

SMUGGLERS OF DEATH

Maxwell Grant

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SMUGGLERS OF DEATH

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CHAPTER I. DOOM'S LIMIT

THERE was menace in the quiet along Manhattan's water front. The foggy, brine-laden air seemed stirring with whispers that crept amid the darkness, though the words remained unheard. It would have taken a person long accustomed to that district to sense that trouble was afoot; nevertheless, the subtle signs were present.

Furtive shamblers veered from gloomy spots near deserted piers that rose, ominous and formidable, into the haze-thickened darkness. Others, nervous without knowing why, were lured by the smudgy lights of Ricky's Café, the only place that showed a glow in that entire block. A night like this invariably made passers form a taste for fish and chips, the specialty served at Ricky's. Customers were there in plenty.

Even the occupants of a random touring car were influenced by that urge. Parked near a corner, they held brief conference while sneaky figures approached, lingered a few seconds, and sidled away again. The visits of those prowlers had its effect upon the men in the car. Four in number, they stepped to the sidewalk and into Ricky's.

With their entry, it was obvious that one man was the leader. He stepped ahead of his companions, letting them shift to tables of their own. Chunky, broad-shouldered, the man swaggered through the eating place,

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turning his beefy face toward different groups. To some, he gave a curt nod of greeting; to others, a contemptuous stare which worried them.

Only a few strangers were puzzled by the scene. The regular patrons all knew Spike Hegley and what he represented.

Ruler along this sector, Spike boasted a horde of tough followers. When trouble started along the water front, Spike and his mob were always in the thick of it, except when paid to stay out: on which occasions, Spike made it a rule to collect from both warring factions.

Spike's appearance in Ricky's Café placed a new interpretation on the recent scene outside. The menacing stir that existed along the river tonight could be blamed upon one person only:

Spike Hegley.

PASSING through the main room of the café, Spike entered a doorway at the rear. He stepped into a barren room, where chairs and tables were stacked along the wall. This room was always dark, except when dock wallopers used it for conferences. But in the far corner it had what Spike wanted: a telephone booth.

A light came on as soon as Spike had closed the booth door. Fumbling through his pockets, the chunky man brought out a crumpled piece of paper on which was written a telephone number. Studying his watch, Spike decided to wait a few minutes before making his call.

By this time, Spike had forgotten the patrons in the outer room. So, for that matter, had the three huskies who were ordering fish and chips. They had given the place the "once over;" and were satisfied. No one in the café had perturbed them; least of all a tall, ill-dressed patron who was slouched behind a table near the rear doorway.

He looked like some sweated roustabout who had come into the place to sober up, only to collapse in the attempt. His head was buried in his arms his feet had overturned an old satchel that probably contained what little dunnage he had brought with him from his ship.

The slouched customer, however, had certain points that would have interested Spike's hoodlums, had they noticed him more closely. His face, despite its smudginess, had a strange, hawklike expression. His eyes, as they peered front above the sweater sleeve, showed a burning gaze that held the unobservant mobbies under close scrutiny.

With one hand, the hawk-visaged watcher drew black garments from his satchel. He let a slouch hat rest in his lap, while he slid a cloak half across his shoulders.

His next move looked like a slow slump, in which he sagged below the table edge. His other hand was busy; he melted into the blackness of the cloak, and clamped the hat upon his head. From his angle, the table was between Spike's doorway and the three followers of the mob leader. By keeping low, the black-cloaked individual had no trouble easing through the door.

Once he had worked that barrier shut behind him, he stood upright in the darkness. He had become a shadowy being, invisible in this setting. Even the burn of his piercing eyes was lost beneath the down-turned brim of his slouch hat. In appearance, as well as deed, the supposed roustabout had become a personage that all crooks dreaded.

The Shadow!

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In the telephone booth, Spike Hegley was dialing a number. He wasn't conscious that eyes had come close enough to watch him. Through the glass panel of the phone-booth door, The Shadow made mental note of each hole that Spike chose when he dialed.

Spike's pudgy lips formed a leer, when he recognized the voice that answered. Then The Shadow was catching the low-rasped words that made up Spike's end of the conversation.

"Yeah... " Spike's tone spoke triumph. "I planted 'em, six of 'em, on board the Flyaway... Yeah. I said six, chief. They'll be enough on that cruiser. Each guy that we've got can match two that are workin' for Mike Waybrock."

Names linked together in The Shadow's mind. The Flyaway-Mike Waybrock. Curious associations, that formed a nucleus for more. The Flyaway was one of the speediest cabin cruisers that plied Long Island Sound. A miniature yacht, she had recently been sold, due to the death of her millionaire owner. Until tonight, The Shadow had not considered the question of the cruiser's purchaser. He was learning that the speedy boat now belonged to Mike Waybrock.

They didn't call Waybrock by the nickname Mike in the circles where he spent most of his time. He was Michael Waybrock, gentleman adventurer, who boasted an enchanting past that thrilled the society girls who listened to his story. For Waybrock was ingenious enough to cover over certain unsavory details of his career.

Michael Waybrock, new owner of the Flyaway; using the ship for some crooked game. A game that had produced the envy of some big-shot on the other end of the telephone wire; a big-shot who had hired Spike Hegley to put a fixed crew on board the cruiser.

The Shadow dropped his findings at that point, for Spike, was beginning to talk again.

"THE mob ain't wise, chief." Spike was positive in his assurance. "There's no way they could figure you as the guy that's runnin' the racket... Yeah. I told 'em Frenchy Brenn was in back of it, and that made sense. What's more, they know Frenchy is on the Albania, the same as Waybrock. That clinched it..."

Frenchy Brenn-another name familiar to The Shadow. As suave as he was dangerous, Frenchy had a reputation as an international crook. Smuggling wasn't ordinarily in his line, for he was too well known; but the thing was taking on an unusual twist.

Some hidden brain was behind the smuggling racket, a game that had grown to real proportions in the past few months. Enough to encourage lone wolves like Michael Waybrock, bringing them into the field on their own. Which was something that no mastermind would stomach.

The big-shot was gunning for Waybrock, using Frenchy for the job. Aboard the liner Albania, due in New York tomorrow, Frenchy was probably keeping an eye on his fellow-passenger, Waybrock. The rumbles from Manhattan's water front were due to reach that in-coming ship, for the hidden big-shot had drawn Spike Hegley into the game; yet, all the while, he was having Frenchy pose as the "front," for the benefit of lesser crooks whose services he needed!

From that discovery, The Shadow formed an immediate plan. He intended to learn, by the most direct means possible, just who was on the other end of the wire talking to Spike Hegley.

An automatic drawn, The Shadow eased open the edge of the booth door, ready to plant an icy muzzle upon Spike's neck the moment that the mob leader finished his call. Spike would talk-as crooks of his sort always did-when confronted by The Shadow.

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A blotch of blackness streaked the green wall of the booth, above the telephone. It formed a hawkish silhouette, an advance token of The Shadow. An instant later, that streak had faded. The Shadow had drawn back because of new words spoken by Spike:

"Listen, chief. I gotta check on the mob... Yeah, it won't take long...I'll call you again...How soon? Inside of ten minutes, if that's O.K. with you..."

Apparently it was O. K., for Spike immediately hung up the receiver and came from the phone booth. The Shadow did not stop him. Circumstances had offered a more effective plan. Given five minutes, The Shadow would be talking to the big-shot in person!

Spike's forced rasp could be easily imitated: and The Shadow had learned enough of the situation to carry through the pretense. He waited until Spike had passed through the door to the café; then glided into the phone booth.

The Shadow's first move was to loosen the electric-light bulb at the top of the booth. That done, he closed the door without producing a glow. In absolute darkness, his deft fingers found the dial and made a test.

After a few minutes, he dropped a nickel into the coin slot. The dial tone hummed briefly; then The Shadow's fingers were at work, probing the dial itself, literally plucking out the same number that Spike had called.

Five minutes were gone, according to The Shadow's accurate estimate. The big-shot wouldn't be surprised by so early a call from Spike, for the latter had specified within ten minutes.

Unfortunately, the call was not going through. The Shadow could hear the steady ringing of the bell; but no one answered. To another, that ringing might have signified a mistake in the calling of the number; but not to The Shadow. He recognized the truth; the man at the other end had gone.

The call wasn't being answered; and that gave The Shadow an answer of another sort, one that brought a sudden end to his well-formed schemes. He now realized that Spike Hegley must have guessed that his conversation had been overheard.

That chatter to the big-shot had been a tip-off, together with a stall for time, in which Spike intended to do more than check on his mob. He had gone out to summon them!

The Shadow, intent upon balking schemes of crime, had placed himself in the center of a trap, with doom's limit only a few minutes away!

CHAPTER II. THE HAND FROM THE DARK

CALMLY, The Shadow eased the door of the phone booth open, to listen for approaching sounds. He heard them from three places. There were creaks beyond the door to the outer café, indicating that hoodlums were posting themselves at that outlet; but The Shadow knew that the first attack would not come from that direction.

True to form, Spike's sluggers would make it look as if they had become embroiled despite their will. Whenever any of them started things on their own, they did it with the utmost secrecy. For that reason, The Shadow regarded other sounds as more important for the moment.

Muffled rips were audible from a rear door that led into an alley. Men were working there with jimmies,

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trying to make as little noise as possible. From another quarter of the room, The Shadow could hear scratches which told that thugs were trying to open a window. Spike's plan obviously, was to supply two thrusts from opposite directions.

Closing the door of the phone booth, The Shadow indulged in a whispered laugh, audible only in his confined haven. He was summing matters as they stood.

Spike Hegley unquestionably knew that he had been seen by The Shadow. The mob leader had caught that from a single clue: the chance appearance of the blackened silhouette when it glided across the interior of the phone booth.

Quickly reaching a decision, The Shadow called a number and spoke in a brisk, important tone. His voice was a perfect imitation of the well-known tone of Ralph Weston, New York's police commissioner. Talking to headquarters. The Shadow had his call put through immediately to the office of Joe Cardona, Manhattan's ace police inspector.

Then came The Shadow's own inimitable whisper, with Inspector Cardona an eager listener. This was a real tip-off—a chance to bag Spike Hegley and his mob in a battle of their own making, at Ricky's Café. That message given, The Shadow ended the call abruptly.

Peeling off his cloak and hat, he draped them across the front of the telephone. Opening the booth door, he screwed the light bulb into place. Darkness continued, for the light would not work while the booth door was open.

During those moments, The Shadow heard the sudden crack of the rear door; also a final clatter that told the window was being raised. Dropping flat upon the floor, a gun in each fist, he thrust a foot toward the phone booth. With a deft toe, The Shadow pressed the door shut.

Things happened with kaleidoscopic speed. First came the light in the booth, revealing the dummy figure. Next, the wild shouts of converging crooks as they saw the blackened shape. Halting short, they opened a volley with their guns; a deluge of bullets raked the phone booth.

The door was riddled, its glass front shattered. Slugs smacked the metal coin box with dull, quivering clangs. Hat and cloak withered downward, while crooks raised an exultant shout, only to end their cry with snarls when they realized that the garments were empty.

They were ready, then, to look for The Shadow; but he was no longer at hand. They hadn't seen him on the floor; and in the roar of gunfire, he had been making unobstructed speed straight for the door that led into the café proper.

Coming to his feet, he yanked that door open, while disappointed sharpshooters were still gawking at the telephone booth.

FLINGING himself through the doorway, The Shadow came upon half a dozen hoodlums who were seated in pairs at rear tables. Fake patrons that Spike had ordered into Ricky's, these thugs formed the crew that was to block The Shadow's outlet.

They had guns ready in their pockets, but they weren't prepared for The Shadow's sudden arrival. Spike had told them to wait until they heard shots answer the first volley in the rear room. The mob leader had actually believed that the opening barrage might settle The Shadow, in which case, the front crew would not have to show its hand.

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The Shadow's surge ended that prospect. It caught the waiting crooks flat-footed. If The Shadow had been cloaked in black, the startled toughs would have dived for cover without offering a single shot. But The Shadow had sacrificed his impressive garb to create the ruse in the telephone booth. Six crooks saw him, not as The Shadow, but as a sweated thug no more deadly than themselves.

Relying on numbers, they sprang to battle, drawing their guns as they came. A fierce laugh came from The Shadow's lips, a shivering peal of mirth that told his true identity; but the taunt was too long delayed. Battle was already under way, with The Shadow as its center.

The very measure upon which Spike depended, proved disastrous to his sluggers. He had told them to pile into any fray that came, which was exactly what The Shadow expected. Revolving in the middle of that gun-pulling throng, The Shadow flayed the crooks with strokes from his big automatics.

Milling fighters sprawled. Those who finally managed to aim were met with point-blank shots before they could tug their triggers. To startled witnesses peering from beneath tables, it seemed that one sweated fighter had shaken off a flood of attackers by the mere process of a rapid whirl that ended with short stabs from his guns.

Had any crook held back, he would have gotten a chance to drop The Shadow; but Spike had assigned no one to such duty. Alone, amid a scattered group of floored opponents, The Shadow was wheeling away from the doorway to the rear room. He was gone when shots began to blast from that direction.

Gunmen surged through, hoping to clip a fleeing fighter before he could reach the street door. There again, Spike's mobbies failed to guess The Shadow's strategy. He had swung to the wall beside the doorway; he drove in upon the gunners as they poured through. Again there was a thud of hard-swung guns; stabs of flame from big muzzles. From a fresh cluster of crumpling crooks, The Shadow was gone again, back into the darkened rear room.

Bullets had extinguished the light in the phone booth. Pausing there, The Shadow snatched up his cloak and hat.

Flashlights were glimmering in the alleyway behind the café. There were other lights, outside the window of the rear room. Spike's reserves had every exit covered, and they kept peppering the room that The Shadow had chosen as his stronghold. Answering shots, in slow fire, kept back any attack; but it was obvious that The Shadow was conserving ammunition.

Such tactics couldn't last much longer. Posted in the rear alley now, Spike was waiting for the right moment to begin a general charge, when the whine of sirens swelled through the fog. The police were here, many minutes before they had a right to be!

Before Spike could gather his startled wits, The Shadow, too, had heard the sign of the law's approach. He began a rapid fire, straight through the doorway to the alleyway. Raked by that barrage, crooks scattered, Spike among them.

Police were everywhere about the water front café, rounding up the running crooks who had forgotten their feud with The Shadow, in order to make their own escape. Only Spike, halting as he reached the next street, still had the cloaked fighter in mind. With a snarl for others to rally around him, Spike flicked a flashlight back into the alley.

The glow was smothered by the sleeve of a black cloak. A gun muzzle pressed Spike's temple; his ear heard a sinister whisper. Deserted by his fleeing mob, Spike had been overtaken by The Shadow, whose ominous

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voice was telling him to talk.

Cowering, Spike licked his pudgy lips. He was trying to gather breath. His gasp was wheezy; then he was coughing words that The Shadow had heard before. Words about the Flyaway, Mike Waybrock, Frenchy Brenn. Then:

"They're on the Albania," whined Spike. "Mike and Frenchy, both of 'em."

"And the big-shot," interposed The Shadow, "is here in New York. State his name."

As if timed to The Shadow's demand, the glare of headlights suddenly bored upon that scene. The brilliance came from a car swinging in from a corner less than thirty feet away. It showed the cowering shape of Spike; above it, the black-clad figure of The Shadow. Then, in a flash, only one form was in the glow. The Shadow had dived into darkness, with a sharp order for Spike to do the same.

Too startled to respond, Spike remained. A gun spoke from the approaching car, delivering a staccato of repeated shots as the motor gave a sudden rumble. From cover, The Shadow saw Spike coiling to the ground; caught a glimpse of a sleek coupé, as it shot past the mouth of the alley.

The car lights blinked off. By the time The Shadow had reached the crumpled form of Spike, the coupé was wheeling the next corner. The Shadow's only shot did nothing more than nick a fender above a license plate that he had no chance to read.

A tiny flashlight in The Shadow's fist revealed the face of Spike Hegley. Bloated lips were fixed upon a name they could not utter. The Shadow's question had been answered, not by Spike, but by the big-shot whose name the mob leader had tried to give.

An answer by deed; not by word. A hand from the dark had settled the matter, leaving the identity of the master crook still unrevealed. Spike Hegley, the man who could have talked, had been snatched from The Shadow's grasp by a swift delivery of death!

Whistles sounded from the alley. The motionless pose of The Shadow ended; his figure made a sudden fade into darkness. When Inspector Joe Cardona, stocky and grim-visaged, arrived at the alley's end, he found only the huddled body of Spike Hegley.

The Shadow, one trail lost, had departed upon another; but his quest remained the same. Other lips besides those of Spike Hegley could reveal the name of the hidden crime master.

The Shadow knew!

CHAPTER III. DEATH RIDES AHEAD

IN departing from the water front battle, The Shadow had left it for granted that the police would soon round up the remnants of Spike's mob. Instead, the law became involved in a campaign that threatened to hold over until dawn.

For the few of Spike's mob who escaped the police did not know Spike was dead, but thought him in the hands of the law. Such was their fury, that they enlisted all the crooks along the water front to battle the law.

An hour after The Shadow's departure, two hundred police reserves were on the scene, dealing with the

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trouble-makers.

War along the water front! That news was important enough to cause certain broadcasting stations to drop their usual programs and furnish listeners with graphic accounts of the battle. Nowhere did the radio reports create more apprehension than on board inbound ocean liners that were soon due in New York.

Passengers on one ship, the Albania, forgot their final celebration to cluster in the lounge and discuss events on shore. When midnight brought word that the police had conquered the Manhattan water front, the little groups of chatterers began to break up.

The last person to leave one corner table was a girl of unusual charm. She was a blonde, tall and slender, with blue eyes and the poise of a danseuse. Every move that she made was graceful, even to the way her long fingers inserted a cigarette in a thin holder and then flicked the lighter that formed the top of her platinum cigarette case.

Her age was perhaps twenty; though it would have been difficult to estimate her exact years.

At this moment, the blonde was noting a well-groomed man who had stepped from a little booth equipped with a card table, where he had been playing solitaire. Odd, she thought, that he had been alone with a pack of cards, for his handsome countenance had all the requisites of a perfect poker face.

He'd noticed her before, this chap who had a way of trying to look younger than he was: but this was the first time that he had attempted to introduce himself. Odd, again, that he should seek an acquaintance on the last night of the voyage.

The blonde met that situation by turning with a sudden smile that left the bland man baffled for a moment. His face showed a peculiar flicker, that shifted into a sophisticated smile. Bowing, he asked suavely:

"You are Miss Myrna Elvin?"

The girl nodded. The man suggested that they sit down at the card table, to which Myrna agreed. Then, after a cautious glance from the booth, a detail which aroused the girl's keen interest, the man introduced himself.

"I am Michael Waybrock," he said. "Perhaps you have heard of me."

"I have," replied Myrna, her blue eyes meeting blackish ones. "Though I never met you before. I seem to recall your name as a hold-over from my debutante days."

Waybrock smiled, as though highly complimented.

"In case you don't know it," he remarked. "it is my honor to have you as a neighbor, Miss Elvin,"

A neighbor?"

"Yes. You have a summer cottage in Connecticut, on the shore of Long Island Sound. Just opposite it"—Waybrock's eyes took on a faraway stare—"is an island called Mariner's Isle—"

WAYBROCK paused. Myrna's eyes were wide as he expected they would be. She, like everyone else along that Connecticut shore, had long wondered who owned that isolated island which had long been a spot of mystery.

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"I own Mariner's Isle," resumed Waybrock, calmly. "I am going there soon after I reach New York. You will also be going to Connecticut, I presume."

Myrna nodded.

Good!" declared Waybrock, settling back in his chair. "I can depend upon you to perform a neighborly favor. In my stateroom, I have a package"—he was leaning forward, lowering his tone—"which I cannot take ashore. I would like you to do so for me. After you have reached Connecticut. I can call for it."

"Smuggled goods. I suppose," mused Myrna, aloud. "Probably jewels. Sorry. Mr. Waybrock. I can't help you."

Waybrock became very earnest.

"I wouldn't ask the favor," he declared, "if it were not a matter upon which my life depends. I am serious about it, Miss Elvin. Unless you aid me, my death may result!"

Waybrock obviously meant exactly what he said. Myrna's gaze became troubled.

"Tonight," the man proceeded, his voice almost a whisper, "I have been listening to those reports of trouble along the New York water front. I learned also—something which you may not know—that arrangements have just been made for an autogiro to land on this steamship in what is termed a shore—to-sea test.

"On board the Albania are certain desperate criminals; persons that I recognized this very afternoon. Add all those facts together, Miss Elvin, and they mean trouble for someone."

He sat back again, lighted a cigarette, with a stare that was almost plaintive. Myrna was impressed; her voice seemed hardly her own, as she asked:

"Trouble for Michael Waybrock?"

The man nodded, nervously puffing his cigarette, he arose, gave another of his furtive glances about the almost-deserted lounge. Then, abruptly:

"I am going to my stateroom," he said. "I shall call at your cabin in fifteen minutes—with the box."

THREE of those fifteen minutes were gone before Myrna roused herself. Waybrock's personality had been dynamic.

Myrna's thought had drifted. She was picturing Mariner's Isle, a wooded clump that seemed to float like an ancient frigate off the Connecticut shore. A house lay lost among those trees; a house that she had never seen. A place which well might be a modern smuggler's lair, where she would be welcome as a visitor if she sided with Waybrock in his present dilemma.

Then that imaginary scene was gone. Myrna realized that she was still aboard the Albania, with five minutes of the quarter hour gone. What a fool she had been to believe that yarn of Waybrock's! If she didn't get out of this silly mess right away, she would be in it too deep to amend the situation.

With sudden resolve, Myrna went from the lounge. As she passed a little booth just in back of the one where she had talked with Waybrock, she glimpsed there a woman who looked vaguely familiar. Carrying an impression of jet-black hair, olive-hued face and reddened fingernails, Myrna suddenly remembered the

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woman's name as Leona Dubray.

But Myrna was in too much of a hurry to connect the Dubray woman with Michael Waybrock.

Going down in the elevator. Myrna settled her mind with the conviction that Waybrock had lied about everything except the matter of the box. It was probably real enough, that box she suspected to hold smuggled jewels, that Waybrock was afraid to take ashore. He would find out, soon enough, that Myrna was no dupe, for such a game.

Myrna had reached her cabin door. She looked back along the passage and thought, for one startling moment, that she saw someone peering from the turn near the elevators. Perhaps it was the gloom that made her think of dark-haired Leona Dubray. Then the illusion had passed. There was no one in the passage.

Myrna unlocked her door, stepped into the cabin, pleased by the fact that she still had more than five minutes in which to block Waybrock's visit.

Seated at a little writing desk, with nothing to disturb her other than the incessant thrum of the liner's engines. Myrna penned a brief note to Waybrock. In as few words as possible, she stated that she did not care to see him; that a visit to her cabin would be useless.

Sealing the note, Myrna rang for a steward. The steward could find out where Waybrock's stateroom was and deliver the message for her. She wouldn't be troubled by Waybrock any longer, because he would be glad enough to learn that she did not intend to inform the customs officials that he was a smuggler, a fact that she had intimated in the note.

MYRNA paused for a moment, the envelope half addressed. She was disturbed by a louder hum than that of the ship's engines; a purr that faded curiously as she listened. It must be the autogiro that Waybrock had mentioned.

The aircraft was landing on the deck of the Albania

Did the fact add weight to Waybrock's story?

Myrna decided finally that it did not. Probably Waybrock had heard that the giro was coming and had simply woven that thread of truth into the fabric of his false story. Myrna finished addressing the envelope just as a sharp knock came from the door.

That knock meant the steward, bringing an end to her problem. So Myrna thought, until she started to open the door. Of its own accord, the barrier swung inward before she could shift her weight to stop it. With a startled gasp, Myrna saw a man's figure lunging in upon her; she sprang away as she recognized the face of Michael Waybrock.

Then, before she could thrust the note into Waybrock's hand and spring past him, his lunge had become a sprawl. It was a crazy fall, an actual collapse, that made him seem disjointed when he struck the floor. One shoulder heaved, as if impelled by a hidden spring, and the jolt turned the man's face upward.

Myrna's next gasp would have been a scream, had she found voice to go with it. She was staring at a different Michael Waybrock than the one who had talked with her in the lounge. The handsomeness had gone from his face, along with his suave smile.

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Instead of the latter, he wore a hideous grin, that was accentuated by the bulge of grotesque eyes, white orbs surrounding tiny beads of black. Below that horrible face was a bloodstained shirt front; from the center of the crimson blob a knife handle projected, silent proof that a blade was deep in the victim's heart,

Michael Waybrock had come to Myrna's cabin, in keeping with his promise. He had come, not as a living man, but as a corpse. And the leer that showed his glistening white teeth seemed fixed there, to chide Myrna Elvin because she had doubted his story of impending doom!

CHAPTER IV. DARKENED WATERS

IT was fortunate for Myrna that she had managed to repress a scream at sight of Waybrock's body. From a side passage, cater-cornered to her cabin door, two watchers were noting everything she did.

One of those watchers was Leona Dubray. Her companion, a wiry man with sallow face and gray-streaked mustache, was the notorious crook who had been the cause of Waybrock's fears—Frenchy Brenn.

"We'll wait," Frenchy was saying in an undertone, "until we find out how much the dame knows. If she knows too much, she'll get what Waybrock got."

"He didn't tell her much," insisted Leona. "Our best bet is to sit tight, Frenchy."

From the harshness of Leona's whisper, it was plain that she felt no sympathy for Myrna. In fact, Leona's watchful glare was catlike; her ruddy fingernails had the look of claws that would eagerly have scratched such prey as Myrna.

Leona was simply reminding Frenchy of a plan which suited them both. They had agreed that by placing Waybrock's body on Myrna's doorstep, as it were, they would shift the burden of explaining matters to the girl who had talked with Waybrock.

If Myrna knew as little as Leona claimed, her testimony would cause no difficulty for the crooks. But Frenchy Brenn wasn't anxious to leave too much to chance. It was his knife that lay buried in Waybrock's heart. He was a murderer, while Leona had played no part in the actual crime.

Moreover, Frenchy was a known criminal, who could not afford to be on the Albania when the ship reached port.

He had already formed his plan for leaving the ship, and the time for the move was very near. A gun in hand Frenchy felt much inclined to settle the Myrna question before he made his break.

Frenchy's gun was nudging forward. Leona restrained his hand. Myrna had turned and was calmly moving into her cabin, and Frenchy thereupon decided to lower his gun. He turned to Leona with the comment:

"I'll sneak across and listen. From what she says over the telephone, I'll know what to do. Leave it to me, Leona."

"I will," granted Leona. "But go light. Remember, you may be putting the rest of us in a tight spot. We figure this Elvin dame will be more use alive than dead."

Frenchy nodded. He started to shift across the passage. He hadn't gone five steps before he heard a warning hiss from Leona. Frenchy wheeled about too late. Bounding upon him was a steward, the man summoned by

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Myrna. Coming into the main passage, the fellow had spied Frenchy and had seen the gun in the crook's hand.

The steward landed before Frenchy could aim. They hit the floor together, Frenchy's gun popping wildly. The steward had gained a wrist clutch that made the revolver shots useless. But he wasn't looking for trouble from anyone but Frenchy.

A gun spoke from the passage opposite. The shot was Leona's. Her black eyes were cold, her finger expert in its trigger squeeze. The steward's back doubled like a contortionist's. He rolled to the floor, with Frenchy rising above him.

There was a scampering sound as Leona fled along the passage at Frenchy's nod. Thrusting his free hand through shocky hair, that was gray-streaked like his mustache, Frenchy turned toward Myrna's cabin. He saw the blonde fishing rapidly in a trunk drawer. Upon hearing the shots, Myrna had decided to find a .22 that she carried for emergencies like this.

Guessing the girl's move, Frenchy gave a murderous snarl. Ready to tug the trigger of his gun, he was suddenly interrupted by a challenge that froze his finger.

It came from the end of the passage, a burst of chilling mirth that made Frenchy forget Myrna. The crook knew the mocking tone that signified disaster to all who dealt in crime. The laugh of The Shadow!

SWINGING about, Frenchy found himself confronted by the muzzle of an automatic. Behind the big .45 was its owner—a black-cloaked being whose burning eyes showed a merciless bore. A sinister tone throbbled through the passage; a whisper that Frenchy was too helpless to ignore.

The Shadow was sparing the murderer's life for one reason only. He knew that Frenchy Brenn could supply the information that Spike Hegley had failed to give: the name of the criminal overlord whose schemes Frenchy served.

The Shadow had ways to make tight lips open. All that he lacked was time to use such measures. As his gun muzzle was pressing close to Frenchy's forehead, as if to freeze the sweat that formed there, sudden shouts came from the passage.

Members of the ship's crew had arrived in time to witness this strange drama; and from their excited cries, it was plain that they took The Shadow for a foe.

Wheeling, The Shadow swept into the side passage that Leona had deserted. He saw Frenchy make a frantic dive in the other direction and took cool aim to clip the fleeing crook. The Shadow's finger was actually on the hair-trigger, when he halted his shot with amazing skill.

Myrna had bobbed out from the cabin. The girl had found her gun. She was starting to fire after Frenchy, and in so doing she shifted into The Shadow's path of aim. He was forced to leave Frenchy's fate to the girl.

Cutting through the side passages The Shadow could hear the .22 delivering its pops. He hoped that it would cripple Frenchy, but not too seriously.

Then The Shadow's thoughts had shifted to problems of his own. Catching a glimpse of a black shape diving out to the deck, hastily assembled crew members fired a salvo from ill-assorted weapons. All that they damaged were the decorations along the passage walls, but they kept up the chase; their yells produced other pursuers.

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Up through a companionway, The Shadow reached a higher deck, where a wingless autogiro loomed like a thin-boned skeleton. That ship had brought The Shadow here, but it was destined to leave without him. He had been a passenger, not the pilot, for his purpose had been to slide from the giro unnoticed; a feat which he had easily managed.

Hot though the chase had become, The Shadow was determined to deal with Frenchy Brenn at any cost. He wasn't worrying about giving those at present chasing him the slip. That would be easy, when the chance came. The Shadow's real problem was to manage another meeting with Frenchy Brenn.

Doubling down to a lower deck, The Shadow performed a sudden fade into the shelter of a stateroom doorway. Clumsy pursuers blundered past him, while he listened for some sound that would aid his next move. It came—the faint report of a gun. Gauging the direction of the sound, The Shadow started sternward.

As he ran, he saw the blink of lights a mile or so at sea. These flashes meant the Flyaway—merely a passing ship to most persons aboard the Albania. To Michael Waybrock, the lights would have offered escape. With Waybrock dead, they could offer the same to Frenchy Brenn, for reasons that The Shadow knew.

Had Frenchy spied the distant glow?

THE SHADOW received his answer when he tuned past a row of cabin windows. Across the deck, poised by the rail, was Frenchy, flinging an empty gun toward someone out of The Shadow's sight.

With Frenchy's throw came the bark of a gun—the shot that emptied Myrna's weapon; for, with that last attempt to down the lucky crook, the girl herself came bounding into sight.

During her mad chase, Myrna had been unable to take calculating aim until she had trapped Frenchy by the rail. The quick hurl of his own gun had caused the blonde to jerk the trigger of the .22, missing on the final shot. But Myrna wasn't giving up. She wrenched the wiry crook back from the rail, answering his punches with hard swings of her tiny gun.

The Shadow had almost reached the pair, when Myrna was flung suddenly in his direction. Catching the girl with one arm, The Shadow swung her aside and aimed for Frenchy. The crook was already rolling across the rail. He gave one arm an upward toss, just as The Shadow fired. The Shadow's bullet pinged the steel rail, adding another link to Frenchy's chain of luck.

He was gone from sight, into the ocean's darkness, the only token of his departure being a rounded object that he had hurled high in the air with that last fling. The thing was a bomb, that burst in a blaze of fiery colors before it struck the water.

Myrna, seeing the bomb's spurt, wondered what it meant. The Shadow could have given her the answer; the flare was a signal to the distant Flyaway, one that Waybrock had intended to give. It meant that Frenchy would be picked up, in place of the rival that he had murdered.

A bold chance, but a long one, that Frenchy had taken through sheer desperation in order to escape pursuers. Perhaps he would not have risked it, if The Shadow had not been among those who sought him. But if Frenchy thought that folly, even to the point of madness, could thwart The Shadow, he was quite mistaken.

Myrna could testify to that, for she witnessed the event that followed.

She saw The Shadow spring to the rail and vault it with one hand. His cloaked figure disappeared like a blackened arrow into the darkness of the sea below. With a gasp, Myrna made for the rail, to stare into deep

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blackness. She saw white streaks of foam stirred by the liner's wake; but that was all.

Frenchy Brenn, the man who had tried to murder Myrna, was gone. So was The Shadow, the being who had rescued her from death. Both were lost, miles from shore, in a pitiless sea that threatened to wipe out their feud with its own erasing power.

Myrna's lips were quivering, when her eyes saw the distant lights. She recognized suddenly what Frenchy's flare had meant; and the sight gave her hope—for The Shadow! Then, as minutes passed, those lights disappeared from view below the horizon, far to the stern of the Albania.

Though her eyes were moist, Myrna's lips held a smile when searching men found her by the rail. Recognizing her as the girl who had aided in the chase, they plied her with many questions. Myrna answered all that concerned Frenchy Brenn.

But her gaze went blank when they questioned her about a fighter clad in black, who, according to some members of the crew, could have been a ghost and nothing else. Myrna couldn't help them with that problem.

Apparently, Myrna Elvin had never seen The Shadow. Actually, she was hoping fervently that she would some day see him again!

CHAPTER V. MEN FROM THE DEEP

A SEARCHLIGHT skimmed the ocean's heaving surface, touched upon a blackened object that looked like worthless flotsam, and kept on until its glare revealed a figure struggling in the water. That light came from the Flyaway; the swimmer was Frenchy Brenn.

Tilted low, the searchlight maintained a path for Frenchy to follow. Men were ready at the cabin cruiser's rail, in case the swimmer's strength gave out. But Frenchy, inspired by new hope, made excellent progress toward the cruiser's side.

All that while, the floating thing was forgotten. Away from the searchlight's glow, its shape had changed. No longer motionless, it had become a swimmer, more powerful than Frenchy at his best. Silent, swift of stroke, this stranger from the deep was like a black torpedo, driving for the cruiser's bow.

Now, while men were pulling Frenchy over the side, The Shadow reached his goal, farther forward. The Flyaway was anchored; the links of the anchor chain made a taut line that The Shadow climbed with ease. Across the darkened prow he rolled, unobserved, into blackness fronting the cabin.

That resting place sufficed for only a few minutes. Soon, The Shadow was moving aft along the cabin's side, inspired by two purposes. The first was to avoid men coming to the bow to hoist the anchor; the second, to get a closer look at the midship section, where Frenchy was talking to the crew who had brought him from the sea.

The drip of The Shadow's brine-soaked cloak was drowned by the clatter of the raising anchor chain. The Shadow glimpsed an open hatchway, below it a shallow hold strewn with coils of rope. With that glimpse; he was gone, worming his way aft.

Feeling the edge of the cabin roof, he found that it was constructed of steel; the windows, below, were in all probability, bulletproof.

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Motors thrumming, the Flyaway was off for shore. She was cleaving the long swells at steadily increasing speed, when The Shadow stretched in the shelter of the cabin, to hear the yarn that Frenchy told the cruiser's crew.

SURROUNDED by hard-faced listeners, Frenchy was suavely claiming friendship with Michael Waybrock. He stated that Waybrock had told him all about the Flyaway; how she was standing by, in case Waybrock found it wise to leave the Albania.

Finally, deciding to stay aboard the steamer, Waybrock had suggested that Frenchy do the overboard dive, to inform the crew of the Flyaway that they could head back to shore.

There were flimsy points to Frenchy's story, but he avoided questions by chattering his teeth and insisting that he couldn't tell the rest until he had dried off. He was shown to the cabin, while the men on deck formed little clusters to discuss what they had heard.

It didn't satisfy them. The Shadow learned that while the cruiser was cleaving shoreward at a speed of thirty knots, Waybrock's men had expected their chief; no one else. From their mutters, it was plain that they intended to quiz Frenchy when he had rested from his swim.

They showed no suspicion, though, of the new crew members with them. They had no idea that thugs supplied by Spike Hegley were serving the same master as Frenchy Brenn. Down in the cabin, Frenchy was probably chuckling over the surprise that he intended to spring later.

By this time, The Shadow was fully rested, though his swim had been longer and much more arduous than Frenchy's. With him, The Shadow had brought a brace of automatics, and though their combined weight was no more than five pounds, they had seemed an ever-increasing burden.

Reasoning that Frenchy should no longer be tired, The Shadow calculated why the crook still kept to the cabin.

Frenchy wanted to wait until the cruiser was near the Long Island shore. Probably Waybrock's crew intended to round the island and enter the Sound, where they would eventually reach some smuggler's lair. But Frenchy wouldn't linger that long.

Far off above the horizon, The Shadow could see the flickers of a distant lighthouse. He decided that Frenchy was watching for such a beacon, and would soon reappear.

The Shadow was right. Dressed in dry clothes that were much too large for him, Frenchy suddenly stepped from the cabin into the glow of lanterns. He beckoned for men to gather about him. He was ready for their questions, not because he intended to answer them, but because he could supply better arguments than words.

One snap of Frenchy's fingers, and the new crew members would turn upon the others. Frenchy hadn't a doubt regarding the outcome of such a surprise attack. All he awaited was the most opportune moment to begin battle.

The Shadow's thought was precisely the same.

When strife began, he intended to take over the cruiser himself. His process would be simple and effective. From shelter outside the steel-walled cabin, he could insert timely shots that would swing the fight against either faction that began to get the upper hand.

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Crooks would slaughter one another, until they had whittled down their total to a very exhausted few. Those men would suddenly find themselves controlled by The Shadow, and their mood would be one of complete submission.

Seldom had The Shadow arranged a more certain plan. It was the sort that seemed devoid of any flaw. Yet chance was to play havoc with that crafty idea. Chance stirred into being by Frenchy Brenn.

The murderer, suave as ever, was trying to bluff his listeners. Someone suddenly asked why Waybrock had needed Frenchy's services, and the murderer saw a chance to supply a startling reply. One to which he gave the ring of actual truth.

"Do you know who was on board the Albania?" he purred. "The guy who really started all the trouble? The Shadow!"

Surprised mutters followed Frenchy's words. The crook gave a chuckle. "We hove him overboard," he continued. "Mike and me. That's when Mike said I'd better dive. He didn't want The Shadow climbing in on you fellows."

Listeners shifted uneasily. They saw merit in Frenchy's argument. Matters had ripened well for Frenchy; ready to snap a signal to his followers, he saw a chance to throw the rest entirely off guard. Staring toward the whiteness of the cabin, Frenchy faked a frantic gulp. With a wild point of his finger, he blurted:

"The Shadow!"

MOBBIES wheeled, flashlights burning in their fists. The sudden bore of many lights revealed blackness looming above the cabin roof, the outline of a silhouette that showed hawkish beneath a slouch hat brim. Below, the crooks saw cloaked shoulders, a fist swinging a big automatic.

Not one of those viewers was half so startled as Frenchy Brenn. He had pointed them to a target that he hadn't bothered to imagine as a menace aboard the Flyaway!

Nor had The Shadow expected to be pointed out by Frenchy. On a ledge beyond the cabin, he had no chance to duck from sight. His plan of inserted battle was ended in that instant. His only chance for life was to beat crooks to the opening shots, and he did it.

Blasting shots purely for his own protection, The Shadow managed to get from the unsafe ledge. He reached the front of the cabin, where he had a chance to find cover; but by that time, gunmen were hot in pursuit.

One gun already emptied, The Shadow was in the glare of flashlights. He still had a chance to wither the nearest opponents; but his fresh .45 didn't contain enough bullets to see him through the fray that would follow.

For once, The Shadow seemed confused. He was wavering, holding his gun motionless, when Frenchy spied him over the top of the cabin. Then, hard upon the barks of a few revolvers, came a quicker finish than any Frenchy had expected. The Shadow crumpled when those shots were fired.

With a long sprawl, he hit the deck, gave a convulsive writhe and toppled through the open hatchway into the shallow hold.

Leering from above the cabin, Frenchy took a quick look at the outspread mobsters. While some were exultantly making for the hatchway, others were halted, looking Frenchy's way. They were the planted thugs,

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ready for the order that Frenchy promptly gave. This was the perfect time to wipe out Waybrock's mob, while the fools were howling their glee over The Shadow's finish.

Guns drilled. Men sprawled before they reached the hatchway. Others wheeled, amazed, to be greeted by more shots. They saw Frenchy leading the fire; instantly, they knew how they had been tricked. Though half the crew had fallen, the rest returned the fire with a quick rally that Frenchy had not anticipated.

His own men were taking bullets. Dropping back, Frenchy shouted for them to make toward the stern of the speeding Flyaway, where a small boat hung from davits. They retreated, keeping up a fire as they went. Maddened pursuers over-stretched their zeal, and began to hit the deck.

Thinking that he wouldn't need the small boat after all, Frenchy started a triumphant shout, that was drowned by a sudden interruption. Another gun had begun to boom. It was coming from above the forward hatchway. There, rising up to grip the cabin roof, was The Shadow, as alive as ever!

He had faked that dive into the hold as his only chance for safety. Lying low while crooks engaged in battle, The Shadow had produced the very twist that he had originally intended. He was replacing the thinned crew of the Flyaway, to deal with Frenchy's mob, trapped with their leader near the open stern.

The Shadow was not handicapped by lack of ammunition. All along the deck were strewn revolvers, dropped by fallen fighters.

Again, luck stayed with Frenchy Brenn. The Flyaway took a sudden jolt, as someone below cut off the motors. The sounds of battle had been heard by the men who served as engineers; they were coming to see what the trouble was about.

The cruiser's lurch sent The Shadow into a sprawl, from which he rolled to cover; but by the time he could aim again, Frenchy's men had profited by the slackening speed.

They had the small boat over the stern, and Frenchy was in it with them. Two of them were working frantically at a little motor, while Frenchy and another, the last of the doublecrossing mob, were trying to find The Shadow with their fire.

The little boat was a hundred feet away, when a cloaked figure appeared at the stern of the Flyaway. Frenchy was gleeful, as the tiny motor began to chug; then came a whining bullet that dropped the mobbie beside him. Frenchy dived; another shot picked off one of the crooks who had started the motor.

One more such blast, and Frenchy would be alone. He'd have no chance under The Shadow's fire to handle the small boat. Frenchy's face was very pale when he peered above the gunwale, watching The Shadow take precise aim. Then, as Frenchy stared, the cloaked marksman took a crazy upward jolt.

At the same instant, the Flyaway ripped apart, flung to pieces by a mighty blast that came from amidships. There was a burst of crimson flame; a roar that quivered the sea about the vanishing cruiser. Against that flare of fierce light, Frenchy saw a black-cloaked shape flinging outward, like a doll tossed from a tower.

Some dying crew member had fired a bullet into the cruiser's well-filled gasoline tank. The explosion had literally torn the Flyaway to shreds. Blackness, closing in again upon the boiling sea, blotted The Shadow along with the mass of scattered wreckage.

ECHOES ended. Only the chug of the small boat's motor could be heard; until it, too, had faded. Deep silence lay upon the sea beyond the reach of the beam from the distant lighthouse. Frenchy Brenn and his one

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remaining pal were gone, believing themselves the sole survivors from the Flyaway.

They were wrong. Swimming weakly in the dark swell was a figure that still fought to keep afloat. Feeble hands fastened upon a chunk of drifting wood that had been hurled from the ruined Flyaway. Those hands tightened; a head raised itself above cloaked shoulders.

A sound stirred the breeze that was whipping shoreward; a strange, uncanny whisper, that faded long before it reached the white foam that marked the surf upon a beach, no more than a mile away. A whisper that spoke of returning strength; of a determination to live, and settle scores with Frenchy Brenn.

That whisper was the laugh of The Shadow!

CHAPTER VI. EVENTS ASHORE.

THE Albania docked before noon the next day, and by that time, Myrna Elvin was in a most uncomfortable mood. She had told her story time and again to listening officers of the Albania, and with all her sincerity, they had not been entirely impressed.

They granted that she had not participated in murder. That crime was definitely attributed to Frenchy Brenn, the man who had gone overboard. What the listeners doubted was Myrna's story of how Michael Waybrock had approached her, to ask her aid in saving his life.

Her admission that Waybrock had mentioned a box to be taken ashore, and her failure to report the matter immediately to the ship's officers, were taken as proof that she was the smuggler's accomplice. The fact that she was wealthy, and knew many influential persons in New York, were things to be disregarded.

Michael Waybrock was noted for his power over women, particularly blondes.

Moreover, the ladies of his choice were always wealthy ones.

Myrna's story, it seemed, was less important than the test it would receive when she reached New York. What that test was, she didn't guess, until she was introduced to customs officers when she landed.

Those gentlemen calmly opened her trunk and strewed her belongings all over the place. When they found they couldn't conveniently break the trunks apart, they X-rayed them. Finding no smuggled goods, they turned Myrna over to a pair of efficient matrons, who disrobed her and searched every square inch of her clothes from the heels of her shoes to the lining of her hat.

When she had dressed again, Myrna went out on the pier, her temper quite as ruffled as her attire. She expected apologies from the customs officials, but received none. Since Myrna's slate was clean, they were busy picking other passengers who might have smuggled goods in their possession.

Most of the suspects were men; but among the few women, Myrna saw Leona Dubray. She wondered, suddenly, how much the dark-haired woman might know about the murder of Michael Waybrock; but Myrna decided to say nothing to anyone. If Leona chanced to be in the game, it would be the business of the customs officials to find out about it.

Starting from the pier, Myrna saw a taxicab and beckoned to the driver. He gave her a shrewd-faced look, then shook his head. He said that his cab was taken, a fact that Myrna doubted and would have argued about, had not someone called her name. She turned, to see a tall, important-looking man standing with derby hat in

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hand.

The man's face was very long and oval-shaped; his forehead seemed unusually high because his head was quite bald, except for thin streaks of grayish hair just above his ears. He wore gold-rimmed, beribboned eyeglasses, that gave him an air of dignity along with his serious expression.

"You may remember me, Miss Elvin," said the bald, man, in a precise tone. "I am Raymond Kendler."

"Of course!" said Myrna, with a smile. "Mr. Kendler, the jeweler. I have been in your store often."

Kendler nodded, as if accepting the final statement as a matter of course. Kendler's was a jewelry store that boasted many wealthy patrons. His face, though, still seemed troubled.

"I should have arrived earlier," he declared. "I am sure that I could have helped you, Miss Elvin. It wasn't necessary for them to search you. A person of your social standing can be trusted."

"Which is exactly what I told them," smiled Myrna. "Since they didn't believe me, I let them find out that I was right."

Kendler nodded his agreement, then turned to gesture toward a large limousine. It was his car, he said, and he would gladly take Myrna wherever she wanted to go. As for her luggage, he would have his chauffeur arrange about it.

With a triumphant look at the listening taxi driver who had refused her as a passenger, Myrna accepted Kendler's invitation.

While they were waiting in the car, Myrna told Kendler about Waybrock's death. The jeweler seemed very well informed on all the details.

"I have already talked with government men," he stated, "telling them what little I knew about Waybrock. The fellow often came into my store, although I seldom talked with him.

"Perhaps it would be well if you came with me to my penthouse. The government men are still there and would probably like to hear your story.

Once told, you would probably be free from later visits, when they investigate the case.

THE invitation suited Myrna. They arrived at the penthouse, where she was introduced to a swarthy, mustached man named Vic Marquette, who turned out to be a Federal operative. She also met a stocky police inspector whose name was Joe Cardona, and found, to her surprise, that both men sympathized with her recent trials.

Perhaps that was because they had heard from the customs officers, to the effect that she was free of any smuggling charges. Nevertheless, Myrna was quite pleased to meet persons who accepted her story as she told it, without quizzing her regarding details that she did not care to mention.

One of those details was the fact that Michael Waybrock had claimed ownership of Mariner's Isle; the other, that Myrna's rescuer on board the Albania had not been a heroic steward who had died from bullets fired by Frenchy Brenn, but a stranger cloaked in black, who had whirled in from nowhere to put an end to further murder.

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Other visitors arrived at Kendler's, among them a tall man whose features immediately impressed Myrna. They were masklike, those features, with a strangely hawkish expression.

The newcomer's name was Lamont Cranston; he was a celebrated globetrotter, who had arrived in New York that morning, after a long plane trip from South America.

Somehow, when she glanced at Cranston. Myrna found herself thinking of The Shadow. In private life, that cloaked fighter might readily be a man like Cranston. The more that Myrna considered that notion, the better it pleased her. Cranston's presence somehow lulled her into feeling sure that The Shadow was still alive.

Myrna suddenly awakened to the importance of a conversation that was going on about her. Raymond Kendler was standing at a table opening jewel boxes, to show a collection of gems that were small, yet unusually fine.

"These are the sort of stones that have come to me from many sources," he declared, "and at prices so low that I cannot refuse to buy. In every instance, I have made sure that the gems were not stolen articles.

"And yet"—he shrugged hopelessly—"I know that they must have been stolen. These gems, gentlemen, have been cut from larger stones smuggled into this country by such adventurers as Michael Waybrock."

There were nods of agreement. Marquette, Cardona and the rest all understood Kendler's position. Recut jewels were nothing new, although the present game had reached unprecedented proportions. Other large jewelers were facing the same problem as Kendler: that of purchasing gems of this doubtful sort.

As Kendler expressed it, matters had reached a state where it was impossible to draw a line. To turn down gems like those he had on exhibit, would mean that he would have to retire from the jewelry business.

Vic Marquette heard Kendler out, then brought up one angle that the jeweler had mentioned.

"Waybrock wasn't the man in back of this racket," declared the Fed. "He was muscling in on it; that's why he was chopped down last night. We'll still have to find the big-shot."

"Frenchy Brenn?"

"Someone bigger. For all we know, Frenchy may be at the bottom of the Atlantic, after that overboard hop he took last night. His reason for being on the Albania was to take over the goods that Waybrock was trying to smuggle in."

He produced a list, handed it to Kendler. It detailed gems recently purchased abroad, presumably by Michael Waybrock. Kendler's oval face showed amazement.

"The Jangapoor rubies!" he exclaimed. "Why, they once paid a rajah's ransom! And these famous Spanish emeralds, there is no telling how valuable they may be! As for these sapphires, once the property of the Turkish sultan—"

He was shaking his head, bewildered. Marquette pressed him with a most important question.

"Could anyone identify those gems, once they are recut?"

"Never!" returned Kendler, gloomily. "Sold piecemeal, they would have meant an enormous profit even to Waybrock, had he kept them. If these stones have come ashore, we shall know it only when a flood of lesser

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rubies, emeralds, and sapphires appear on the market."

"ONE thing is certain," said Marquette. "Whoever is running this million-dollar racket knows his gems. You agree with that, don't you, Mr. Kendler?"

"Positively," replied Kendler. Then, his voice hesitant: "But I am sure that no reputable jeweler would—"

"Perhaps you could name one who isn't reputable."

Kendler's hesitation was more evident than before. It was quite understandable, his unwillingness to blacklist anyone in his own profession. It was Joe Cardona who put the probing question:

"What about old Amos Marle?"

Momentarily, Kendler compressed his lips; then, facing his questioners, he said frankly:

"I believe that Marle should be watched."

Marquette and Cardona exchanged significant looks, as though they had depended upon Kendler's opinion to settle that particular matter. Myrna noticed, too, that Cranston was keenly interested. Even that, however, did not rouse Myrna's enthusiasm. She had never heard of Amos Marle, nor did she care to learn more about him.

Her blue eyes had taken on a faraway stare, produced by a new idea that had occurred to her. An important idea, in her opinion, because it might concern the safety of The Shadow.

More questions were being put to Kendler, all concerning the man called Marle. Myrna interrupted the discussion to announce that she had remembered an appointment and would have to leave at once. Kendler bowed her to the door, then went back to his conference.

There was another person absent when Kendler returned. Lamont Cranston had stepped to a telephone in a little hallway, and was putting in a call. His message given, he returned almost unnoticed to the penthouse living room. Stopping by a deep window, he gazed to the street below.

He saw Myrna, a tiny figure, when she stepped to the sidewalk. He watched her wave to a cab, then hurry into the taxi as soon as it had stopped. Gazing across the street, Cranston studied a parked coupé as though expecting some move from its direction.

Almost immediately, a man hurried from a little restaurant and entered the parked car. Myrna's cab was still in sight when the coupé wheeled along its trail.

Imperceptibly, Cranston's lips closed to repress a softened sound—a curious echo of a weird mirth that had last been heard amid floating wreckage off the Long Island shore.

That tone, audible only to the personage who uttered it, was the laugh of The Shadow!

CHAPTER VII. MARINER'S ISLE

DURING the next few hours The Shadow, otherwise Lamont Cranston, heard much concerning Amos Marle. It was curious that a man suspected of managing a huge smuggling ring should have escaped The Shadow's previous notice, while the law was working on the case.

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The situation was explained by the fact that the law had but recently heard of Amos Marle. Last night, right after the battle on the water front, Inspector Cardona had received a telephone call from a man who had sounded like a whiny stool pigeon.

The caller had said that "Marle is the guy who is out to snatch the sparklers"—a statement that had been Greek to Joe Cardona, until reports arrived concerning battle on the liner Albania.

This morning, Vic Marquette had received similar information, also by telephone, from a gruff-voiced informant, to the effect that if he, Marquette, wanted Frenchy Brenn, Amos Marle could tell where to find him; which was enough to set Marquette in action.

Bound on the same mission, Cardona and Marquette had met each other outside a cheap jewelry store near the lower East Side. They had entered the place together, to inquire for the proprietor, Amos Marle. They had learned from a pasty-faced clerk that Marle was away on business, and hadn't stated when he would return.

Though he sold cheap jewelry, Amos Marle was a man well known in the trade. The investigators had learned that before they came to Kendler's. Gravely, Raymond Kendler agreed with Cardona and Marquette when they said that Marle was noted for his ability at buying up collections of valuable gems.

"I have made purchases from Marle," declared Kendler, "at prices that were very reasonable. But none of these"—he gestured to the gems on his table—"came from Marle. Curiously, that fact is something that has made me wonder."

The Shadow was the first to catch the significance of Kendler's statement, although he did not show it. He left that to the others. Cardona snapped to it more quickly than Marquette.

"I get you, Mr. Kendler," announced the inspector. "You've been wondering why Marle didn't get hold of these bargains, since he's usually Johnny on the spot. In other words, it looks like Marle had this stuff to begin with, and peddled it around before it got to you."

Kendler nodded.

"Good enough," put in Marquette. "Let's get down to business. Maybe Marle had double-crossed some of his pals, or fixed other chaps, like he did with Waybrock. That would account for the tip-off. Our job is to decide what we're going to do about it."

They did decide, after a prolonged discussion. It was agreed that the right system would be to watch Marle, with two purposes. First, to learn if stolen jewels were delivered at his dingy store; second, to find out what happened to such gems, if they were received. Cardona and Marquette agreed to split the assignment, using picked men for the job.

An hour later, they had finished with their plans. On Kendler's table lay a big map, showing the streets near Marle's place of business. Pins with heads of various colors showed where the picked men would be posted when Amos Marle returned.

A lamp was lighted on the table, for dusk was settling by the time the plans were completed. The glow showed Lamont Cranston shaking hands with Raymond Kendler. Leaving the penthouse, The Shadow descended in an elevator, and during the downward trip his lips showed a faint smile.

The Shadow had linked certain facts that interested him. The number that Spike Hegley had called last night had merely been another pay station, but it was located on the East Side and it happened to be within a block

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of Marle's jewelry store. The map showed a convenient parking lot within the next half block, where Marle could have kept a car.

Finally, the parking lot was within a quarter hour's drive from Ricky's Café. The hand that had fired the death shot from the window of the passing coupé could easily have belonged to Amos Marle.

THE gloom that greeted The Shadow when he reached the street was also welcomed by Myrna Elvin. Miles away from New York; the girl was speeding along in a high-powered roadster, bound for her cottage on the Connecticut shore. Glancing frequently in the mirror, she had noticed a small car following her; but it had dropped back a while ago.

It didn't occur to Myrna that she had reached a road that led to one place only: the shore district where her cottage was located. If the other car happened to be following her, its driver had merely worked a bluff by dropping out of sight. He could come along later and look for Myrna's roadster.

The reason for Myrna's mental lapse could be blamed on the single thought that gripped her. She suspected that Michael Waybrock had expected to board a boat at sea and head in to a hidden base. Frenchy Brenn had blocked that, and taken over Waybrock's scheme; and when he had gone overboard, The Shadow had followed.

Either one, or both, might have reached Waybrock's waiting boat. That granted, Myrna reasoned that they would have arrived later at the base. She knew where the base was, for Waybrock had told her. It was the wooded clump of land called Mariner's Isle.

By secretly visiting that island, Myrna hoped that she might aid The Shadow, if he happened be a prisoner. She was intrigued by the possible opportunity of repaying her own rescue through performance of a similar favor for The Shadow.

Shortly, the headlights illuminated the front of a high-porched cottage built upon a slope. Swinging past, Myrna reached a parking space on the far side.

Walking back to the front of the house, she passed a small side window and reached a padlocked door directly beneath the rail of the broad porch. The basement that she entered was an improvised boathouse, containing a small canoe. There were stairs leading up into the house and Myrna followed them into a square living room, where she turned on an electric lamp.

Stepping into a connecting closet, she found old garments that suited her coming journey: dark slacks, blue jersey, and canvas sneakers. Removing her town clothes, she hung them in the closet and clad herself in the camping garb.

The season was early, but there was a chance that someone had seen the light in the cottage. Myrna decided to leave it on, and she also unlocked the front door, to make it look as though she had just stepped out but would soon return.

Going down into the boat cellar, she tested two flashlights on a corner shelf. Both were still usable, but one produced a better glow, so she tucked it beneath her belt.

After dragging the light canoe from the boat cellar, Myrna replaced the padlock on the door and clamped it. Using the flashlight, she hauled the canoe along a crooked path until she reached the water's edge.

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BULKY, black, Mariner's Isle showed dimly. The night was moonless, and clouds rendered the starlight feeble. The water, itself, was inky, which pleased Myrna perfectly. The light from her cottage faded among the trees, as she paddled cautiously in the direction of the isle.

Soon, the island loomed above her. Working the canoe against its shore, Myrna stepped on sandy ground and pulled the craft toward a clump of bushes. She crept in among the trees, then began a search for a path, keeping the flashlight close to the ground.

Within five minutes, Myrna stumbled upon a brambly pathway. It twisted, snakelike, toward the center of the island and Myrna followed it. Every step seemed to engulf her in blacker gloom, until she felt herself within a tiny world consisting of nothing but the blackness that was almost a part of Mariner's Isle.

Ordinarily, Myrna would have experienced an increase of dread; but she was steeled by her adventures of the night before.

The path widened into a clearing. Myrna's flashlight glimmered on the ivied walls of an old stone house that dated back at least a hundred years. The place looked entirely deserted; it wasn't the sort of residence that Myrna had pictured as belonging to Michael Waybrock.

She decided, at last, that Waybrock had merely used the place for staying overnight, probably bringing camping equipment with him. The stone steps were in good condition; so was the front door, which Myrna found unlocked. She entered the house, expecting the floor to creak; but it proved quite solid.

She was beginning to understand why Waybrock had chosen a house of stone.

The place was a veritable fortress. Its windows had heavy steel shutters, all clamped tight. Doors, whether closed or open, were heavy and strong and mounted on stout hinges. Some had bars that could be swung across them, and Myrna guessed that they were intended as prison cells.

There was a stairway leading upward; on one side, a deep hall, on the other, a door that stood ajar. Myrna flashed her light in one direction, then the other. Satisfied that all was safe, she began to climb the stairs. On the first step, she heard a creak.

Curious, that sound. The step seemed solid enough. Myrna tested it again; the creak was repeated, louder than before, but in a more puzzling fashion, it seemed to come while she was lifting her foot, instead of pressing it.

Next, the creak came clearly while she was standing stock-still, and Myrna suddenly realized that it wasn't from the step at all. It came from the doorway just beside the stairs. Quickly, Myrna wheeled about, turning her light into a yawning space. Out from the opened doorway came a chunky driving figure.

Myrna sprang away, toward the hallway on the other side. Another man rose up to meet her. Leathery hands clamped her arms behind her, flapped themselves across her mouth, preventing her from making useless outcry.

Struggling frantically, Myrna was shoved to the steps, where the same hands began to bind her with short lengths of stout rope.

Myrna's last effort at resistance came when her silent captors tried to slap a wide strip of adhesive plaster across her mouth. Then a fist lifted itself to the girl's jaw with a, short, deft motion. Myrna scarcely felt the shock. Her closed eyes saw a starry flash; then sudden blackness.

Slumped upon the old stairway, Myrna Elvin made no more trouble for her captors.

CHAPTER VIII. SMUGGLERS MEET

BACK in New York, a tall, weary-looking panhandler was shambling along an East Side thoroughfare. Near a corner, he stopped to accost a man who was standing in a doorway, then shied off, as if he had received an electric shock.

Twitching his pasty lips, the panhandler muttered an apology and sidled along the street. Once clear of the doorway, his mutters turned to a soft, whispered laugh.

The Shadow, posing as a Bowery bum, had walked into a member of Cardona's headquarters squad and had done it purposely. Knowing where the detective was to be stationed, he had found little difficulty in picking out the doorway.

He had given the dick a good look at his face, knowing that it would serve as a passport, letting him continue farther down the block. For the detective had seen nothing hawklike nor distinguished in those well-disguised features. He had taken The Shadow for just another bum, the sort who couldn't get past the doorway of Marle's jewelry store, and therefore didn't need to be watched.

Nearing the store, The Shadow paused. He let his face press against the lighted window, for the benefit of other hidden observers. He was doing what any derelict might do. He was taking in an envious view of Marle's display window, where dozens of gaudy low-priced items attracted the eyes of passers.

Through the window, The Shadow saw a counter that ran along the side wall and the back. At one corner was a large safe, built into the wall. In the other The Shadow saw a curtained doorway leading into a rear room. There were sleepy-eyed clerks talking with shabby customers, but none of them interested The Shadow.

His keen eyes had picked out Amos Marle. The jeweler was back from his business trip.

In appearance, Marle suited his peculiar reputation. Bent above a counter, his shoulders showed a fixed stoop. He appeared to be of medium height, and his face, like his shoulders, bore signs of increasing age. Marle's features were drawn and withery; the color of old parchment.

His eyesight, too, seemed feeble. He was wearing large horn-rimmed spectacles, through which he peered with squinty gaze while he examined a trayful of cheap finger rings. Clamped on his head was a tight-fitting skullcap from which long locks of white hair projected, to form a shocky circle.

He had a miserly look, old Marle, and if economy was his motto, his hair suited it. From all appearances, Marle hadn't visited a barber shop within the past three months.

The Shadow's gaze went back to the display. He saw snake rings, old-fashioned stickpins, bracelets that looked like chunks of glass set in gilded tin. Of the few genuine gems in Marle's window not one resembled any of the finely cut stones that The Shadow had seen at Kendler's penthouse.

Time was up. If The Shadow gawked any longer, posted watchers would begin to think that he was signaling to Marle. The Shadow did not want to confuse the issue by starting the law on the trail of a pretended panhandler. Nor did he care to go to the trouble of giving followers the slip. The Shadow had other work ahead.

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SHAMBLING along the block, The Shadow passed another hidden watcher. He cut through the parking lot, looking for a sleek coupé that could be identified as the one that had passed the alley in back of Ricky's. No such car was on the premises.

Reaching the next street, The Shadow paused in front of a deserted building. Five seconds later, that space was empty.

The disappearance of the shambly panhandler was rather baffling. The only clue to the riddle was the fact that a limousine a dozen yards ahead suddenly pulled away from the curb. Quite as odd as the fact that a panhandler had vanished, was the fact that a ten thousand dollar automobile had been parked in this forsaken block. It would have seemed preposterous, however, to consider the two events as connected.

For that very reason, The Shadow had arranged the two in sequence. In the back seat of the departing car, he was peeling away his bum's makeup.

Tugging zippers in the sides of his shabby coat and trousers, he removed those garments and stuffed them into a space beneath the seat.

He was Cranston again; but from the same hiding place he was bringing out a cloak and hat—the garb of The Shadow. Laying those jet-black clothes in readiness, The Shadow produced a pair of earphones. Clamping them on his head, he turned a dial that completed the short-wave hookup.

Talking into a tiny microphone, The Shadow was sending his voice through a special mixer that made it unintelligible to any listener except the designated receiver. His whisper, heard by anyone else, would have sounded like the blur of static.

A steady voice came through the earphones; a tone that would be choppy, broken into disjointed syllables, if caught by an outsider. The Shadow was talking to his contact man, Burbank, who took telephoned reports from various agents.

The Shadow asked if Vincent had reported. He received a negative reply. Then came a report that he received with interest. It concerned a taxi driver named Moe Shrevnitz.

Signing off, The Shadow put away the radio equipment, spoke an order through the tube that led to the chauffeur's seat. His tone was the calm voice of Lamont Cranston, stating that he had decided not to return to the club. Instead, he gave an address quite unfamiliar to the chauffeur.

As they rode in that direction, The Shadow put on his cloak and hat. His whispered laugh was audible in the confines of the limousine's rear seat. The Shadow had learned facts of vital importance. Facts so useful that he could let Joe Cardona and Vic Marquette worry about Amos Marle, for the present.

When the limousine halted in a secluded West Side block, The Shadow dismissed it for the night. While speaking in Cranston's tone, he was gliding from the half-opened door in a fashion that would have amazed the chauffeur, had he turned around to look.

Entering a dark alley between two houses, The Shadow studied the building on the right. It was barren, black, with boarded-up windows, quite as deserted-looking as the house that Myrna Elvin had discovered on Mariner's Isle.

Besides the boards, the basement windows were provided with steel gratings. Noting that with a tiny flashlight, The Shadow decided to try the floor above. Prodding a cracked board with the muzzle of an

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automatic, he worked the wood loose. Then his deft fingers were in action, tugging with the strength of steel.

Silently ripping a narrow space, The Shadow pulled himself through the first floor window, then replaced the boards that covered his improvised entrance. His flashlight blinked through empty rooms and halls, until he discovered a stairway leading downward.

At the bottom, The Shadow encountered a thick door with a solid lock. He went to work with a set of oddly shaped picks, that included a tweezer-like instrument that had the strength of pliers. The door yielded and The Shadow moved across a dark tiny room, guided solely by a minute beam of light that had the exact shape of a keyhole.

Reaching the far door, he inserted a peculiar skeleton key that delivered drops of oil from its hollow interior.

Probing the lock, The Shadow turned it silently. Opening the door a scant half inch, he looked in upon a scene that he was due to long remember.

FRENCHY BRENN was seated in the corner of a lavishly furnished room. He was facing three companions. One of them was Leona Dubray, attired in a white sharkskin sports dress. Her shoes were yellow-hued sandals, and her hat, a creation of the same color, was a coarse straw trimmed with a cluster of artificial cherries.

The other two were men; one, a pasty-faced chap who looked like a playboy. He was lounging in a deep chair, his feet stretched to the top of a wooden case that contained two dozen liquor bottles. The last member of the group was a middle-aged man, whose long-jawed face showed a big-toothed grin.

"Sorry I kept you waiting," announced Frenchy, stroking his hand through his hair "I had a lot of things to do before I got here."

"So did I" put in Leona. "I spent about fifteen bucks riding in a dozen different cabs."

Leona was wrong. She had been riding in one cab all afternoon. Its driver Was Moe Shrevnitz, the very hackie who had refused Myrna as a fare at the steamship pier. It had been Moe's job to pick out a most likely customer, and he had chosen Leona. Always around when she needed another cab, Moe had finally left Leona at this hidden meeting place.

Frenchy turned to the long-jawed man, said, "All right, Buck. Let's see em".

Obligingly, Buck began to remove his teeth. They weren't a false set, they were single teeth, wedged in between genuine ones, and each tooth was hollow. From half a dozen false molars of unusual size, Buck tapped out six emeralds.

"All I could carry," he announced, "but I got by easy. Corky here has the rest, along with sapphires."

The younger man was Corky, and he widened his grin as he leaned toward the liquor case. He didn't remove the bottles; he simply broke the seals and removed the corks. Taking a cork between top and center, he twisted it apart. Embedded in the center was a smuggled emerald.

Soon, several of the large gems were on the table. The sapphires proved of even greater size, when Corky came to them. He kept up a drawling speech, as he proceeded to disgorge the jewels.

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"They went through me right," he declared, "and they were even suspicious of the bottles. Boy, you should have seen those monkeys shake 'em up and hold 'em to the light! But they passed up the works. Said I could take the booze ashore if I paid the right amount of duty. So I did."

Leona was removing her hat. As she laid it on her lap, she voiced in harsh contralto:

"I'll bet that Elvin dame got a real going over. She was the one they had their eye on. But I didn't have any cinch of it. I raised a squawk when they were turning this chapeau inside out. Told 'em it had cost me fifty smackers in Patee. So they got softhearted, the matrons did, and let the cherries ride."

Leona was cutting those cherries open with a tiny penknife. Out of the cotton-wadded centers, she poked big rubies, the last of the many gems that Frenchy had stolen from Waybrock's stateroom before murdering the man himself.

Frenchy was again the possessor of the much-prized swag. He poured the glittering gems into a chamois bag, where the emeralds and rubies formed a contrast of green and red, sprinkled with the purple sparkle of the sapphires.

"I'll start these on their way, chuckled Frenchy. "I phoned the chief just before I got here, and he told me—"

FRENCHY'S eyes dwindled to tiny, fear-fixed beads that matched the glitter of the gems. He was staring across the room toward an opening door. The others shifted their gaze along with his. Like Frenchy, they were petrified.

The Shadow was on the threshold, advancing with a brace of leveled automatics, each .45 moving back and forth between a pair of startled crooks. Not a hand moved except Leona's, as her fingers spread to drop the penknife into her open handbag.

A strange tone shivered the stillness of that room: the mirth of The Shadow, sibilant in its whisper. Crooks cowed away, rising shakily to their feet at The Shadow's command. They knew the cloaked invader's intent. He was going to march them, in helpless single file, out from this basement lair.

Of the four, the one who seemed most nervous was Leona. She couldn't rise, at first. Even her hands were sagging; the fingers of one dipped farther into the handbag, which showed such harmless contents as a change purse and a fountain pen.

Then, with a suddenness, Leona's manner changed. She launched forward to her feet; her fingers shot from the bag, the fountain pen between them. Her thumb, lucky in its rapid flip, released the pen clip. Before The Shadow could wheel, a puff of tear gas sprinkled toward his face.

Crooks dived, as The Shadow flung his cloaked sleeve upward; too late. Eyes blinded, he was firing instinctively, but he had spun too far to keep his proper sense of direction. He wanted to keep crooks at bay until his vision cleared; for his eyes, shutting rapidly, had suffered nothing more than temporary harm.

In the midst of his shots, The Shadow heard an answering report that told him his bullets were taking no effect. Thinking he had located the sound, he emptied his guns in its general direction, for he knew that Frenchy was the marksman. The murderer once settled, the rest might weaken; for chances were that only Frenchy had a gun.

Again, The Shadow's fire was scattered. Echoes from the basement walls had deceived him. The Shadow's final shots brought plaster from those walls, as Frenchy fired again. With a forward topple, The Shadow

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sprawled inert upon the floor.

"That got him!" chuckled Frenchy. He stepped forward, whipped The Shadow's hat away and stared at the face of Cranston. Then, after a closer look, he added: "Cripes, no! It only creased him! That slug slid along his skull like it had hit a chunk of armor plate!"

"Try again. Frenchy," suggested Leona, coldly. "This time, shove the muzzle right against his dome."

Frenchy gave his revolver a tricky juggle and shoved it into his pocket.

"Last night," he reminded, "you said to take it easy. That's still good advice, Leona."

Going through The Shadow's pockets, Frenchy removed everything that he could find, including a reserve supply of cartridges. Examining the automatics, he found them empty. Jestingly, he shoved the useless guns back into the holsters beneath The Shadow's cloak. Turning to the men beside him, Frenchy ordered:

"Tie the guy up, and do it right! Use wire; there's plenty of it around here. Then take him away—you know where."

Leona was protesting frantically. She preferred to see The Shadow dead. Frenchy shoved her aside, to prevent her from getting the revolver that he had tucked into his pocket.

"Lay off!" he snarled. "You'll get your chance to croak The Shadow later, if you want. But do you think I'm sap enough to bump him without asking the chief?"

"You know what the chief will say," retorted Leona. "What's the good of asking?"

"Nobody knows what he'll say, except himself. We'll be hearing from him after the swag is along its way."

LEONA subsided. She watched Buck and Corky finish the binding of The Shadow to Frenchy's satisfaction. The pair lugged their cloaked prisoner out through a rear door. Frenchy followed with Leona; they listened, until they heard a car pull away from the rear street. Then, with the jewels bulging from Frenchy's other coat pocket, the pair took their own route through the darkness.

"Take it from me," confided Frenchy. "If The Shadow ever does wake up, he won't know what happened to him!"

Frenchy was almost right. A long while later, The Shadow did wake up, to sense himself floating through blackness. A jolt of the car in which he was riding threw his aching head against a door and sentenced him to another period of oblivion.

He awoke again when Corky and Buck were dragging him from the car, but in the brief respite The Shadow sensed nothing more than a flicker of vague light; which vanished suddenly, when he felt himself pitched backward into gloom.

How long that tumble lasted was another fact unknown; for the first jar that The Shadow's head received sent him into another spell of complete unconsciousness.

Blackness, it seemed, had reached up to take The Shadow, clutching that master of darkness in a grip that could only be a foretaste of death itself!

CHAPTER IX. TRAILS CROSS

HOURS had passed; how many, Myrna was unable to estimate. There were two reasons why she couldn't see her wrist watch: first, because her hands were bound behind her; again, because the room where she lay was pitch-dark.

Her captors had dumped her in one of the rooms that reminded her of prison cells, and had clamped the big door from the other side. Long ago, she had given up trying to open her mouth, for the adhesive tape was firmly affixed to her lips.

The first break in the monotony came when Myrna heard a scraping sound at the door. Someone was lifting the bar on the other side, and in a very few seconds the door itself swung open.

Even though it signified a return to her captors, Myrna was somewhat pleased. All along, she had been wondering what would happen to her next, and had decided that the sooner it occurred, the better.

Dim light from the hallway showed Myrna in the corner. Immediately, the door went shut; and the girl saw the glare of a flashlight. Someone was crossing the room toward her corner, and from his actions, he could not be one of the men who had taken her a prisoner. This visitor seemed very anxious to keep his entry a secret.

The flashlight glimmered upward when it reached the corner. Myrna saw a man's profile in the glow. He looked young, rather handsome, and quite earnest of expression. Whoever he might be, he could not belong to a band of thugs. Such was Myrna's immediate and emphatic opinion.

Rapidly, the young man disposed of Myrna's bonds. He helped the girl to her feet, quietly told her to follow him. He did not add that she was to avoid making any noise. That admonition was unnecessary, considering that Myrna's mouth was still taped.

Upon reaching the hallway, Myrna's rescuer piloted her toward the front door. He remained, to close the door of the cell room and replace the clamp.

Overtaking the blonde, he guided her away from the house, until they struck the very path that Myrna had used when she came from the beach.

At the shore, the man suggested that Myrna remove the adhesive tape by using salt water to moisten it. She managed to loosen the sticky gag, then gave it a sharp tug, that pulled it entirely away. After rubbing her lips and finding them still intact, Myrna turned to her new rescuer.

"I owe you many thanks," she said in a low tone; "I suppose the next thing is to introduce myself. My name is Myrna Elvin."

"Mine is Harry Vincent," returned the young man, quietly. "I have seen you before, Miss Elvin. In fact, I followed your car from New York this evening."

Momentarily, Myrna was bewildered; then a sudden thought struck her. "Tell me," she questioned, "did you come of your own accord—or did someone order you to follow me?"

"I was acting under orders."

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"Orders from—"

Myrna halted, not knowing what name to supply. Harry knew the reason for her hesitation. He completed the statement:

"Orders from The Shadow."

The name electrified Myrna. How well it fitted her cloaked rescuer of the night before! She didn't have to ask Harry if The Shadow had avoided death after his dive from the Albania. From the fact that Harry was following his cloaked chief's orders, Myrna divined that The Shadow must still be alive.

In the midst of a grateful sigh, Myrna realized that Harry was speaking again, discussing matters important to them both. Myrna listened, intently.

"You were gone when I reached your cottage," explained Harry. "I knew that you might have gone to the island, so I found a rowboat and came here. Noticing lights among the trees, I decided to land on the other side.

"I found the house: Its occupants were outside. Thinking that you might be a prisoner, I tried several rooms and finally found you. I had come across this path earlier, and it seemed the best one to take. If you wait here, I'll cross the island and bring my boat around."

Myrna shook her head.

"That won't be necessary," she told him. "I have a canoe right near here, in the bushes."

The news pleased Harry. It meant that they could work another plan. While they were looking for the canoe, he suggested that Myrna paddle to the mainland and get to a telephone. She could call a certain number—one that Harry gave her—and thereby get word to The Shadow.

"If others are on their way," concluded Harry, "we can still trap the crooks who are here on the island. I'll stay and watch them, while you do the rest."

The idea sounded perfect, but it struck a snag when they failed to find Myrna's canoe. Whether it had drifted away, or had been found by the mobsters mattered very little. The point was that Harry and Myrna were now dependent upon a single boat, which happened to be on the other side of Mariner's Isle, a full mile away.

"We'll go across the island together," decided Harry. "That's all we can do. It will be a long walk around—"

He stopped as Myrna began to press objects in his hand. The items were a wrist watch, a pair of finger rings and a bracelet.

"Keep these," she whispered. "You can return them later. I don't want to lose them."

"You can't mean—"

"That I'm going to swim ashore? Why not?" Myrna laughed softly. "It's only a half mile. I've often taken a swim of twice that distance, even with a handicap."

Harry was puzzled, as he repeated: handicap?"

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"Yes," replied Myrna. "I mean a bathing suit. I won't need one tonight, in all this pitch-darkness. You'd better gather up my clothes, though, after I've started. We wouldn't want the crooks to find them."

But you'll need clothes when you get ashore!" "There are plenty in the cottage. I won't have any trouble finding it, because I left the light on in the living room. So wait right here, Mr. Vincent, and make sure that everything is safe."

While Harry waited, Myrna went beyond the bushes along the shore. Soon, Harry heard a light splash, then a rippling sound that soon faded. Creeping shoreward, he found Myrna's clothes and promptly gathered them into a bundle, rolling the silk stockings and undergarments inside the darker camp attire that Myrna had worn.

THROUGH dark waters, Myrna was swimming smoothly, steadily, watching for the light ahead. She saw it after a few minutes, a sparkle among the trees. She was glad, for the water had proven colder than she expected. But the swim was merely troublesome; not difficult.

Myrna came ashore, beneath silent, brooding trees that cut off the twinkles of the few faint stars. She found the twisty path that led to her cottage, but she was forced to proceed along it very slowly.

The ground was damp from recent rains, and her bare feet could not gain the grip that she had managed with her rubber-soled sneakers. There were brambles, too along the path, that scratched her arms and bare body.

At last she was at the porch steps, ready to, scurry indoors. Sounds suddenly deterred her; those sounds were men's voices, coming from the cottage itself!

Invaders had come here ahead of her, cutting Myrna off from a goal that had become tremendously important, considering her unclad state. Frantically, she was prompted to return to the shore and swim back to the island; then, she remembered that Harry Vincent would be gone where she couldn't reach him, and that he would have her discarded clothes with him.

Moving sidelong from the cottage steps, Myrna remembered the door into the boat cellar. She felt for it and found it; then her fingers encountered the padlock. It was locked, as she had left it, and the key was in a pocket of the slacks that she had left on Mariner's Isle!

At that moment, Myrna thought that she had reached the bounds of her predicament. She was wrong. Her dilemma was soon to call for haste, along with headwork. A sound disturbed the stillness of the woods. Turning about, her back against the padlocked door, she stared at the headlights of an automobile that was moving slowly through the trees.

Those lights began a long, slow swing. The car was coming to this cottage! When the lights rounded the final bend, their glare would be focused full upon the spot where Myrna stood. Against the darkness of the green-painted cellar door, her white slender figure would be instantly revealed!

Myrna stood as motionless as if the chill water of the Sound had frozen her. She watched the swinging lights like a bird fascinated by a creeping serpent. It wasn't until the lights were making their final turn that Myrna came to life. Sheer desire for self-preservation caused her to scramble away from the sweeping glow, toward the corner of the cottage most remote from the lights.

Her hands found that corner in the darkness. She stumbled along the side wall and sank to the ground. Lights came into view, but they were not turned in her direction. Myrna's new fear was that these arriving crooks might discover her after they had parked beside the cottage.

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Somehow, she felt conspicuous, even in the darkness. Crouching as close as possible to the wall, she found a space where her knee nudged a pane of glass. It was a tiny window, one that opened into the boat cellar. Myrna was delighted, when she found that the window was loose.

Regardless of the noise she made, the girl thrust her feet against the pane.

Hinged at the top, the window flapped inward, and before Myrna could fling her arms wide enough to stop the sudden momentum, she was sliding into the cellar itself.

She struck the damp cement floor with a jolt that left her half-bewildered; but throughout her mental whirl she recognized that she was safe, for the present, at least.

CRUNCHING footsteps sounded on gravel outside the window, five feet above her head. Myrna heard them pound upon the steps that led up to the porch. Thought of these new intruders on the floor above made her feel more helpless than ever.

Apparently; crooks intended to occupy the cottage all night, which wasn't a pleasant outlook for Myrna as she shivered in the cellar. She had put herself in a spot that might prove even worse than her prison room in the old house on Mariner's Isle.

She couldn't go upstairs, for the door opened directly into the living room, which was occupied by her self-invited guests. Nor could she leave by the large door at the front of the boat cellar, for it was padlocked on the other side. An exit by the little window was the only route, and it would prove more difficult than her swift entrance.

Looking up, Myrna could not see the window in the darkness. She would have to use a light to find it; fortunately, there was a flashlight in this cellar, the one with feeble batteries that Myrna had rejected before setting out to Mariner's Isle.

The flashlight lay on a shelf against the opposite wall. Since the cellar no longer contained the canoe, there should be little difficulty in crossing the dark floor that lay between. With that thought, Myrna came to her feet and started in the right direction.

She tripped unexpectedly at the center of the cellar, stumbling over something in the middle of the floor. Catching her balance, Myrna stifled a startled gasp and scampered the remaining distance. Frantically, she pawed along the shelf, found the flashlight and turned about.

Her hand at arm's length, Myrna flicked a circle of light toward the place where she had stumbled. She intended to risk no more than a few blinks from the flashlight; but when she pressed the on switch, she was too amazed to turn off the light.

The thing that had tripped Myrna was the sprawled, motionless figure of a man whose torn, rumpled clothes were partly obscured by a black cloak that lay across him like a shroud. His face was turned away, hidden by a slouch hat that was tilted between his head and shoulder.

Pitiful though that inert form appeared, it stirred Myrna's recollections to a scene that was vivid and impressive. She remembered the moments when a similar being, very much alive, had battled with a desperate murderer.

The imaginary quest that had taken her to Mariner's Isle had ended with a reality, here in the cellar of the girl's own cottage.

Myrna Elvin had found The Shadow!

CHAPTER X. THE SHADOW'S RETURN

DURING the next half dozen minutes, Myrna's own plight was gone entirely from her mind. She was concerned only with the welfare of The Shadow, whose senseless condition she first mistook for death. Approaching with the dull flashlight, Myrna knelt beside the silent figure, lifted the slouch hat and looked at The Shadow's face.

That action produced a discovery which amazed her. She recognized the features of Lamont Cranston, hawkish despite their pallor. Cranston was The Shadow—something that reason had told her was impossible. Nevertheless, once known, the fact revealed much to Myrna.

It fitted with the fact that Harry Vincent had been sent to guard her. Cranston, a guest at Kendler's penthouse, had been in an admirable position to arrange such a matter. Immediately after her arrival ashore, Myrna had again been under the protection of The Shadow.

How could The Shadow have come here?

Myrna answered that mental question promptly. He was a victim of the mob that had invaded the main floor of the cottage, the very ones responsible for Myrna's own dilemma. The Shadow was still alive; Myrna learned that when her fingers felt his heartbeats. But his enemies probably didn't intend to let him live much longer.

He was bound with twisted wires that would hold him helpless, even if he revived. Myrna knew a cure for that situation. Returning to the shelf, she found a pair of pliers. With them, she untwisted the wire bonds.

Freed of that grip, The Shadow's figure slumped; gave a half roll on the floor. Myrna thought that she could hear a faint sigh from The Shadow's lips.

Something slipped within the folds of The Shadow's cloak, making a muffled thud as it struck the floor. Drawing away the cloak, Myrna found an automatic that had slid from its holster. Holding the gun in one hand, she arose. The cloak came with her. Myrna realized that she was still grasping the black garment, and that it had gone free of The Shadow's shoulders when he rolled.

Myrna had found the answer to her own need. The cloak, at present, was useless to The Shadow; but it was exactly what Myrna wanted. Eagerly, she slipped her arms into the cloak sleeves and wrapped the garment tightly around her body.

Though Myrna was tall, the cloak was too long for her. She felt as if she had put on an oversized bathrobe. Her hands were lost in the sleeves; the hem of the cloak dragged the floor. Those details were fortunate in a sense, for Myrna realized that she was clothed in complete blackness, except for her hair. She could not risk a venture into the night with her blond locks in sight.

Picking up the slouch hat, she combed her bobbed hair upward and clamped the headgear in place. The transformation was complete. She felt a surge of confidence. The Shadow used these garments to blend with the darkness of night. Myrna could do the same.

Then dread returned. Myrna wasn't fearing for herself. She was thinking of The Shadow.

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With crooks upstairs, engaged perhaps in discussing the fate that they intended for The Shadow, it would be folly to leave him here. One alternative was to remain on guard; but that would be useless, if a crisis came.

From the little she knew of guns, Myrna was sure that The Shadow's weapons were empty, particularly as mobsters would hardly be foolish enough to leave him armed for battle, once they had captured him. Pinch-hitting for The Shadow, Myrna would never have a chance to fight it out with men of crime.

Not unless she forced the issue, catching her enemies unaware.

What if crooks were suddenly confronted by The Shadow at a moment when they still believed they held him helpless! Sight of a cloaked foe, ready with a gun, might drive them to frantic flight. Frenchy Brenn, a double murderer, had fled when faced by The Shadow.

The opportunity might pass, if Myrna waited for The Shadow to regain full consciousness. There was a simpler way to work the ruse. One which occurred to Myrna because of the two garments, black cloak and slouch hat, which at present constituted her entire apparel. She could masquerade as The Shadow!

CAREFULLY, Myrna adjusted the cloak sleeves so that her hands were nearly free, yet did not quite show. Through the right sleeve she gripped the automatic, holding it as if she wore a glove. She elbowed the slouch hat more evenly on her head. Crossing her left arm in front of her, she kept the cloak tightly wrapped about her.

Myrna wasn't dry from her swim; hence the cloak clung to her as she stole up the stairs. Reaching the door that opened into the living room, the girl took a deep breath. Uncrossing the fingers of her hidden left hand, she turned the doorknob, then gave the door a sudden fling.

The gun ahead of her, Myrna thrust herself into the room. Her entrance was dramatic, for the table lamp cast just the proper glow upon the open doorway. She saw two men swing from the table, where they had been drinking from a liquor bottle that had a wadded chunk of paper for a cork.

Those two were Buck and Corky. Myrna did not recognize them as passengers from the Albania. She was interested only in their reaction, and it was a startled one. Half drunk, they took Myrna for The Shadow, and uttered fearful grunts as they lifted their hands above their heads.

Across the room, Myrna saw two other persons, who must have come in the car that arrived a short while before. She recognized that pair: Frenchy Brenn and Leona Dubray.

They were almost as startled as Buck and Corky. With good reason, too, for Frenchy had been questioning his two accomplices just before Myrna appeared. He had doubted that the pair could have kept proper watch over The Shadow and the liquor bottle at the same time. Thus Frenchy, and Leona also, could readily believe that Myrna was The Shadow.

All would have gone well for Myrna, had she chosen her next move properly. She should have concentrated upon the men near the table, motioning them toward the door with her gun. If they had started a retreat, Frenchy and Leona would have bolted.

But Myrna knew that Frenchy was the most dangerous enemy. She decided to bluff him with a direct threat. Remembering the quick methods of The Shadow, Myrna took three side steps from the doorway. Hardly had she shifted, before Leona Dubray uttered a triumphant shout.

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The dark woman pointed to the spot that Myrna had left. Frenchy stared; he saw what Leona had noticed, the marks of small bare feet imprinted on the floor.

"It's the dame!" shrieked Leona wild with glee. "She must have swum over from the island and found The Shadow's outfit! I'll bet all she's got on her is that cloak and hat—and an empty gat, that she thinks can scare us!"

BEFORE Myrna could spring away, Leona pounced across the room and plucked the automatic from the girl's hand.

Frenchy was next; he snatched away the slouch hat, letting Myrna's blond hair tumble around her pale, determined face. Raucous in their laughter, the two dropped back with their trophies.

Free for the moment, Myrna thought of flight. She turned toward the door that led through the dressing closet, but before she could reach it Corky sprang after her. He caught the cloak, gave it a terrific yank, that completely whipped it from Myrna's back.

Her arms flung high, Myrna missed the doorway when she grabbed for it. Actually staggered by the loss of the cloak, she finished her twist with a backward tumble.

She was sprawling toward a corner near the table, her last chance of escape ended. But as she fell, Myrna could hear a strident laugh that drowned the jeers of her enemies. As she landed in the corner, her elbows struck the walls, saving her head from a hard jolt as it tilted back.

Eyes opened wide, Myrna saw a sight that restored her faded hope. Not one of the crooks was faced in her direction. All had turned toward the doorway from the cellar. There stood The Shadow. Cloakless, he had the appearance of Cranston, but the sinister mirth that came from his lips gave proof of his identity.

His challenge held crooks riveted. They looked askance when they saw an automatic in his fist, the big gun raised, ready to sledge down the first attacker. Then a betraying quiver of The Shadow's laugh told that he was still half dazed. Encouraged, the crooks sprang to battle. Buck was the first. Nearest to The Shadow, the big-toothed man yanked a revolver and drove in beneath The Shadow's descending arm. Reeling back, The Shadow shoved his free hand forward, making an instinctive clutch for Buck's gun wrist. The grab succeeded. Buck's hand twisted full about just as he pulled the trigger.

The mobster, not The Shadow's was the man who slumped to the floor. The revolver skidded from Buck's opening hand and bounced across toward Myrna's corner. Again The Shadow's laugh rang out, this time with confidence and vigor.

Frenchy was springing toward the door to the porch. He wanted a safe place, before he opened fire, and he thrust Leona ahead of him as he went.

He was counting upon Corky to occupy The Shadow for the next few seconds, which Corky did.

Waving the cloak that he had yanked from Myrna's shoulders, Corky charged forward and flung the garment over The Shadow's head like a matador flagging a bull. While The Shadow was trying to pull away the folds, Corky scrambled toward the porch door and pulled a gun of his own.

By that time, Myrna was no longer bewildered. On hands and knees, she reached the revolver that Buck had lost, aimed it and took a quick shot at Corky. The dapper crook gave a howl; clutching his shoulder, he let his gun hit the floor. The Shadow, his regained cloak streaming from his shoulders, made a rapid dive for the lost

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revolver.

Frenchy was shooting from the doorway. Myrna could not stop him, for Corky was between. Two shots were wide; as Frenchy aimed the third, The Shadow's figure was also eclipsed from his sight. Corky, reeling, had come in front of Frenchy's gun muzzle.

Furiously, Frenchy fired twice again, burning the bullets into the body of his own accomplice. Before he could shoot Corky from the path, The Shadow had picked up the reeling crook's gun.

Diving through the doorway, Frenchy shoved Leona to the porch steps, with The Shadow in pursuit. Myrna sprang to the front window, hoping that she could add timely shots. She saw Frenchy and Leona running for their car; coming below the porch edge, they were where she couldn't reach them with gunfire.

Nor were The Shadow's shots effective. His strength had finally failed. He was slumping on the steps below the porch, when another gun began to talk from near the shore. Myrna gave a glad cry, for she knew that the marksman must be Harry, back from the island.

A car was wheeling away, carrying Frenchy and Leona. Harry fired after it; so did Myrna, but the range was too distant. The last two crooks were away, leaving Buck and Corky dead on the scene of battle.

MYRNA realized that Harry would soon need her help in reviving The Shadow. She was wasting time, standing around without any clothes on, when plenty were at last within her reach.

Hurrying into the connecting closet, she gathered the dress and shoes that she had worn from New York. Going through to a darkened room, she opened a bureau drawer, to find stockings and other garments.

She must have dressed very rapidly, for she was fully clothed when she heard Harry's low call from the porch:

"Myrna—are you safe?"

Myrna came through the closet, to meet Harry with a smile. Gathering up the Shadow's hat and automatics, Harry beckoned the girl out to the porch. At the bottom of the steps, they reached The Shadow; relapsed into the unconscious state wherein Myrna had first found him.

"He must have stumbled on the steps," declared Harry. "He'll be all right, soon. We'll take him in your car, Myrna."

Reaching the girl's roadster, they placed The Shadow in the middle of the front seat. Myrna took the wheel; Harry sat on the right, supporting their unconscious passenger, to ease the jolts along the wood road. As the roadster neared the paved highway, Myrna asked about the men on Mariner's Isle.

"They are still there," said Harry. "After I had brought the boat around, I decided to come over to the cottage, to be there when you returned."

Myrna smiled. She knew that Harry's real worry concerned her swim; that he had wanted to make sure that she had reached the shore. It was fortunate that he had let such worry master him; otherwise, he would not have been on hand at the timely moment when he had taken over for The Shadow.

Despite the misadventures that had marred this night, Myrna felt that she had made up for her various blunders. Crooks had at least been beaten off, their numbers thinned; and Myrna had started The Shadow

along the path to self-rescue.

Besides, Myrna had met Harry Vincent. From the brief time that they had been together, she could think of no one more desirable as a companion in the work that lay ahead.

For Myrna Elvin knew, without being told, that she would be assigned further tasks in the service of The Shadow.

CHAPTER XI. THE LAW'S REPORT

LATE that next afternoon, Lamont Cranston called at the penthouse of Raymond Kendler. He came there by special request of his friend Ralph Weston, the New York police commissioner. Vic Marquette and Joe Cardona were also present, and they listened knowingly while Weston explained why he had invited Cranston.

"Matters went badly last night," declared Weston. "You were here, Cranston, when arrangements were made to cover a man named Amos Marle. Therefore, we thought it best to tell you how those plans miscarried."

The Shadow showed only slight interest. That was the way with Lamont Cranston. He seldom let any matters disturb him. On this occasion his blasé pose was very helpful, for he actually did lack energy. He had spent most of the day in bed recovering from last night's ordeals.

"At half past eight last night"—Weston was referring to a police report—"Amos Marle returned from his trip and appeared at his East Side store."

As he spoke the commissioner looked at Cranston, as if telling him remarkable news. The Shadow's disguised face gave no change of expression. The report, however, did not surprise him, for he had been near Marle's store soon after the time stated by Weston.

"At ten o'clock," resumed the commissioner, "a messenger arrived at Marle's and delivered a fair-sized package. Our men closed in, to intercept the messenger when he came out. They watched Marle through the show window, and saw him open the package.

"It contained smaller parcels, which Marle placed in his safe. After he had locked the safe, he began to close the shop. Federal operatives and police detectives entered, showed him warrants and demanded that he open the safe."

Weston paused, his face so grouchy that the tips of his military mustache seemed to bristle. In Cranston's quiet tone, The Shadow calmly asked:

"Did he?"

"He did," returned Weston, "and they found the parcels, along with a few dozen others, so much alike that it was impossible to tell which was which. So they opened all of them—"

"And found the smuggled jewels?"

"No!" Weston fairly roared at the interruption. "Hear me out, Cranston! Or, if you prefer, see for yourself? Show him what was in those boxes, inspector!"

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Cardona opened a small satchel. A glittering flood of junk jewelry rattled on Kendler's table. Weston pawed among the rings, bracelets, necklaces, separating them into groups. He wasn't watching Cranston, or he would have seen thin lips form a faint smile.

All the so-called jewelry upon the table was the sort of stuff that Marle kept in his display window marked with sales tags that ranged from 49 cents to \$19.98.

The whole lot wasn't worth more than a few hundred dollars.

"Marle was shrewd," declared Weston. "He knew what the law wanted. He let Inspector Cardona take this stuff, but first he listed all the items."

"So we wouldn't plant any real stuff with it," put in Cardona. "From the way Marle talked, he made out that we'd probably try to frame him. If he hadn't been wearing those big specs, I'd have poked him one when he sprang that line!"

He was a sarcastic buzzard," added Vic Marquette. "That wheezy voice of his got my goat. Plenty of bite to it, too. Every time he said 'my dear gentlemen', you know he was thinking 'skunks', or something worse."

RAYMOND KENDLER was helping the police commissioner sort the junk jewelry. To Kendler, who loved to handle real gems, these tawdry imitations felt like scum. He gave a distasteful grimace after he had finished.

"Put these things away," he pleaded.

"I hate the sight of them!" Then, shifting his gaze from Cardona to Marquette, the bald-headed jeweler questioned: "Why did you let Marle pass you these wretched atrocities? Why didn't you search his safe and find out what else he had there?"

"We did," returned Marquette. "But there wasn't anything else, except his ledgers and other books. My men took charge of them. They've been going over Marle's figures all day, but there's nothing wrong with them. I'm taking the books back tonight."

"Inspector Cardona will go with you," announced the police commissioner. "He will return Marle's satchel and all its contents. Make sure"—Weston turned to Cardona—"that Marle's list tallies with yours."

Again, The Shadow was making good use of his Cranston pose. It enabled him to let his thoughts drift far. He was recalling the gems that he had seen last night: rubies, emeralds, sapphires, some of which had looked as large as humming-birds eggs.

Nothing junky about those jewels. They were the very stones that Waybrock had purchased abroad, only to lose. Frenchy Brenn, in turn, had passed them along, last night, to his unknown chief. He had done that during the interval between the capture of The Shadow and Frenchy's reappearance at Myrna's Connecticut cottage.

Talk of a messenger arriving at Marle's, fitted with Frenchy's own action. From reports that Weston had begun to read aloud, The Shadow learned that the messenger had been summoned to an office, where he had found the package waiting outside the door. The package had been marked for delivery to Marle.

Today, the police had investigated that office, only to find it empty. The Shadow could easily picture Frenchy inside the office watching to make sure that the messenger took the package. That far, all was good. But from

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all reports the package hadn't contained the smuggled gems that The Shadow had seen.

The case brought up many questions.

Had a package of junk been sent to Marle, merely to mock the law? If so, had the wizened old jeweler received the real gems elsewhere? Or was Marle merely a blind? Had those tip-offs to the police been given to create an entirely false trail?

All those questions were interlocked. Somewhere among them was an answer. Looking ahead, The Shadow could see that the law's final procedure would be to forget Marle entirely; in fact, both Cardona and Marquette were already showing such inclination.

For that very reason, The Shadow refused to reject Amos Marle as the big-shot of the smuggling ring. It would be a cunning stunt for a master mind to first bring suspicion upon himself, then shake it off. Amos Marle might be playing that very game.

Commissioner Weston was referring to other reports. His comments again aroused The Shadow's keen, but well-disguised, interest. While Marle had been at his store last night, Feds and police had visited his apartment.

Marle lived in a very cheap apartment; an old converted house that was flanked by larger buildings. The furnishings were few, and a complete search of the premises had been an easy matter. No smuggled gems had been found in the apartment; nor had anyone come there, except Marle, after he had closed his store.

EYES half closed, The Shadow was considering the merits of both places—store and apartment. There were reasons, good ones, why the store would have been the place where Marle would want the gems to come, assuming that he was actually the big brain.

Was the fact that his safe contained nothing but junk a final proof that the gems had not been delivered? The Shadow was not willing to concede that point.

His one regret was that he had gone to Marle's too soon. His trip to Frenchy's lair had been superfluous; the cause of many misadventures which had produced no worth-while gain, except to prove the courage of Myrna Elvin, which The Shadow had already recognized.

True, Buck and Corky were dead; but they had never been very dangerous. Today, The Shadow's agents had removed their bodies to Mariner's Isle, from which other crooks had fled. Once owned by Waybrock, the isle was a good place for dead crooks to be found.

It would have been better if Frenchy had been captured alive. He was the one man who could talk, and lift the cloud of mystery surrounding Amos Marle. Finding Frenchy was going to be a hard job. The law, in fact, was ready to believe him dead.

"That explosion off Long Island," Weston was saying, "may be the answer to our problems. She was a cruiser owned by Waybrock, called the Flyaway, and Frenchy Brenn may have been aboard her."

"Do you think," inquired Kendler, "that Frenchy had the smuggled gems?"

"Who else could have carried them?" demanded Weston. "The customs officers searched all suspicious parties who were passengers on the Albania."

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The commissioner's speculations were going very far astray. Instead of correcting them, The Shadow arose, extended his hand in Cranston's leisurely style.

"Thank you for inviting me here," he said to Weston. "Unless you had a certain reason for the invitation, it might be—a smile was showing on Cranston's lips—"that my presence here yesterday placed me under some suspicion."

"You can't mean—"

"That I could have carried word of the plans to Marle? Why not? I knew everything in advance."

Weston was wringing Cranston's hand with both of his own. The commissioner's voice showed real emotion, when he insisted:

"I trust you, Cranston! I couldn't doubt you for a moment! No more than I could doubt Mr. Kendler, who wants the smuggling ring broken. Nor more than I could doubt our loyal friend, Inspector Cardona—or Marquette—or myself!"

"Thank you, commissioner," expressed The Shadow, seriously. "I understand, fully."

Perhaps The Shadow understood more than Weston supposed. Going down in the elevator, his eyes showed their keen flash and his straight lips were definitely enigmatic. Past crime was beyond recall. There would be no chance to reclaim the gems that Frenchy Brenn had sent along the way.

But the duel with a master crook was not ended. Past crime would lead to future. When that time came—and it would be very soon—crime's perpetrators would find The Shadow ready!

CHAPTER XII. CRIME FORESEEN

DURING the days that followed, Commissioner Weston kept in close touch with his friend, Lamont Cranston. His habit of taking everything seriously, caused Weston great anxiety; for the commissioner had not forgotten that he had technically placed Cranston under suspicion.

Those get-togethers with Weston were very helpful to The Shadow. They kept him posted on all new developments that concerned the smuggling ring. The New York authorities, like the government operatives, had lifted the clamps from Amos Marle. They intended to tighten them again, though, if occasion demanded.

Such occasion would arise when news of more jewel sales arrived from abroad. Meanwhile, of course, the law was keeping a lookout for any of the gems that Waybrock had tried to smuggle; but it was conceded that there would be little chance of tracing the source of such gems, even if they did appear.

Privately, The Shadow was following a campaign of his own. He was trying to find Frenchy Brenn, or Leona Dubray, for the two were so well teamed that discovery of one would lead to the other. He had assigned Harry Vincent to that task, and Myrna Elvin was giving her assistance. But Frenchy and Leona had vanished completely since that night on the Connecticut shore.

As for Amos Marle, The Shadow decided to leave the jeweler strictly alone, until the time came when there would be good reason to watch him. That time came at last, thanks to a meeting that occurred between Lamont Cranston and Commissioner Weston.

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The two were together at the exclusive Cobalt Club, when Weston, very importantly, displayed his trust in Cranston. From a large brief case, the commissioner extracted a sheaf of reports and announced:

"The ring is at work again, Cranston. We have learned, on reliable information, that the famous Lamballe necklace has just disappeared in Paris. It was purchased at a low figure by some anonymous buyer; hence we believe that it is on its way to this country."

Cranston, it seemed, had never heard of the Lamballe necklace. Weston began to discuss its value; and to the commissioner's credit, he did not exaggerate. The necklace, composed entirely of diamonds, had been bought for a mere fifty thousand dollars; but it was worth ten times that amount.

"These diamonds," declared Weston, "could be recut and sold in America for half a million dollars. I've talked to Raymond Kendler and he is highly reliable. In fact, he believes that the recut stones would be the easiest to market."

"We are confident that if the gems are smuggled, they will be brought to New York by someone on the French liner *Corse*, due here the day after tomorrow. This time"—Weston was grimly hopeful—"we hope that the customs officers will do their part. If not—"

Weston ended with a shrug. He didn't want to promise anything. He remembered, only too well, how everything had vanished, crooks as well as jewels, when the smuggling ring had staged its previous triumph.

Apparently, Cranston's interest was aroused. He wanted to know more about the Lamballe necklace. Weston gave a description of the diamonds from the report sheet, then said:

"Why don't you drop in on Raymond Kendler? He knows all about those particular jewels. Come to think of it, he may have a photograph of the Lamballe necklace. It was once on display in his jewelry store."

ACTING on that suggestion, The Shadow left the Cobalt Club. Soon, Cranston's big limousine was rolling toward Kendler's Fifth Avenue store. The place was an imposing one, its windows filled with gems of real value. Once inside, The Shadow saw long rows of counters; behind them, attendants attired in frock coats.

Asking to see Kendler, he was conducted to a magnificent private office; where the bald-headed jeweler sat behind a large mahogany desk. Kendler came to his feet the moment saw Cranston, and proffered a hearty handshake.

Then, before The Shadow could mention the Lamballe necklace, Kendler became very serious. He opened a desk drawer and brought out a jewel case. Lifting the lid, he said:

"Look at these."

The gems were emeralds and sapphires, small but of excellent color. The Shadow recognized them but did not mention the fact. Instead, he examined them with a mild curiosity that was characteristic of Cranston.

"I am very, much afraid," declared Kendler, with a headshake, "that these gems were cut from those that Waybrock tried to smuggle; the stones which were later in the possession of Frenchy Brenn."

Kendler was right, and The Shadow knew it. After studying the jewels, he inquired how Kendler had happened to obtain them.

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"They came in a large shipment from the Middle West," declared Kendler. "I bought them, on description, from a reliable jewel merchant. But these are not the gems he sent; nor has he received the money that we paid his agent.

"The man who came here was obviously an impostor, but my clerks are very vague in their description of him. They were interested chiefly in examining the gems. Finding them of the proper quality, they paid for them in full"

It was a curious situation. Kendler had paid out fifty thousand dollars, and the gems were worth it. He had lost nothing, because he merely suspected, but could not prove, that the stones were smuggled goods. Even the Middle West merchant was not to be disappointed, for Kendler intended to buy his jewels anyway. The nub of the matter was the fact that the smuggling ring had profited to the extent of fifty thousand dollars.

"I've been trying to communicate with Commissioner Weston," said Kendler, "but he is not at his office."

"You can reach him at the Cobalt Club," returned The Shadow, "but before you call him, Mr. Kendler, I would like to see a photograph of the famous Lamballe necklace."

Kendler stared, his face surprised. When he heard Cranston explain that the necklace was on its way to New York, the jeweler became horrified.

"Diamonds!" he exclaimed. "They are better than gold! They can be sold on sight. Once cut, there would be no chance of tracing them, even by guess-work!"

Excitedly seeking through his big desk Kendler at last found a batch of photographs that depicted the Lamballe necklace. Five years ago, a former owner had brought it to New York, and Kendler had paid a handsome sum for the privilege of displaying it over a two-week period.

"Show that photograph to Commissioner Weston." suggested Kendler "Tell him that I shall supply prints to the customs officers. If they uncover the Lamballe necklace, or any of its stones, they should be able to identify it. "Of course, a photograph cannot give an accurate impression; but it is close enough. Particularly, because it shows the diamonds in their actual size. If such a set of gems should be discovered they could only be the Lamballe necklace."

LEAVING Kendler's store, The Shadow rode many blocks to an old office building. Still Cranston, he entered an office where a genial man of middle age greeted him with an appreciative bow.

The man was Timothy Noyes, a wholesale merchant, who offered advice to many wealthy persons, Cranston among them. Noyes smiled, when his visitor showed him the photograph of the Lamballe necklace.

"If you want that, Mr. Cranston," he said, "you will have to buy the original. Those stones could not be duplicated."

"This photograph," remarked The Shadow, "happens to show a replica."

"I mean the originals," insisted Noyes. "I could try for years, yet fail to assemble such well-matched diamonds. It would be impossible!"

"With zircons?"

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Noyes cocked his head. This was something different. Cranston was proposing a compromise between genuine stones and imitations.

"That would be comparatively simple," Noyes said, finally. "Yes, I can supply the zircons. A peculiar stone, the zircon; some people regard it as a mystery among gems. Twenty-four zircons"—he was counting the stones shown in the photograph—"will make a marvelous show, at a comparatively small cost.

"But I warn you, Mr. Cranston"—he gave a chuckle—"they will not deceive anyone who really knows diamonds. They will look better than paste, of course; but any capable jeweler can tell a zircon from a diamond, the moment he places it beneath a magnifying glass."

If Noyes had expected to lessen Cranston's enthusiasm, he was badly disappointed. In Cranston's tone, The Shadow calmly questioned:

"How soon can you have the zircons?"

Noyes promised them within two days. The Shadow left him studying the photograph of the Lamballe necklace, counting along the chain of pictured gems, making notations of their sizes and weights. From the photo, Noyes could tell that he would have very little trouble in assembling matched zircons with the proper number of facets.

But he kept shaking his head after Cranston had gone. He felt that his wealthy customer was wasting money on a foolish whim. If he wanted a replica of the Lamballe necklace, he would do much better by having one made of paste gems, in the opinion of Timothy Noyes.

Paste imitations would cost only a few dollars, while zircons, an actual species of gem, would run to several hundred. Perhaps Cranston liked zircons; some collectors favored them. After all, they would be worth the money he paid for them. Nevertheless, the zircons were not diamonds, as anyone familiar with gems could testify.

Still, Cranston was an old customer. He would have to be satisfied.

Lamont Cranston was satisfied. His smile showed it, when he reached the street and got into his big limousine. He was very pleased, too, by the fact that the afternoon was almost ended. An early supper at the Cobalt Club; after that, The Shadow would have the benefit of darkness.

He was planning an important route for this evening—one that would begin with an old trail and end with a new. From it, he hoped to uncover facts that would stand him in future stead. Through secret, devious methods, The Shadow might find a way to balk the smuggling ring's next stroke.

If all went well, this night could end with The Shadow's hidden finger pointing straight toward the insidious big-shot who controlled the entire game of crime.

CHAPTER XIII. THE UNSEEN SHADOW

DARKNESS. The next night. Again The Shadow was roaming the East Side area where Marle's tawdry jewelry store was located. Tonight, if any Feds or detectives were on watch, they were not at their fixed posts. That possibility, however, made no difference to The Shadow.

He had discarded his previous disguise, that of a shifty panhandler. This visit was a secret one; hence he was

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wearing his cloak of black, that blended with doorways and dark walls as if it were a part of them.

No eyes, no matter how watchful, could have glimpsed the figure that glided through alleyways and other spaces, seeking a secluded destination. The byways of this district were made to order for The Shadow.

A block of solid blackness loomed in hazy gloom. It was a low brick wall that The Shadow scaled with smooth and silent precision, as capably as if it had been no obstacle at all. Moving through a cement courtyard, The Shadow preserved the same silence. The tread of his soft-soled shoes resembled Myrna's barefooted progress, on that night when she had masqueraded in The Shadow's cloak.

To avoid the use of a flashlight, The Shadow looked upward and picked a certain building by the fact that it was much lower than the two structures that flanked it. An easy task, for the glow of distant lights cast their reflection from the cloudy sky.

The Shadow was at the rear of Marle's cheap jewelry store. The structures on each side were gloomy loft buildings, closed for the night.

Hands probing the darkness, The Shadow found a barred window. It was strong enough to keep out prying thieves, but it would have been easy picking for a band of competent burglars. Amos Marle evidently considered a formidable barrier unnecessary. His cheap stock wouldn't interest crooks of real caliber.

Within a short while, The Shadow had removed the bars. He used a thin wedge of metal to unlatch the window. The sash was metal; it made no creak as he worked it upward. Over the sill, The Shadow closed the window behind him and began guarded operations with a flashlight.

He was in a little storeroom stacked with odds and ends. After a brief inspection, The Shadow came to a door at the front of the room. It was locked, but his skeleton key settled that difficulty. Through the door, The Shadow reached a tiny office. Its trifling light came in trickles through the edges of a doorway curtain.

This was the little rear room that The Shadow had noticed from the street some nights ago. The fact that a curtain was all that separated him from the store itself, made very little difference to The Shadow. His moves were naturally silent; the glints of his tiny flashlight remained well muffled by the folds of his cloak.

Marle's office was an easy place to search. It was small, poorly furnished, and the desk drawers were empty. Any papers that Marie considered valuable, he kept in his safe; all others, he threw away.

After several minutes, The Shadow had finished with the office. Moving to the curtained doorway, he peered out into the store.

The showroom was wider than the rear office. Its width allowed for the counters that ran along the side wall on the left. From a slanted position, The Shadow took a look behind the rear counter. He could barely see the knobs of Marle's big safe, over in the rear corner. It was set in the rear wall, at the end of the passage behind the side counter.

Amos Marle wasn't about. Sleepy-eyed clerks were lounging behind the counter, and there was no telling, from their manner, whether or not they expected their boss to return. They had a habit of loafing, even when Marle was present.

Once again, The Shadow had arrived at Marle's store too early; but on this occasion, he patiently bided his time.

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TEN minutes passed; The Shadow was rewarded by sight of a car that slackened speed as it went by the jewelry store. That automobile had a familiar look when The Shadow glimpsed it. He watched the front door keenly.

Very soon, a brisk figure appeared there. The visitor was Commissioner Weston. About to enter the store, he stepped aside and gave a polite bow. Myrna Elvin entered the store.

A moment later, The Shadow learned the reason for the blonde's appearance here. When Weston entered, he was accompanied by Raymond Kendler. The Shadow had instructed all agents to keep posted on matters concerning gems.

It was obvious that Myrna must have dropped in to see Kendler after The Shadow had left. Weston, arriving later, had probably invited both of them to dinner.

The Shadow was interested in learning why the trio had decided to come to Marle's. Developments proved that the idea was Kendler's; for the jeweler, after removing his derby and mopping his bald forehead, became the spokesman.

He asked one of Marle's clerks where his employer was. The clerk shrugged, finally said that Marle was out of town and hadn't stated when he would be back. Kendler flashed a triumphant look toward Weston and the commissioner nodded. They had probably agreed that such news would be of consequence.

Marle had been away when previous shipments of smuggled jewels had reached New York. The fact that he was again absent might have some significance in the matter of the Lamballe necklace.

Assuming a pompous pose, Kendler began a contemptuous inspection of Marle's showcase. His oval face registered his scorn of the junk jewelry on display. Weston and Myrna realized that he was stalling about; and they did the same on the chance that Marle might happen to return. They could picture Kendler, an expert on gems, asking Marle some very pointed questions regarding such jewels as the Lamballe diamonds.

Kendler's tactics were soon exhausted. With a reluctant shrug, he turned to Weston, and the two went out accompanied by Myrna. As soon as they were gone, Marle's clerks began to smirk. This visit of Kendler and the police commissioner had been nothing more than a feeble echo of the law's previous invasion.

LINGERING behind the curtained doorway, The Shadow waited until the clerks had lapsed into their indifferent poses. Moving over to the office desk, he plucked up a telephone, carried it into the rear storeroom and closed the door so that the extension cord ran beneath it.

Dialing police headquarters, he talked to Cardona's office, using the brisk tone of Commissioner Weston. He left instructions for Cardona to drop in at Marle's store and wait there, in case the old jeweler arrived. If Marle came, Cardona was to question him on every angle that pertained to smuggled jewels.

After that, The Shadow called the Cobalt Club. Using Cranston's tone, he learned that Commissioner Weston had arrived. Chatting with the commissioner, The Shadow heard the details of the recent trip to Marle's and learned that Myrna had returned to her apartment, Kendler to his penthouse.

Resuming his post at the curtained doorway, The Shadow witnessed the arrival of Joe Cardona. The ace inspector must have called his office and was given the instructions that had supposedly come from Weston. He decided to wait in the store, in case Marle came there; and Cardona fared well with such policy.

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He had been waiting less than twenty minutes, when a cab halted out front. Amos Marle appeared, his crooked body almost doubled as he hobbled on a stout cane. Through his big-rimmed spectacles, the withery jeweler recognized Cardona and gave a wry smile.

Marle was wearing a shabby overcoat, an old felt hat that looked as if it had shrunk; but that was because he still needed a haircut. Carrying a satchel, he limped straight past Cardona toward the curtained doorway to the office. By the time Marle had entered the little room, The Shadow was gone.

The cloaked intruder didn't stop in the rear storeroom; for he assumed that Marle might take a look there, on the hunch that one of Cardona's men could be hidden in the place. The Shadow was out in the courtyard, holding the window bars in position, when Marle came and took a quick glance around the storeroom.

Some minutes later, The Shadow saw Marle again. From a taxi, rolling slowly past the front of the jewelry store, he spied the old man behind the counter, near the big safe. Marle had taken off his overcoat, and he was wearing his skullcap instead of the felt hat. The Shadow could see his white locks sway as the old jeweler shook his head in answer to Cardona's questions.

The inspector probably wouldn't learn much from Marle, but that suited The Shadow perfectly. Cardona was persistent, and therefore wouldn't quit. Which meant that Marle would be in the store for the next hour, at least. That paved The Shadow's way to another visit: the new portion of his trail. He was going to Marle's apartment.

Leaving the cab a block from his destination, The Shadow had no trouble finding the place he wanted. The apartment house, like Marle's place of business, stood between two taller buildings.

Coming from a space at the rear, The Shadow found a fire escape and began an upward trip to the third floor back; which was where Marle lived

A window opened almost on the platform of the fire escape. The window was not latched; the room inside was totally black. With an easy swing, The Shadow crossed the sill and settled on the floor. The only sound that betokened his entry was a creak of the window sill, which was very old and warped. Warned by that, The Shadow took care not to produce similar squeaks from the ancient board floor.

MOVING from room to room, he found the apartment as thinly furnished as Marle's office. It consisted of living room, bedroom, bath and kitchenette. There were windows only in the living room and the bedroom; but the kitchenette was the best portion of the apartment. The owners of the building had supplied it with modern equipment, including an excellent stove and a large electric icebox.

It would seem that Marle had little reason to thank them for such furnishings. Lack of any dishes proved that the old jeweler never cooked meals here; and the icebox was far larger than his needs required. Opening the big chest, The Shadow stared into an empty interior which could have held food enough for a family of five.

Marle evidently paid his own electric bills. In keeping with his miserly methods, he had disconnected the icebox. Bulking against the wall, it reminded The Shadow of the huge safe in Marle's store.

That comparison was an interesting one, but The Shadow did not go further with it. He had caught a sound from outside the kitchenette; silently closing the ice chest door, he glided into the living room, to investigate.

One sound became two. The Shadow heard a click from the main door of the apartment; also, a slight clang from the platform of the fire escape. Neither of those sounds could signify Marle's return, for the old jeweler wouldn't have had time to get rid of Joe Cardona.

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They meant that lurkers had learned of The Shadow's visit. Knowing that someone was in Marle's apartment, men were coming from two directions to cut off any departure. They were working together, for the sounds, from door and window, were timed almost to the exact second.

This was something that The Shadow had not expected, but it was an emergency for which he was always prepared. Invaders, whoever they were, would be due for a surprise when they learned the identity of the person they had snared.

Taking the door to the kitchenette as the best spot. The Shadow drew his automatics and waited. He was ready to make a forward surge or a fade back into a darkened room, which would serve him as a stronghold, if he needed it.

Crooks were moving into new battle with The Shadow; and this time, the cloaked fighter was determined upon victory, swift and complete, no matter what surprises came his way!

CHAPTER XIV. THE HIDDEN WAY

IMPORTANT to The Shadow's plan of meeting stealth with stealth, was the question of how the lurking foe had learned of his presence in Marle's apartment. A quick flash of recollection gave him the answer to that riddle: the creaky window sill.

Purposely loose, the sill had made contact with hidden wires when The Shadow pressed it. In some remote hiding place, crooks had caught the signal: their cue to close the trap.

The evidence pointed to Amos Marle as the designer of the snare, with the invaders as fighters in his employ. There was a chance, however, that the trap could have been laid without Marle's knowledge, particularly if the old jeweler actually made long trips from New York, as he claimed.

Such probabilities could be debated later. The Shadow's present problem concerned himself, not Marle. He was positive on one point: namely, that the invaders did not know the identity of the person that they had trapped. They might suspect that they were moving in against The Shadow, but they had no way of being sure. Therefore, The Shadow had a definite course of strategy.

His game was to delude these foemen into thinking they had trapped an easy prey. They would then show their hand and do so overboldly. No longer expecting The Shadow as an adversary, their surprise would be doubled when they learned the truth.

The Shadow remembered a telephone stand, six feet from the kitchenette door. Stretching in that direction he slid the telephone to the far end of the stand. Shifting back, he laid flat on the floor, gave the near leg of the stand an upward lift. An instant later he had whisked back to his doorway.

There was a thud as the telephone struck the floor three feet beyond the stand. The thud was followed by a clang—an even better break, on which The Shadow had not counted. Bouncing, the telephone had hit a radiator in the corner, leaving no doubt regarding the direction of the sound.

Prowlers ended all caution. There was a scurry from the hallway door, a clatter at the window. Someone pressed a light switch; the glow that flooded the living room showed four thuggish men with knives pounding in the direction of the radiator.

They looked like a picked crew of bantam weights from Spike Hegley's old mob. Wharf rats who had the

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speed of whippets; killers trained to deliver knife thrusts in the back. Chosen assassins, instructed to kill with silence before a victim could bleat. But this time, they lacked a human target.

If the killers wanted silence, so did The Shadow. He showed them how he could battle under such conditions. Before the bewildered mobsters could do more than blink at the blank wall, The Shadow was among them, his long arms sledging hard strokes that drove gun-laden fists to human skulls.

One thug sprawled, then another. The other pair had time to turn and make passes with their knives. Had The Shadow raised his arm for other strokes he would have laid himself open to stabs. Instead; he made cross slashes with his guns.

One weapon hooked an assassin's wrist, drove it back past his head, while the gun stopped squarely upon the thug's chin.

That crook was flattening on his back when The Shadow's other hand attended to the fourth opponent. This time, a gun clanged a knife blade; close to the hilt. The numbing stroke snapped the dirk from its owner's fist.

Madly, the crook grappled. There was a whirl of blackness, the bantam struggling in the midst of it. Dropping one gun, The Shadow took a neck hold upon his wiry adversary and flung him with a jujitsu throw, clear across the room. It was the wall that gave that thug the thump that left him groggy.

IN his whirl, The Shadow had not forgotten his base; the doorway to the kitchenette. He overstepped it, almost to a closet door, then halted. His right hand free, a gun in his left, The Shadow was faced by a prospect of no return.

At the doorway to the hall stood a fifth foe, the crook who had pressed the light switch. His arm was back, starting the swing that threatened to put a knife point squarely in The Shadow's heart.

The Shadow dropped back. It was the only direction he could take, after his sudden stop. Sheer folly, it seemed, for the knife hurler had calculated upon that very move. But The Shadow's right hand had made a quick pluck near the wall, to grab the knob of the closet door.

With his quick step, he brought the door swinging with him, a bulwark between his body and the scaling blade. The knife hit the door's thin panel, cleaved it like cardboard; but the hilt couldn't travel through the narrow slit that the blade had sliced. The knife was quivering in the woodwork, as The Shadow's left hand poked past the door edge.

The foiled assassin was bounding toward the window, yanking another knife as he went. He turned, hoping deliver a deft cross-arm throw. The Shadow, abandoning his game of silence; delivered a prompt shot from his automatic.

Jabbing flame flashed straight for the flying crook, and the stab it gave was deadlier than any knife. The Shadow's bullet crumpled the leaping crook in mid-air; he landed, his knife beside him in crazy, telescoping fashion.

Instantly, The Shadow scooped for his other gun. If reserve crooks were outside, covering for the slinky crew, that shot would surely bring them. The Shadow's hunch was backed by what followed. Faces thrust in from door and window, guns with them.

Sight of The Shadow brought hurried shots, which he answered before hasty gunners could gauge their aim. One crook staggered in the doorway; with a half-spin, The Shadow clipped another at the window. Others,

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few in number, dived from sight.

The wounded man at the window let his gun fall across the sill, as he rolled to the safety of the fire escape. From the floor, a scrawny hand snatched the lost weapon; the man who grabbed it was one of the undersized thugs that The Shadow had slugged earlier.

Slowly rising to take careful aim, the fellow would have been a simple target; but The Shadow, at that moment, had another objective. His purpose was to reach the windowless kitchenette, there to be ready if crooks attempted a real rally. Wheeling full about, he was far ahead of the slow-moving marksman; when he saw a real menace straight before his eyes.

Out of the darkness of the kitchenette appeared a grimy hand, that lifted a revolver muzzle into The Shadow's path!

The dive that The Shadow took was more than a lunging fall; it was a twist, that carried him away from the gun, as well as below it. He was to wonder, afterward, how he had managed that instinctive maneuver so successfully; for when the gun roared, The Shadow actually filled two thirds of the door space, yet escaped unscathed.

That hand from nowhere had fired through emptiness, thanks to an over-calculated aim. When the hand shifted, it was too late. There was no sign of The Shadow. He was sliding along the linoleum, toward the rear of the kitchenette.

What the second shot produced was a yowl from the bantam crook across the living room. He had taken a mortal wound and was slumping forward; but in his final waver, he was trying to tug his gun trigger. He wanted revenge and he got it, through The Shadow's aid.

With a lash of his right foot, The Shadow ended his slide by hooking the door of the electric ice chest. That door had opened three inches, and The Shadow's toe hauled it wide. Out from the chest tumbled a crouched gunner, who made a mad scramble when he hit the floor. As he came about, the crook heard a taunting laugh; saw The Shadow raised on one elbow, aiming a .45 straight toward him.

Here was a foe that The Shadow would have preferred to take alive; but his wish remained without fulfillment. A spurt of a gun from the hand of the dying crook out in the living room sent The Shadow's prisoner into a slump. Crook had shot crook and the favor had been returned. When The Shadow came to his feet, he saw another corpse stretched before him.

THE living room was empty, save for forms that were dead or stunned. The Shadow extinguished the light, dragged the body from the kitchenette and laid it near the dead thug who had engaged in the duel that sent both crooks to death. That done, The Shadow used his flashlight to probe the mystery of Marie's icebox.

A deep cavity showed in the glow. The back of the icebox was open like the wall behind it. Creeping into the icebox, The Shadow pulled the door shut, then crawled through the wall. The thing he entered wasn't a hidden room; it was an elevator!

The arrangement was as clever as it was simple. This elevator didn't belong in the old building where Marie lived. It was an elevator in the big apartment house next door. The man who had tried to cut off The Shadow's retreat had stopped the elevator between floors, then opened a panel in its wall.

Carefully, The Shadow closed the rear of the ice chest. It clicked into place, making a perfect fit. Next, The Shadow sealed a connecting door in the building wall, which was also neat enough to pass ordinary

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observation. Closing the rear of the elevator, he started the car downward.

The elevator was an automatic one, and The Shadow pressed the button that bore the letter "B," for basement. He felt sure that mobsters must have held their rendezvous there, waiting for the signal from Marle's apartment.

Hardly had The Shadow stepped from the elevator, when he heard sneaky footsteps from somewhere in the cellar. Blending into darkness beyond a pile of crates, he watched two thuggish individuals approach the elevator.

Somewhat surprised to find the elevator empty, the pair held conference, during which The Shadow heard them mention the name "Gus". It appeared that Gus should have been on the elevator. Since he was missing, and the car was at the basement level, they decided that Gus must have gone with the crew that had invaded the apartment from indoors.

That conclusion proved that these two crooks had been with the group on the fire escape.

"The Shadow must have busted through," growled one, "and made a getaway out the front."

"Then it's jake for us to take a gander," said the other. "Maybe we can drag out the guys he knocked off, and make it look better for the chief."

"Yeah. I'll bet we'll find that Gus got his. How about putting some dough on it?"

"Not a chance! I'm betting the same. Gus always was a mug that would shove himself into a fight too soon. He's lucky he wasn't croaked long ago!"

The Shadow made no effort to stop the pair from using the elevator. When the door had closed, he slipped from his hiding place, picked a path through the big cellar of the apartment house, and reached the open air a half block from the building where Marle lived.

He could hear the distant wail of approaching sirens, which meant that the police had received reports of gunfire in this neighborhood. By the time patrol cars arrived, things would probably look quite different up in Marle's apartment.

That prospect suited The Shadow. With the question of Gus settled by the crooks themselves, the pair would be working for The Shadow, as well as Amos Marle. The Shadow's plans, newly formed, would be helped if Marle escaped too much suspicion.

For The Shadow had learned a secret known only to Marle's henchmen; that of the hidden way by which the shaggy-haired jeweler could leave his apartment whenever he chose. Knowing the icebox route, The Shadow could put it to his own advantage in the future.

Moreover, there was another reason why The Shadow's whispered laugh throbbed the night air. In learning one secret, The Shadow had found a likely answer to another riddle; one that was even more important.

The future promised The Shadow the exact opportunity that he had hoped to gain: a chance to insert a balking hand into the crafty schemes of Amos Marle. The Shadow, in his turn, would find a hidden way to outguess the master mind who ruled the smuggling ring.

CHAPTER XV. DOUBLE TRAIL

DEFEATED crooks managed a skillful retreat, as the next day's newspapers proved. Before searching police had reached Marle's apartment, that battlefield was clear. Dead thugs were found in cars in alleys, several blocks away. Any effort to connect old Amos Marle with warfare would have been very feeble indeed.

Marle, in turn, had no suspicion that The Shadow had found the secret way from the apartment. The old jeweler used that exit himself, after he came home from his store. He was trailed some distance by a hunch-shouldered little spotter named Hawkeye, who worked for The Shadow as one of his secret agents. But Marle was slippery, and Hawkeye over-cautious, for he had been warned to keep from sight at any cost.

It seemed that the ultimate trailing of Marle would be a matter of installments on Hawkeye's part, unless The Shadow took over the job himself. At present, however, The Shadow had other matters on his mind.

One task concerned the zircons, which Noyes delivered to Cranston in keeping with his promised schedule. The Shadow promptly took those cheap gems to his sanctum, a black-walled room that formed his secret headquarters. Attached to the sanctum was another room of black, where furnishings of metal and enamel had the smooth polish of fine ebony.

In that laboratory, The Shadow examined his purchase. Noyes had matched the zircons well. All were of the yellow variety, a bit smoky, but excellently cut. No one could have possibly mistaken them for diamonds, but there was one virtue that zircons possessed: they could stand intense heat.

Placing the yellowish stones in a small crucible, The Shadow left them under-going a heating process.

Reports from agents, relayed through Burbank, were received by The Shadow on later visits to his sanctum. One call, however, was more of a reminder, though it pertained to a matter that The Shadow had not forgotten. It caused him to leave the pitch-black sanctum; when he arrived on the street as Cranston, he was in the broad daylight of early afternoon.

Riding by cab, Lamont Cranston arrived at the penthouse where Raymond Kendler lived. Commissioner Weston was there; he and Kendler were just leaving for a North River pier, to meet the French liner *Corse*. The Shadow went with them.

THE scene on the dock outrivaled the confusion that had greeted the arrival of the *Albania*. Determined to intercept the celebrated Lamballe necklace, the customs men had added an extra crew and widened the list of suspects.

Passengers had been required to turn over all jewelry, and reclaim it afterward, with the result that the chief inspector's office looked like a cross between Kendler's store and Marle's.

Gems of all descriptions were on display, marked with names instead of price tags; but among that accumulated mass were none that resembled the Lamballe diamonds.

Kendler, called upon to examine various gems, looked as morose as a customs officer. He was shaking his head glumly, when someone told him that he was wanted on the telephone.

Kendler showed a startled expression when he answered the call. He looked toward Weston and Cranston, began to beckon frantically. He was spluttering into the telephone, too angry to talk plainly; a few moments later, he was juggling the hook. With a grimace, he let the receiver fall in place.

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"It was Marle!" exclaimed Kendler. The purple that tinted his irate face traveled to the glistening surface of his bald brow. "He called up simply to taunt me!"

"From where?" asked Weston.

"From Baltimore," replied Kendler. "He said he'd be back in town tonight. The old scoundrel wished me better luck here than I had at his store the other night. Said he was sorry he hadn't been there when I called!"

"Inspector Cardona saw him that night," recalled Weston. "He sent me a routine report the next day, but it contained nothing of value."

"Marle just mentioned Cardona. He invited me to call again tonight and bring the inspector with me."

"We'll take care of that, Kendler. If Marle wants visitors, we'll arrange for them. I'll call Cardona and have him get in touch with Vic Marquette."

Weston was obviously planning another raid. Perhaps that accounted for the fact that Cranston strolled away. There was something else, however, that interested him. Passengers were entering the office to claim their possessions.

A doll-faced girl with staring brown eyes approached and gave her name as Janet Frayne. Whatever expression she had was due to her heavy makeup, for her features were a blank otherwise. The Shadow expected the customs officer to give her a surly look; instead, the fellow smiled.

"I remember you, Miss Frayne," he said. "You were the one person who misunderstood our instructions. We asked for jewelry, not for junk."

He picked up an atrocious necklace made of big beads, colored to resemble pearls. Even as an imitation, the thing was hopeless. Looking at the necklace, the customs man gave another grin, and muttered something about "a dime a dozen." The girl pouted her ruddy lips.

"I think it's pretty," she insisted, as she fastened the cheap trophy around her neck. "It's a souvenir of Parea. Why, I paid fifty francs for it!"

With francs exchanging for a few cents each, the cost of the necklace had been a matter of about two dollars; but even that insignificant price made the inspector grunt.

"They still trimmed you," he told the girl. "But that's none of my business. Goodbye, Miss Frayne."

"I was only trying to help you," argued the girl. "Everybody was talking about a necklace, saying it was wanted, and this is a necklace—"

"You win! I haven't time to argue it any further."

THE customs inspector turned away, to talk with other persons who were clamoring for their valuables. Staring blankly, Janet Frayne walked from the office toying with the necklace that she wore.

Commissioner Weston was looking around for Lamont Cranston. His friend had strolled somewhere, which was a way with Cranston. Maybe it was just as well to discuss plans with Kendler while Cranston was gone. Weston reverted to the subject of Amos Marle.

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Upon leaving the pier, Janet Frayne looked for a taxicab. One slid in to take her as a passenger, for its shrewd-faced driver had spotted a signal from a tall stroller who was close behind the girl. The cab pulled away, rolling slowly in the traffic, while Lamont Cranston stepped into a coupé, where Harry Vincent sat behind the wheel.

From then on, events repeated themselves. Janet Frayne went on a shopping tour, very much like the one that Leona Dubray had taken when she had arrived in New York. Every time the girl came out from a store and looked for a cab, Moe's taxi was on the job. Wherever that cab went, Harry's coupé followed.

Coming from a dress shop with a package, the girl took the same cab again. Moe's face was turned away; he started the cab promptly. But this time, The Shadow's hand gripped Harry's arm. To his own driver, The Shadow spoke a single word:

"Wait!"

Although it was growing dark, The Shadow had noticed that Janet was no longer wearing the necklace. She had been carrying the package against her shoulder, to hide the fact that she lacked the string of pearl-colored beads.

Within five minutes, another woman came from the little store. Harry suppressed a low whistle.

The woman was Leona Dubray. Around her neck was the cheap souvenir that Janet Frayne had brought from Paris.

Leona glanced sharply about, then chose a cab. Not until the vehicle had rounded the next corner did The Shadow tell Harry to follow. He used similar tactics along the entire trail; when the taxi finally turned into a secluded dusk-laden street, Harry's car sneaked after it without lights.

From a spot by the curb, The Shadow saw Leona dismiss the cab. From then on, he took the trail on foot. The woman went between two houses, through to the next street. Stopping near a cab stand, she hesitated and looked back.

Had she suspected that she was being trailed, Leona would have used another cab to shake off followers. But her eyes, sharp though they were, detected no sign of The Shadow. He was no longer Cranston; from a suitcase in Harry's coupé he had donned black garments during the final ride.

Reversing her course, Leona walked straight past stone house steps where The Shadow lurked. She took a devious route, through streets and alleyways, pausing at every turn to look back. Again, The Shadow was delaying at each corner. When he came to a passage beside an ancient brownstone house, Leona had disappeared.

The place had lights, except for the ground floor, which looked like a doctor's office. Upstairs were apartments, but none of their windows looked suspicious.

Close to the house wall, The Shadow found a side door, that looked as if it were no longer in use. Such a door should logically have been bolted on the inside; but when The Shadow had probed the lock with his skeleton key, the door gave.

This was Leona's entrance to a new hideout. Inside, The Shadow found an obscure door and opened it. Passing through a musty cob-webbed room, he reached another door, that gave a crack of light the moment The Shadow inched it inward.

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Again, The Shadow was looking in upon a rendezvous of crooks, dominated by the very man that he expected to find: the vanished Frenchy Brenn.

IN the light from a table lamp, Frenchy's mustached face had a look of satanic expectation that was matched by the wise smirk on Leona's lips.

In the same room were two other crooks; replacements, probably, for the lamented Buck and Corky. The pair were here for guard duty, but they had forgotten it on Leona's arrival. Something important was due, and they wanted to see it.

Leona spoke.

"I told you the Frayne kid would come through," declared the woman. "She's dumb as they make 'em, and that's just what we wanted. The stupe handed this bunch of beads to those monkeys at the dock and got it back, just like I said she would.

"And do you know what? She likes these glass pearls so much, she didn't want to hand 'em over! Said she couldn't get another string that looked as good. I finally argued her into selling 'em at a profit; and did I have a job convincing her that ten bucks was more than fifty francs!"

Frenchy wasn't listening to Leona. He had laid the junky necklace on the table, was poising a small hammer in his fist. Like a xylophone player running the scale, Frenchy delivered a series of rapid taps, from one end of the necklace to the other.

Each stroke broke its quota of glass beads. The atrocious imitations that Janet had termed "pearls," fell in thin, minute fragments on the table. Those huge beads were hollow shells; when shattered, they revealed their solid contents.

On the table, sparkling with a dazzling magnificence, lay the famous chain of diamonds known as the Lamballe necklace!

CHAPTER XVI. WAY OF THE SHADOW

IF ever the stage was set to The Shadow's liking, it was at that moment. In his fist, he gripped an automatic; a mere shove of the door would have brought him in upon the clustered crooks. A duplication of his thrust at the other hideout, but this time, with foreknowledge of which person to watch most closely.

Leona Dubray would never find another opportunity to trick The Shadow; and she would have realized it, had he moved in upon the scene. But The Shadow, despite this perfect situation, did not intend to make a thrust.

He had found out many facts since his previous invasion of a smuggling lair. To those, he had added theories, upon which he had based certain preparations. These crooks could keep. There was another who came first: Amos Marle.

Keeping his gun drawn only for emergency, The Shadow watched the routine that Frenchy and Leona followed. They brought out a dozen cardboard boxes, which, when opened, showed batches of cheap imitation jewelry of the sort sold in Marle's store. With the exception of one box, which was empty.

Separating the diamonds that formed the Lamballe necklace, the two crooks dropped them into the empty box. Despite the long while that they had teamed together, Frenchy and Leona each counted the diamonds, to

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make sure that the other had not pilfered a few.

"All there," chuckled Frenchy. "You won't be hearing from the chief, Leona, asking you to check up. You never have."

"There's always a first time," returned Leona. "If it's due, it would come after this job—the last and the biggest that we've pulled."

Frenchy didn't comment further. He put a pencil mark on the box that contained the diamonds, then packed it with the others into one bundle. That done, he glanced at his watch.

"I'm heading out," he told his pals. "Clear the route, while I call the chief and get the dope on when to shove the swag through."

The Shadow's door had closed by the time Frenchy's bodyguards reached it. Well ahead, The Shadow made the outer door and deftly locked it with his skeleton key. He was gliding along the front street, when flashlights blinked in the passage that lay beside the house.

How soon Frenchy would send those diamonds to Marle was a question. Probably they couldn't go through within the next few hours, but that was not too much time for The Shadow. He slid aboard the first cab that he saw; gave the driver his first news of a passenger, by stating an address in Cranston's easy tone.

The destination was a jeweler's shop in a fairly presentable neighborhood, but one that carried a considerable supply of cheap stock. Alighting as Cranston, The Shadow had his cloak and hat bundled over his arm as he casually paid the taxi driver.

In the store, he picked out several dollars worth of cheap jewelry; then pointed to a small cardboard box that he saw on a shelf.

He told the clerk to pack the purchase in a dozen boxes of that size. The request was unusual, but not unreasonable; while the clerk was digging up the required boxes, The Shadow made a telephone call. A large limousine pulled up just as Cranston was strolling from the shop, a package under his arm.

RIDING toward the sanctum, The Shadow opened the package. He removed the contents of one small box, put the items in others and marked the empty box with a pencil, exactly as Frenchy had done. The package was partly wrapped again, when the limousine parked on a dimly lighted street. Garbed in cloak and hat, The Shadow stepped from the car, dismissing it in Cranston's tone.

Reaching the sanctum, he found a tiny light aglow. Picking up earphones, he received a report from Burbank, who stated that Myrna Elvin had called on Raymond Kendler. The girl had a few valuable bits of information.

Conceding that the Lamballe necklace might have been smuggled from the Corse, the law was putting a close watch on Amos Marle. Though Kendler had not gone into details, Myrna was sure that the system would be similar to the one previously used.

As for Kendler's own call from Marle, he intended to ignore it. Kendler had important business engagements for this evening, and did not care to waste time, or make himself ridiculous, by taking Marle's insults seriously.

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That report received, The Shadow went into his laboratory and worked there rapidly. He opened the crucible and lifted an inner container that held the zircons. Sprinkling a greenish powder into a tall hydrometer jar, The Shadow filled it with water and poured the zircons into it.

The water sizzled from the heated gems; as they sank, they scintillated, as if bursting with a living fire. The greenish liquid cooled the gems, but their sparkle was not lost. When The Shadow removed them, they showed a magnificent luster beneath the light.

His test had succeeded. In their glitter, these semiprecious stones actually rivaled the Lamballe diamonds. Studying a few beneath the microscope, The Shadow was further pleased. Temporarily at least, he had caused these zircons, valued at much less than a thousand dollars, to assume an appearance which would lure an expert into pricing them at half a million.

This wasn't a process known to reputable jewelers like Raymond Kendler; nor even to connivers such as Amos Marle. Both, according to their lights, dealt with genuine stones. It was unlikely that any one had ever sent a heat-treated zircon to Marle's tawdry store; nevertheless, The Shadow was not taking a chance on Marle's probable ignorance of the process. Marle, himself, would not see the treated zircons until later.

In the sanctum, The Shadow opened the end of the partly wrapped package, to bring out the marked cardboard box. He filled The later with the zircons; shoved the box into the package, leaving the end still loose. Clicking off a bluish light, the sanctum's sole illumination, The Shadow delivered a strange whispered laugh.

Long echoed by shrouded walls, that mirth did not fade until the sanctum itself was empty.

Outside, The Shadow was picking a swift course, to the vicinity of Marle's store, which was not many blocks distant. He slowed his course near its finish, to avoid attention of watchful Feds and police, who were by this time stationed at their posts.

Once within the courtyard behind Marle's store, The Shadow looked up at looming buildings. There was a marked resemblance between this setting and the one at Marle's apartment: a small structure wedged between two larger ones; a similarity which bore a marked significance for The Shadow.

Instead of entering Marle's store, The Shadow chose the loft building on the left. Working his way into the basement, he found the elevators. There were two; but only one car was at the basement level. The other was at the top of its shaft, which was curious, considering that the building was closed for the night. It was a situation, though, that pleased The Shadow immensely.

Using the lower car to help his climb, The Shadow reached the first floor level inside the elevator shaft. Finding a ledge, he moved his hands along the wall until he discovered a thin crack.

There, he found a catch, precisely like the one in the apartment house next door to Marle's. The wall slid open.

There was metal beyond: the back of Marle's safe. Probing for the catch, The Shadow found it, but allowed only the slightest crevice to open beneath his fingers. He wanted that steel sheet to appear quite closed, until the right time came.

SUCH time was near at hand. On the street in front of Marle's, a dull-faced man was stepping from a cab. He looked like a messenger, bringing a rush delivery. From their posts, Cardona's detectives and Marquette's Feds were peering with eagerness that they could hardly restrain.

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This looked like what they wanted.

Apparently, Marle wasn't trusting to an ordinary messenger tonight. Behind his counter, where he had been for half an hour, the skullcapped jeweler took the package and signed for it. The messenger came out, started away in his cab, only to be stopped within the next block.

Meanwhile, Marquette and Cardona had reached Marle's display window. They had bided their time, knowing that if the messenger had brought the Lamballe diamonds, it would be folly to grab them until the gems were actually in Marle's hands. They saw the jeweler opening the package, fumbling with little boxes that it contained.

Marle had lifted one lid. Through his high-powered spectacles, he was studying the Lamballe diamonds, giving them careful scrutiny while his fingers counted them. His head was cocked sideward; his other eye was watching the front of the shop. Marle saw a stir there.

On went the box lid, as Marle swung toward the safe. He didn't have to turn the combination—something upon which his watchers had not reckoned—for the safe was already open. He shoved the twelve boxes into the safe together, just as entering men shouted from the doorway.

Guns drawn, badges flashing, Marquette and Cardona roared for Marle to leave the safe door as it was.

They were too late. Marle shouldered the door shut, spun the combination, then faced them with lifted hands. His eye blinked pretended fright, then recognition.

"I thought . . . thought it was a holdup!" he stammered. "I heard the shouts—saw the guns—"

"But not the badges," snorted Marquette. "Quit the stall, Marle, and get that safe door open!"

Fumblingly, Marle began to turn the combination; Marquette and Cardona exchanged looks, both thinking that this time they had Marle with the goods. They didn't begin to suppose that Marle's slowness could change the status of things inside the safe.

Already an alteration was under way. The Shadow had noted a thin edge of light when Marle had swung the safe door wide. The moment that the chink was gone, The Shadow opened the rear of the safe, spraying in a flashlight's rays.

Seeing a loose collection of boxes, instead of a solid package, he found the marked one and put it under his cloak. From his own package, he pulled the little box that bore a similar mark. Into the safe it went, The Shadow's zircons, in return for the Lamballe diamonds.

Speed was needed. From above The Shadow's head came the slick of descending cables. Down through its shaft, an elevator was driving its solid floor toward The Shadow, coming with the crushing power of a merciless Juggernaut. Seconds more, that blindly driven weight would trap its victim, if he remained.

Cool in those instants that separated him from death, The Shadow closed the rear of the safe, slid the panel in the wall. The jerk swung him in the direction of the other shaft, where he let himself drop. His fall was stopped by the top of the other elevator.

The Shadow had beaten death by the margin of a single second, perhaps less, for when he raised his head from the top of the empty elevator, the other car had stopped on the ground floor level. Looking through the slatted side, The Shadow saw a nimble little man with wrinkled face and forehead working feverishly to open

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the wall and the safe beyond it.

The fellow had used the elevator to come down from the roof, and his job called for speed. The panels opened, he pawed about among the boxes in the safe, came out with the one that bore a pencil mark. To make sure that he was right, he lifted the lid, saw the sparkles of the zircons, brilliant in the dimly lighted elevator.

Quickly, the nimble man locked the safe's secret panel, closed the smoothly sliding wall. He started the elevator slowly upward, to avoid too much rumble. As soon as the car was gone, The Shadow dropped down into the empty shaft and made his way out through the basement.

ALL that while, Vic Marquette and Joe Cardona had been surprising themselves by their own patience. They might have been less lenient with Marle had they felt his stalling would help him.

When the old jeweler finally manipulated the combination, and sank away with an exhausted gasp, Vic hauled him aside, while Joe brought boxes from the safe.

Placing the boxes on Marle's own counter, they opened them one by one, confident, the longer they proceeded, that they would find the wanted diamonds. Both were tense when they came to the last box. Each was ready with his gun, if Marle tried a break.

Off came the lid, to the tune of Marle's pleased cackle. The last box contained nothing but cheap trinkets, like the ones before it.

"My compliments, gentlemen," wheezed Marle. "A silver-plated scarf pin for each of you! This watch charm"—he plucked up a chunk of green glass attached to a small gold-plated ring—"is for you, commissioner!"

Cardona and Marquette turned to see Weston, just arrived, receive the bauble that Marle offered him.

"Good night, gentlemen," bowed Marle, his shaggy white hair shaking as he tilted his skullcapped head, "and give my best regards to Mr. Kender."

Cardona and Marquette rode with Weston to the Cobalt Club. As they alighted from the commissioner's official car, they saw Lamont Cranston, about to leave. He heard the commissioner's glum tale, then said good night. He was leaving for his residence in New Jersey, and he was late.

As Cranston's limousine was pulling away, Commissioner Weston muttered a question for the twentieth time.

"What I'd like to know," he repeated, "is who has those Lamballe diamonds, how did he get them, and what has he done with them?"

The police commissioner should have put that triple question to his friend, Lamont Cranston, otherwise The Shadow, who had just left with the Lamballe diamonds in his pocket!

CHAPTER XVII. CROOKS DIVIDED

THE SHADOW did not start for New Jersey. As Cranston, he might have gone there but he was no longer Cranston, from the moment that his limousine turned the corner. His stop-off at the club had been merely an interlude to receive reports from agents.

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He was The Shadow again, so completely garbed in black that the big car seemed empty as it sped northward. Reaching a chosen point, The Shadow left the car and glided into his next zone of action, so stealthily that he came unheralded upon a huddled man who was watching a courtyard doorway from a hiding place across the way.

The man whipped about as The Shadow's gloved hand pressed his shoulder. A whisper stopped the fellow's swing. Recognized, The Shadow spoke with Hawkeye, the artful spotter who was watching the secret exit from Marle's apartment.

Crooks were about, for Hawkeye had seen them; and Marle was home from his store. Hawkeye had learned that by stealthy trips behind the buildings.

He had just come back from a quick journey, during which he had sighted lights at Marle's rear window. He had glimpsed Marle's skullcapped head against the glow.

The Shadow ordered Hawkeye to go to the spot where he had last trailed Marle, to be ready to pick up the track from that place onward. Another link in that chain might produce the final evidence that The Shadow needed to complete an important theory regarding Marle's activities.

Soon after Hawkeye had left, a figure crept into the courtyard. By the blinks of a flashlight, The Shadow saw the wrinkled face of the nimble man who had taken the zircons from Marle's safe. The fellow entered the cellar of the large apartment house and proceeded toward the elevators, The Shadow close behind.

Choosing the right car the man started up to Marle's apartment. The Shadow waited expectantly, sure that he knew the purpose. Marle's icebox, like his safe, had no interior catch that could open it. The big-shot wasn't taking chances on any lucky searcher learning the trick.

Those panels had to be opened from the outside; hence Marle, desiring an exit, was dependent upon some helper. The Shadow expected Marle to come along with his confederate within a very few minutes.

True to The Shadow's calculation, the elevator suddenly arrived at the basement level. Marle stepped out, beckoned the other to follow him. The Shadow trailed them to the rear street, where they walked rapidly eastward. This wasn't the route that Hawkeye covered. Marle was going somewhere with his nimble pal.

After several blocks, they came to a dingy office building, so old-fashioned that it was scarcely worthy of the name. The elevators weren't running at night, so the two men had to use the stairway.

Listening below, The Shadow gauged where they had gone, by the creaks of the stairs and the floor boards on the second story. Following, he reached a little office, with a glass panel that was thickly frosted and very grimy.

The panel bore a name: HECTOR JARVIN. It told The Shadow all he needed to know regarding Marle's companion.

Jarvin was a jewel cutter of high reputation. His services were constantly in demand by important jewelers, hence he had not been suspected as a worker for the smuggling ring. Like many others in his profession, he liked an isolated spot in which to work; and had taken this office because he needed nothing better.

Ignoring the bolted door, The Shadow opened a hallway window and shifted to the one beyond it. Through a dirt-streaked pane, past the frayed edge of a drawn shade, he saw both Marle and Jarvin. His withery face gleeful, Marle was watching Jarvin work at the zircons.

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Their yellow hue cleared by The Shadow process, both men accepted the stones as diamonds, until Jarvin's cutting tool split one in half.

No diamond would have cut so readily. Marle said something to Jarvin; the man began to test another gem. Dropping his tool, he turned to Marle, mouthing a word that The Shadow recognized from the motion of Jarvin's lips:

"Zircons!"

MARLE'S hands shot for Jarvin's throat. They lacked the fake shakes that Marle had used on the dial of his safe. While the skullcapped jeweler was choking words from his victim's throat, The Shadow coolly worked on the rickety window sash. Sliding it upward, he heard Jarvin's half-screamed pleas.

"I didn't double-cross you, chief! I took what was in the safe, what you put there! How could I know you hadn't seen the diamonds? I wouldn't have switched them—"

"Once a rat, always a rat!" interrupted Marle. "I've got plenty on you, Jarvin. That's why you're working for me." .

"I couldn't have risked it, chief"—Jarvin was putting sincerity into his bleat—"with you coming here later. It wouldn't have paid me."

Marle's hands drew away from Jarvin's throat. His stoop returning, the withery-faced jeweler resumed the aged appearance that he had temporarily lost. Something in what Jarvin said had stirred Marle's recollection. He leaned to the table, eyed the zircons closely.

"I did take a look at these," he muttered. "Hand me that phone, Jarvin."

Shakily, the jewel cutter obliged. Marle called a number, held a low-pitched conversation. When he had hung up, he made an announcement that not only pleased Jarvin; but suited The Shadow even more.

"The man we want," Marle snarled, "is Frenchy Brenn. He hasn't come back to the hideout, but he's got some dough there, so chances are he won't lam before he picks it up. That's what Leona told me just now, and she said plenty more.

"She saw those rocks when Frenchy took them, and they were real diamonds. The Frayne girl was too dumb to pull a double cross. But Frenchy went out alone with the package. That's when he could have staged the switch.

"Leona said she'll handle him. We're going over there to help, taking along the crew that's moved in downstairs. I was going to throw you to that mob, Jarvin, but you talked yourself out of trouble."

With a sweep of his hand, Marle scattered the zircons on the floor. Their reflectings died out when the big-shot pressed the light switch, as he and Jarvin departed. Creaky footsteps faded below. The Shadow swung himself into Jarvin's office. In the darkness, he picked up the telephone.

FIVE minutes later, Harry Vincent and Myrna Elvin were leaving a little restaurant only a few blocks from Frenchy's hideout. As they hurried along, Harry explained how they could best follow the latest instructions from The Shadow.

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"Leona is alone in the hideout," said Harry. "I can handle that side door quickly enough, from what I've just heard about it. One of us has to cover when we're inside, and it might turn out to be the tougher job. Do you think you can handle Leona?"

Myrna replied that she was aching for just such an opportunity. From a pocket of her dark dress, she brought out a .32 automatic that Harry had given her. She'd been practicing with that gun, and was ready for her part in battle.

Harry smiled when they stopped at the side door of the brownstone house, where he began work with a special key. He liked Myrna's gameness.

There was time to bring Leona out before Marle and his mob arrived. The Shadow, by his telephone call, had beaten distance. With Leona gone, Frenchy wouldn't learn that he was branded as a traitor until he met up with Marle, in person; which was what The Shadow wanted. Nevertheless, Harry urged Myrna to use speed in dealing with Leona.

Myrna did. She left Harry outside the darkened room, made a quick trip through, and opened the door with a touch that was only slightly cautious. Leona was near the table, reading a magazine. She tossed it casually aside, remarking:

"Hello, Frenchy I say, what kept you? I've—"

Half around, Leona saw the bulge of the gun in Myrna's hand. Biting her rouged lips, Leona thought for the moment that she was trapped by Frenchy, who might have learned of her talk with Marle. Suddenly sighting Myrna behind the gun, Leona brightened.

"Why, if it isn't blondie!" she exclaimed, sarcastically. "All dressed up, for a change! In your own clothes, too! Say, kid"—she was eyeing the gun coolly—"you sure bungled things that night. We'd have fixed you easy, if it hadn't been for The Shadow."

Myrna's forefinger eased its trigger gently. It was a trick that Harry had advised, and it worked like a charm upon Leona. The woman's olive face went ashen. Her arms went up as if a string had pulled them.

"Don't shoot!" she pleaded. "I won't make trouble!"

Her hand shoving forward, Myrna poked the gun almost to Leona's ribs. The woman sank, quailing, into a corner. Myrna stepped past her, pointed the gun just above Leona's head. A man was coming into the room, through its front door. He was across the threshold, closing the door again, before he saw that he was trapped.

It was Frenchy Brenn. He had come in the front way, the route by which Harry had not expected him. Curious, how a trifling thing like that could upset the best made plans. But Myrna proved herself equal to the circumstance.

With Leona cowed, she had taken Frenchy into camp. Seeing the determined eyes above the gun, Frenchy lost all hesitation. His arms stretched.

"Turn around!" ordered Myrna, her voice deliberate and cool. "Walk into that other room—both of you!"

The criminal pair obeyed. As they started their reluctant march, Myrna felt a surge of triumph. She had certainly learned how to deal with this duo. She remembered how she had fled at their approach outside her cottage, totally lacking nerve as well as clothes; how she had later staged a bluff, in The Shadow's attire, only

to have it fail when the pinch came.

All that was changed. Given a fair start, she had shown her ability to meet the unexpected. What to do with the prisoners was a problem that Harry would solve when she turned them over to him. The situation looked quite rosy, until Frenchy and Leona reached the door.

There, they turned, as if by agreement. Though their arms were still raised, they grinned as they looked past Myrna.

Instinctively, the blonde darted a glance over her shoulder. At the front of the room were Frenchy's bodyguards. Their guns covered Myrna, ready to rip lead when Frenchy gave the word. Leona's low, harsh voice sounded in Myrna's ear:

"It's the other way around again, blondie! Only this isn't Connecticut, where we could take time out for a laugh. This is New York, where we get things over quick!"

MYRNA's gun had lowered. Frenchy and Leona were spinning her around, about to shove her into the path of the aiming guns. From a mental whirl, Myrna plucked the thought that death was due and no mistake. She was going forward, toward the guns, when the room itself took a spin.

Myrna was sprawling toward a corner, away from the revolver, conscious that something had struck her with a mighty jolt, to begin that corkscrew twirl.

From the floor she saw a shape that could be likened only to a black whirlwind. Striking in from the room Myrna had left Harry, that human avalanche had flung the girl to safety. The being in black had tangled with Frenchy and Leona; one after the other, the crooks were launched toward the gunners at the room front.

Revolvers barked, the spinning shape their target, but those shots were wide. In changing aim to avoid Frenchy and Leona, the gunmen at the doorway missed the human tornado as well. Ending his dervish spin, Myrna's rescuer performed an amazing fade-away, from the lamplight into a gloomy corner of the room.

Spurts of flame alone revealed his new position—burning jabs that formed a quick staccato as they delivered bullets that clipped the marksmen at the door.

In strident obbligato to that roar of guns rose a strain of chilling mirth—welcome to Myrna; sinister fearful to the scattering crooks.

Crime's rally had been ended by The Shadow.

CHAPTER XVIII. THE NEEDED LINK

By crippling the crooks at the room front, The Shadow had disposed of a pressing situation, but not the most dangerous one at hand. The foe who could offer strongest battle was Frenchy Brenn. Trapped, he displayed an ability in combat that equaled his speed at flight.

Away from The Shadow, Frenchy had yanked a gun. He was coming in with it from an angle calculated to drive The Shadow toward the front of the room. Frenchy hoped for further aid from his bodyguards. They had staggered into a little anteroom, which offered the darkness needed for a sniper's nest.

In fact, as Frenchy flung himself upon The Shadow, he heard shots from that direction and took it for granted

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that his men had rallied. Catching The Shadow in the midst of a spin, Frenchy thrust his gun straight for the black form and fired.

A matter of two inches doomed Frenchy Brenn.

That was the margin of his overthrust. The Shadow's right arm, flinging rearward, met the revolver barrel at the moment of Frenchy's trigger tug. Nudged away, the muzzle ripped a shot that scorched The Shadow's cloak, nothing more.

As Frenchy dropped back, swinging to a new aim, The Shadow's left hand delivered a shot from beneath his right elbow. A timely bullet lodged in Frenchy's heart.

Gunfire from the anteroom had ceased. Those shots had been fired by Harry Vincent, who had doubled through to the front of the house when The Shadow took over Myrna's battle. Harry had settled with the bodyguards. The Shadow, standing above Frenchy's prone form, looked for the only remaining adversary, Leona Dubray.

She was already on the way out. Myrna Elvin, gun still in hand, had pounced for Leona while The Shadow was settling Frenchy. All fight gone, Leona was harmless; yet The Shadow hissed a swift warning, that Myrna understood.

She was to hold Leona prisoner somewhere upstairs, for this whole floor would soon be a new battleground. The Shadow, racing here, had arrived ahead of Marle; but by this time, the big-shot was probably very close.

Myrna and her prisoner were gone. Harry, coming through from the anteroom saw The Shadow stooped above Frenchy's body. From the dead murderer's pocket The Shadow removed a chamois bag in which Frenchy had formerly carried gems. Into that bag, The Shadow poured the real Lamballe diamonds, and tucked that half-million-dollar prize into Frenchy's pocket!

Harry understood, in part. Amos Marle, when he arrived, was to find proof of his theory that Frenchy was the traitor.

There were two closets in the room. The Shadow pointed Harry into one, then opened the door of the other. Picking up the hideout telephone, he duplicated the procedure of that night—quite long ago, it seemed—when he had met with the vanguard of the smuggling ring, under the leadership of Spike Hegley.

The Shadow knew that Joe Cardona would be at his office, muttering over his unfinished reports; and Joe was. A few whispered words were all The Shadow needed to give. He delivered them and ended the call, ignoring the police inspector's eager questions.

The time limit was up. Sounds from the side doorway told that Marle and his mob had arrived.

IN slow, hobbly fashion, Amos Marle entered the lighted room. From the closet, The Shadow watched the big-shot nod his approval when he saw Frenchy's body. Leona had done a good job, in Marle's estimate. Then, suspicion crept over those withery features; Marle was wondering where Leona had gone.

Three chunky bodyguards stood close, while Marle knelt hurriedly beside Frenchy's body. His white hair clattering his face and eyes, Marle cocked his head and made a hasty search. He came upon the jewel bag, rose with an elated cry.

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Pouring the diamonds into one hand, he straightened. His expression was almost youthful as he displayed the gems to Jarvin, who was crouched nervously at the rear door of the room.

The jewel cutter held out his hand.

Marle laughed, poured the diamonds back into the bag and tucked it in his own pocket.

Worried no longer because of Leona's absence, Marle beckoned his followers to leave. He had evidently decided that Leona had fled in confusion, after shooting Frenchy. Remaining on these premises was a risk, in Marle's estimate, even though he did not realize how great a risk it was.

Each passing minute was bringing disaster closer to Amos Marle, and the game he represented.

Delay was still The Shadow's policy. His plan was to trail Marle from the hideout; to begin battle when they reached the street. The best of schemes, since Marle was showing no intent to hurry. His departure had all the signs of a deliberate one—when something altered it entirely.

In from the anteroom came a crawling figure, that collapsed when it reached the light: one of Frenchy's bodyguards, recuperated from a blow that Harry had dealt him. Marle saw the wounded man; staring farther, he made out another figure beyond. It struck him that Leona could not have overwhelmed three opponents.

Springing to the man on the floor, Marle lifted the fellow's head, heard him mutter the name:

"The Shadow!"

Quick calculations gave Marle a wrong answer; then a right one. He didn't suspect that The Shadow had planted the diamonds on Frenchy; instead, he took it for granted that The Shadow had lacked time to search the dead man.

From that erroneous conclusion, Marle came to the positive, and correct, assumption that The Shadow must still be at hand.

Secrecy was no longer possible. As Marle turned to stare at the closed doors of the closets, The Shadow sprang into view. Marle made a wide, left-hand slash with his cane, as he reached his right fist for a gun. On the draw, he sprang spryly toward the anteroom.

Other crooks were slower, but more direct. They were hauling guns as they piled forward, to be met by The Shadow's point-blank fire. From the other side of the room, Harry opened with his gun. Wounded thugs went sprawling, shooting uselessly toward the ceiling. The Shadow ripped a quick shot in Marle's direction.

Marle didn't wait. He scrambled through the front door, while Jarvin was diving for the back one. The Shadow took the first trail. Harry the second. Outside, Marle's shouts brought gunners rising from the sidewalks, to be met by The Shadow's fierce challenge from the doorway.

The barrage that followed was terrific, but lacking in result.

The big-shot himself was making for more distant safety; but he halted, to look back, when he was out of range.

ODDLY, Marle had put himself in the very sort of spot The Shadow wanted. A car wheeled from around the corner, its headlights a brilliant glare of light. Marle, wheeling on the sidewalk, with fists that held gun and

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cane, was the first person caught in that light.

The car shrieked to a stop. From it pounced a pair of headquarters men, ready to collar the shaggy-haired jeweler. All that saved Marle was the fire of his sharpshooters.

It sent the detectives diving for cover; but they, in turn, were preserved by The Shadow's quick shots at murderous marksmen who had unwisely leaped into sight.

Other police cars were roaring into the street, from both directions. Marle's mob was caught between two devastating fires. Some tried to make the space between the houses, but The Shadow, doubling through the house itself, was there to stop them, with Harry's aid.

Myrna, catching a summons from The Shadow as he passed, came down the stairs, driving Leona ahead of her.

Police, seeing crooks stagger from between the buildings, piled in that direction. The Shadow whisked Harry and Myrna with him, through toward the back street, leaving Leona helplessly in the dark, until the glare of flashlights blinded her. Detectives grabbed her as she tried to dart into the house; but they saw no sign of any others.

The Shadow was gone with his loyal aids; but they were not the only ones who had vanished from the scene. Amos Marle had taken advantage of the barrage delivered in his behalf.

During that fusillade, the last that his mob had been able to give, the big-shot had fled for the corner. He was free from the mesh, the Lamballe diamonds in his possession.

Sending Harry and Myrna elsewhere, The Shadow took up the trail. A blind one, it seemed, for The Shadow had gotten a mere glimpse of Marle's flight. He was depending, however, upon intercepting the big-shot at a known spot: the place where Hawkeye waited. Marle was due for one of those mysterious vanishes, that always led along a route that The Shadow had partly learned.

FINDING Moe's cab, sent to this area by Burbank, The Shadow rode northward to a cross street. Alighting, he was met by Hawkeye in a darkened doorway near a corner store. The spotter pointed down the side street; he and The Shadow went in that direction together.

The last time, Hawkeye had traced Marle here while riding an elevated local. This trip, Marle had come by taxi, dismissing his cab at the corner less than two minutes before The Shadow's arrival. Watching, Hawkeye had seen Marle disappear somewhere near the center of the block.

At that spot, The Shadow and his nimble agent found a blank basement store that still bore the sign of a Chinese laundry. Trying the door, The Shadow felt it give. Marle had gone through here in too much hurry to waste time locking the door behind him.

Out back, a thin slice of light showed a narrow way to the next street. Coming through, The Shadow saw a garage across the street. The door was sliding open; pressing Hawkeye back into the darkness, The Shadow watched. A garage attendant stepped aside, to let a car roll out into the street.

The automobile was a sleek coupé—the same machine that The Shadow had seen near the water front the night when Spike Hegley had died. This time, however, The Shadow saw its driver's face, and spotted the number of the license plate.

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The final link was fitted into the chain-like trail that The Shadow had gathered, piece by piece, with Hawkeye's aid. The trail of Amos Marle!

This garage was where the withery jeweler came whenever he sneaked from his apartment. Once in that car, he was free to go his way; an airtight route closed behind him.

As The Shadow watched, the car's twinkling taillights winked back tauntingly, for the cloaked observer had no vehicle in which to follow.

Yet Hawkeye, crouched from sight, heard a whispered laugh from the black-clad being beside him. That sinister mirth carried a tone of confident prophecy. The Shadow did not have to follow the sleek car.

The Shadow knew where the master smuggler had gone; where he could be found when needed. His keen brain was forming a sure fire plan to bring Amos Marle back into circulation, the Lamballe diamonds with him!

CHAPTER XIX. THE SHADOW'S ORDER

POLICE calls were coming over the short-wave radio set in Cranston's limousine, as the big car rolled eastward. The Shadow, again in Cranston's guise, was listening to repeated orders that concerned a citywide man hunt. Police, everywhere, were combing Manhattan for the missing jeweler, Amos Marle.

The hunt was based on information supplied by two detectives, picked men that Cardona had sent to Frenchy's hideout in response to The Shadow's call. They were the pair in the car that had crossed Marle's path. Their description of the man tallied so perfectly with Marle's appearance that Commissioner Weston, hearing it, had put through the order for the jeweler's arrest.

One hour of intensive search producing no result, The Shadow was moving in to aid. There were reasons why he had chosen to delay; at last, they were eliminated.

The first reason, a rather minor one, became apparent when The Shadow stepped from his car at Marle's store. The place was alight, and alive with scouring detectives, the latter under command of Joe Cardona. The ace inspector was searching the entire premises, in hope of some clue that would lead to Marle.

Cardona was quite surprised when he saw Cranston. He remarked that he had supposed the commissioner's friend was in New Jersey.

"During all this excitement?" inquired The Shadow, with Cranston's light smile. "It only takes an hour to get back to town. The hunt has been going on longer than that, inspector."

Cardona nodded. Cranston's statement explained his reappearance in Manhattan, but not his arrival at Marle's store.

"I've been looking for Commissioner Weston," resumed The Shadow, casually. "I expected to find him at the club."

"He's at his office," returned Cardona. "I can see why you thought you'd find him here, though. We've been bearing down on this joint pretty heavy, lately."

"Any new results?"

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Cardona shook his head.

"None here," he said. "Nor at Marle's apartment. Marquette is handling the search up there."

The Shadow watched the working detectives. Some were prying up the flooring of Marle's store, while others were shifting the big showcases. Something in Cranston's ease of manner made Cardona feel that he had been a trifle surly, and much too inquisitive, when he had first spoken to the commissioner's friend.

"We've got the goods on Marle, right enough," declared Joe. "I was a little leery of the first identification. My men are reliable, but they've had Marle on the brain, lately. We took a prisoner, though, whose testimony helped us. A fellow named Jarvin; a jewel cutter.

"He's in the hospital, pretty well loaded with lead. He came out of his daze long enough to admit that he went with Marle to look up Frenchy Brenn. The joint we raided was Frenchy's hideout, and he was lying dead in the middle of it."

Cranston seemed only mildly impressed. The question that he put sounded very casual.

"Did anyone else identify Amos Marle?"

"No," admitted Cardona. "But Jarvin was enough. Most of the mobbies that we grabbed didn't know who the big-shot was. There was a woman we arrested—her name was Leona Dubray—but she swore she'd never heard of Marle.

"Said she'd talked to the big-shot over the telephone, but only Frenchy knew who he was. She'd been working with Frenchy, smuggling stuff through. She talked enough about that side of it; told us a lot we didn't know. So her claim that she never heard of Marle sounded right enough."

Looking about the store, The Shadow asked if there was a telephone he could use to call the commissioner's office. Cardona pointed him to the rear room; once there, The Shadow made a call to Burbank. He gave instructions that certain agents were to follow.

Cardona saw Cranston come strolling from the rear room. While pausing to let detectives rip up another stretch of flooring, the commissioner's friend remarked:

"A message for you, inspector. Commissioner Weston will meet you up at Kendler's penthouse. I'm going that way. I'll be glad to drop you off."

DURING the ride, Cardona speculated on what lay ahead. He hoped that Raymond Kendler had tapped some source that would provide new facts concerning Amos Marle. Cardona expressed that hope to Cranston; but there was something else that Joe kept to himself.

The whole thing might be what Cardona termed one of the commissioner's "crack-pot" ideas, which Joe regarded as a common failing with Weston. When other measures failed, Weston liked to sit around with persons that he regarded as important and imagine that he was getting somewhere by a discussion of the case.

Maybe that was why he was going to Kendler's penthouse. Weston liked places that were built high; the reason being—in Cardona's opinion—that he liked to look out over Manhattan and imagine that he owned it.

When he arrived at the penthouse, Cardona found that Weston wasn't there. Kendler was rather surprised to see the police inspector, but told him that he had talked to the commissioner less than an hour before. Weston

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had said that he might call to see Kendler, after he had finished with pressing matters.

Cardona had run into something of a coincidence; one, perhaps, upon which The Shadow had depended when giving him Weston's mythical message. The circumstance, however, was merely helpful, not essential, for The Shadow had other plans to keep Cardona anchored at the penthouse for a while.

Soon after Cardona's arrival, other visitors were announced. Myrna Elvin entered, accompanied by Harry Vincent. In a few minutes, Myrna was artfully telling Cardona a few facts about Leona Dubray, restricting them chiefly to accounts of her meetings with the woman while both were passengers on the Albania.

Harry Vincent made a telephone call during that conversation. Secluded in Kendler's hallway, he answered specific questions that Burbank put to him; all being important to The Shadow. One, very vital, concerned the radio in the penthouse.

Burbank wanted to know if it had been picking up police calls. Harry answered in the negative. The radio was turned off, and it was in another room from the one where the guests were chatting.

The stage was set for The Shadow's next move. While Kendler, at Cardona's urge, was taxing his brain for any details that might help the search for Marle, a servant entered to announce that the inspector was wanted on the telephone. The call, the servant added, was from the police commissioner.

At the telephone, Cardona heard the brisk voice that he identified as Weston's. He had been fooled by that tone once before. The speaker on the wire was actually The Shadow, clipping his speech in Weston's best style.

What Cardona heard left him amazed. Recovering from his bewilderment, he glued his ear to the receiver and listened to explanations. Gradually, he was convinced because of a very definite reason. The Shadow, talking to Cardona at Marle's store, had noted points on which the inspector was doubtful.

Emphasizing those very factors, The Shadow convinced Cardona as Weston never could have. He was playing through Cardona's greatest weakness: Joe's belief in hunches. Something which Weston never did, for he believed that hunches were the bunk. To keep within the commissioner's range, The Shadow didn't mention the hunch angle, but simply let Cardona relish it himself.

COMING back to the room where Kendler and his guests were seated, Cardona shook his head, to recover from his mental daze. Thinking things over, there were some points he didn't like; others that he did. But he was certainly sold on what he heard.

"The search is off." Cardona delivered that bombshell bluntly. "Marle isn't the big-shot in the smuggling racket."

Surprise greeted that announcement. The suspense pleased Cardona.

"Those men of mine are good," affirmed Cardona, "but just like I thought, they had Marle on the brain. They got kind of skittish, each thinking he had argued the other into something. Not knowing where to get hold of me, they called the commissioner.

"When he found out they weren't sure they'd seen Marle, he called the hospital, to see what Jarvin had to say. The guy's out of his coma and he's begun to talk straight. He didn't go to Frenchy's hideout with Marle.

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"Somebody called him, told him Marle wanted to see him. It sounded funny to Jarvin, because he'd never worked for Marle. Next thing he knew, he was in the middle of a lot of shooting. It was just another attempt to pin something on Marle."

Warmed up to his own argument, Cardona leaned forward in his chair.

"That's what the whole business is—a frame-up!" he declared. "We've never pinned a thing on Amos Marle. That's why the call has gone out to forget Marle. The commissioner hopes he'll hear it and be decent enough to come and talk to us."

"Marle may be able to help us find the big-shot who has worked the frame-up. But if Marle doesn't find him, we will. The master mind, whoever he is, let his mob in for a mess tonight. Somebody shot in a tip-off that will be a clincher."

"It's about a car—a coupé that was down near the water front the night that Spike Hegley was knocked off. The same car was spotted tonight and it belongs to the big-shot behind the smuggling racket. We've learned the name of the garage where the car is kept, and we've got the license number."

"In about ten minutes"—Cardona sat back in his chair—"we'll hear from the commissioner again. He'll tell us what every patrol car in town is waiting to hear: the name and description of the brain behind the smuggling ring. And it won't be Amos Marle!"

There was a half minute of spellbound silence. It was broken by a sudden snap of Kendler's fingers. The baldheaded jeweler came to his feet with a triumphant exclamation.

"I've got it! I see how the whole thing fit! It hinges on Hector Jarvin. To begin with, he's a jewel cutter—"

"You mean he's the big-shot?" inserted Cardona. "He couldn't be! He's been in the hospital since the raid."

"It hinges on Jarvin," still insisted Kendler. "Wait here, while I look for some correspondence that I had with him when I offered him steady employment. The letters were so odd that I brought them from the office."

Kendler went from the room. Cardona began to pace the floor. He wasn't as interested in the Jarvin letters as he was in the expected call from Weston. Stopping by the window. Cardona looked down to the street, saw a patrol car roll past. He wondered if its driver had received the latest instructions.

Another patrol car. The second in five minutes. Cardona turned angrily, wondering if the commissioner had forgotten him. Harry and Myrna came over to the window, began to chat with Joe. It was Myrna who happened to glance to the street. Excitedly, she pointed as she exclaimed:

"Look!"

Staring, Harry and Cardona saw a taxi pulled to the curb. A man was standing with one foot on the running board talking to the driver. In his hand, he wagged a cane; and even from this height, his head was distinguishable by the skullcap and the shaggy white locks that dangled from under it.

Joe Cardona voiced the name that sprang to every mind:

"Amos Marle!"

CHAPTER XX. CRIME'S MASTER

THOUGHTS were pounding through Cardona's brain with thrumming regularity. The ace inspector was no longer amazed by Marle's arrival on the street below. There had been ten minutes since Cardona had listened to Weston's voice across the telephone.

Word was out, so Weston had said, that Marle was no longer wanted. If Marle had heard the news, he would naturally come out of hiding. He would want to talk to someone, and he had probably chosen Raymond Kendler.

Any feud between Marle and Kendler had been dependent upon misunderstanding, as Cardona reasoned it. Therefore, Marle's choice was logical. What wasn't logical, was the fact that he was getting into the cab instead of leaving it. Cardona straightened that one out a few seconds later.

Amos Marle might have decided that he would not be welcome here. Perhaps he was going to the commissioner's office instead. That didn't particularly please Cardona. He wanted the privilege of hearing Marle's story first.

The hope seemed too late. Marle was in the cab; it was pulling away. Then came the incident that stopped it. Another cab rolled into the one-way street, heading the wrong direction. Both cabs zigzagged, as if disputing with each other. Brakes screeching, they locked with a thump that tangled bumpers.

Cardona saw his chance to talk with Marle.

"Come on!" he snapped. "Let's get down there! Where's that flunky? Tell him to hunt up Kendler. We want him with us."

Harry and Myrna followed Cardona out through the hall. Joe saw the servant, told him to get Kendler.

Horns were honking loudly when they reached the sidewalk. Traffic was jammed, and police cars were threading through it by shoving their wheels over the curb. Cardona saw Marle step from his cab and turn toward the corner, as if looking for another.

A patrol car pulled up beside the stoop-shouldered jeweler. A policeman leaped out, clamped his hand on Marle's shoulder as if making an arrest. Marle started an argument; another cop arrived. Marle's head wagged back and forth, his white hair shaking rapidly beneath his skullcap. Two officers were gripping him, when his manner changed.

Wrenching free, Marle lashed sideways with his cane. His powerful stroke was unexpected. The officers dodged. Flinging the cane aside, Marle dashed along the sidewalk, straight toward Cardona. Officers were pulling revolvers; to protect Marle, Cardona tried to leap between.

Harry and Myrna stopped him; it took all their combined power to halt the stocky police inspector. Kicking at his ankles, they tripped him; all three rolled on the sidewalk as guns began to bark above their heads.

Not only the police were shooting; Marle had a gun out and was jabbing wild replies. New guns began to chatter from a touring car near the corner. Mobbies were in the picture, suddenly aiding Marle.

A sedan rolled up to block Marle's flight; its driver changed course and bashed into the crook-manned car. Out piled a squad of Feds headed by Vic Marquette. Their quick shots put a finish to the mob attack.

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On his feet, Joe Cardona was shouting that it was all a big mistake. His voice wasn't heard amid the gunfire. Marle was getting away; with no cab in sight, he dived into a sleek coupé that was parked near by.

His stoop was gone; and his arms were rapid as they wheeled the car out into the street. Ahead, he saw a route to freedom. Blocked traffic had cut off the patrol cars.

Then, as the coupé straightened, a big car whizzed in from the opposite direction. Witnesses caught sight of arms thrust from windows: Marle's, from the coupé; another arm, cloaked in black, from the rear of a limousine.

Guns spurted fire, so suddenly that only the result told the outcome of that split-second duel. Marle's car jolted to a stop; the other kept ahead. The cloaked arm drew itself into the window; from the lips of an unseen passenger came a strange laugh that shivered the night air.

The big car was gone. The door of Marle's 'coupé slid open. The skullcapped man slumped to the street, then rose. His body straight again, he rallied despite his wound. Pulling a fresh revolver, he stabbed shots in mad haste.

Other guns answered, from every side. Feds and police were close enough to return the maddened fire with which Marle, against the world, would gladly have dropped everyone in sight. Torn by a deluge of bullets, Marle struck the street, his gun slipping from his stilled hand.

WHILE others halted, breathless from their haste, Joe Cardona arrived beside the body. The fact that he, alone, had sided with Marle made him want proof that he had been wrong.

Probing through the dead man's pockets, Cardona found a chamois bag—the one that had formerly belonged to Frenchy Brenn. From it, the police inspector poured the conclusive evidence: the diamonds of the Lamballe necklace. An official car had reached the scene.

From it stepped Commissioner Weston. Shaking his head, Cardona pointed to Marquette, told Weston to congratulate the Fed. Marquette, in turn, delivered a shrug.

"I didn't stop him," he disclaimed. "Who it was, I don't know. Anyway, we've bagged Amos Marle."

Cardona's lips delivered a mutter.

"So it was Marle," he declared. Then, to Weston: "It was Marle, commissioner."

"Of course!" clipped Weston. "Who else—"

He stopped, recognizing a newcomer who had stepped up beside them. The arrival was Lamont Cranston, and he was acting quite oddly. Leaning toward Marle's body. Cranston was tracing lines on the dead man's face.

"Notice the change, commissioner," he remarked in almost casual fashion. "That dead face resembles another—one I seem to recognize. This may help us."

Cranston's hand plucked the shaggy locks that spread beneath Marle's skullcap. He gave a tug; the hair came away, skullcap with it. The whole thing was a wig, fitted in a single piece to aid in rapid changes. With the wig gone, there was no mistaking the face. The bald head above it was the clue.

Amos Marle was Raymond Kendler!

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MANY thoughts sprang to the minds of those who viewed the transformation. Words were unneeded, for Kendler's whole game revealed itself, once the truth of his double identity was known. Master of the smuggling ring, he had protected his game, even with his own followers, by creating the personality of Marle.

Boldly, he had cast suspicion on his other identity, to strengthen his own position. It was he, Kendler, who had openly denounced Marle. He, too, who had supplied tip-offs to the police, to liven the game. For Kendler's plans had called for the final disappearance of Marle.

Two deceiving touches had been his pretense of receiving a telephone call from his other self at the pier where the *Corse* had docked. The other, his visit, as Kendler, to Marle's store, where he had expressed disappointment at finding himself absent.

The Shadow had seen traces of that deception very early in the game. Kendler's buying of jewels, which must have come through Marle, had been an indication; but another, strong enough to be conclusive, was the fact that Marle had known when and how his store was to be visited by the law.

The Shadow had actually broached that subject to Commissioner Weston in Kendler's own penthouse, when he had suggested that he, the commissioner's friend Cranston, might reasonably be accused of letting the law's plans leak.

There had been a leak somewhere, and the only other man who knew the preparations was Kendler. Excluding, of course, Marquette, Cardona and Weston himself. When the commissioner had expressed horror at the thought, he had shown trust in Kendler, as well as Cranston. From then on, The Shadow had known that the master crook would be overconfident.

Kendler was Marle. The Shadow knew it. He wanted the law to have its proof. Somewhere along the trail, Marle had to become Kendler. The Shadow had found out when and where. With Hawkeye aiding, he had learned that Marle's route led through a block by way of an old Chinese laundry; then to a garage.

But the man who drove from the garage was Kendler. His basement trip was the time when he pocketed his wig, whether attached to skullcap or felt hat. The garage men knew Kendler, not Marle. The car license belonged to the man who passed as honest, not the crook.

The Shadow had let Marle take the diamonds because he knew that they would be found with Kendler. With Marle wanted as a crook, the problem was to coax Kendler back into the personality which he had permanently discarded, and The Shadow had solved it with the aid of Joe Cardona.

Those astounding reports that Cardona had heard and repeated to Kendler, were entirely false; but behind them lay every element of possible truth. With Cardona convinced, Kendler was sure to believe the story. Talk of a new man hunt for the owner of a traced coupé had struck deep.

Raymond Kendler had suddenly believed that his own personality was the one that would get him into trouble; that his only hope of safety lay in shifting back to Amos Marle. On a quick pretext, he had left his guests; had donned the Marle disguise, which he had not found time to destroy.

He had been leaving the building when Cardona saw him from the penthouse; and by that departure, Kendler, once more Marle, had thrust himself into the jaws of the man hunt that was still going strong.

The Shadow had added teeth to that trap. A report that Marle had been seen near Kendler's had brought police cars and hurried Feds to the spot where they were to find the wanted crook. Moe Shrevnitz's cab had bucked the one-way street, to block Kendler's getaway. The Shadow, himself, had covered the last outlet, which

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Kendler had managed to gain through superhuman effort.

The hand of The Shadow had thereby been the final factor. The Shadow had mastered crime's leader, in that sharp duel which ended Kendler's flight and brought him to earth as Marle.

THERE were two persons who discussed those angles of the case, and many others with which they were familiar; and their chat continued almost until dawn. Those two were Harry Vincent and Myrna Elvin, whose stout efforts had done much to aid The Shadow's cause.

One other knew much that he never intended to tell. Dawn found Joe Cardona seated in an armchair, puffing cigar smoke toward the ceiling and repeating to himself the words that he had heard from the telephone receiver.

Words in the voice of Commissioner Weston, but from the lips of The Shadow. Statements that Joe Cardona was glad he had accepted, because his belief in them had enabled him to play the cards exactly as The Shadow wanted.

After all, Cardona decided, his part had been a large one. It was the actual wedge by which The Shadow had knocked the props from under Kendler's game.

His eyes half closed, Cardona had a whimsical thought inspired by his recollection of that voice so much like Weston's that the commissioner's own tone might well be termed the imitation.

Cardona's thought was this: If Ralph Weston should ever resign his office as New York's police commissioner, Joe Cardona would like to name the person to fill the place.

Joe's choice would be The Shadow!

THE END