledge, suspected. All these were summed in one tremendous point that the public would never know a scoop that the Classic would never print.

The hand of The Shadow! Hidden, invisible, but never failing, it was the power that had struck down the master of silent death.

The Shadow had turned the tide of doom to sweep aside the villainous fiend, Professor Folcroft Ulrich. Unseen by the detectives, he had silently followed his rescued agents into the darkness of the night.

The truth of the monster's end must remain unknown to the world. But the story would be found, preserved for posterity, in the secret archives of The Shadow!

THE END