

# **THE CRIME MASTER**

Maxwell Grant

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# THE CRIME MASTER

**Maxwell Grant**

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## CHAPTER I. THE LAW WAITS

"ALL right, inspector. I'll be there in twenty minutes."

The stocky man hung up the receiver of the telephone. Dark eyes peered from his swarthy face as he turned from the corner of the little East Side store. He stared at the proprietor, a dull-faced old fellow who was standing, stooped, behind a decrepit counter.

The old man blinked back. He showed no signs of intelligence. The swarthy man grinned. With a shift of his shoulders, he buttoned his light overcoat and stalked from the dilapidated shop, out into the night.

The old man watched, hands on the counter. He came cautiously forward. He reached the door and peered out along the street. He could see the striding form of the man who had departed. He went back to the corner of his shop, deposited a nickel in the coin box and dialed.

A voice clicked through the receiver. The old man spoke, in a crackly eager tone:

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"He just left here... Yes... Joe Cardona, the dick... No, he ain't going back to headquarters... Going to see the police commissioner, that's what..."

Clicking ceased. The old man hung up the receiver. He glanced furtively toward the door; then, with straggly step, went back to his place behind the counter.

MEANWHILE, the swarthy man had covered a full block. The old proprietor of the store had not been mistaken in his statement of identity. This stocky strider who was marching through the fringe of New York's underworld was Detective Joe Cardona, ace of the Manhattan force.

The fact that he had been deceived by the innocuous appearance of the old storekeeper did not prove Joe Cardona to be unobservant. On the contrary, the star sleuth was remarkably alert as he paced his way along the narrow street.

Though he apparently stared straight ahead, Cardona kept his eyes in constant motion. Peering from right to left, those optics noted much that an ordinary observer would not have seen.

The open door of a tawdry barber shop; two Italians gesticulating while one clutched a newspaper – Cardona caught words in a Neapolitan dialect. He nodded grimly as he recognized the topic of conversation.

The detective passed a corner. He went by the door of a pawn shop. Again, he caught snatches of talk – these words in English. Cardona kept onward; his face more grim than before.

The bulk of an elevated structure loomed at the next corner. The detective stopped and struck a match against a pillar beside the station steps. A train was rumbling overhead as Cardona lighted a cigarette. A pale-faced, sweated fellow shambled from beside a fruit peddler's wagon. He stooped to pick a cigar stump from the gutter.

"What's doing, Squawky?"

Cardona emitted the growled question without looking toward the stooping man. Rising, the sweated fellow looked at the cigar stump; then flung it back into the gutter. His lips moved as though muttering to himself. But his mouth framed low words.

"Nothin' doin'," mumbled Squawky. "Just talk – but nobody knows nothin'. I'm goin' to the Pink Rat."

"Call me at headquarters."

Puffing at his cigarette, the detective turned and ascended the elevated steps. "Squawky" slouched back toward the fruit peddler's wagon; he dug a few pennies from his pocket and handed them to the peddler in exchange for an apple. Chewing at his purchase, the sweated man shuffled along the grimy avenue.

JOE CARDONA had reached the elevated platform. A train was coming into the station. The detective stepped aboard. Standing within the end door, he eyed two passengers who were seated a dozen feet away.

One was tapping the columns of an evening newspaper. The other was nodding in response to a statement which Cardona could not hear because of the train's rumble. But the detective saw the scoffing smiles which the two exchanged. Turning, Cardona eyed the tops of old East Side buildings past which the train was speeding.

"Luck," he growled, half aloud. "Luck – and everybody knows it. If I could guess what's coming –"

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The train reached Cardona's station. The detective alighted. He was away from the underworld now; his footsteps quickened as he reached the street.

"Poiper, mister?" The question came from a newsboy who pattered along beside Cardona. "Police stop big holdup –"

Cardona waved the boy aside. The gamin persisted for a dozen steps; then gave up the idea of a sale as the detective turned a corner and swung into the entrance of a building.

A few minutes later, Joe Cardona came into a quiet anteroom. A girl spied him from a desk in the corner; she motioned for him to enter the inner door. Cardona followed through. He came into a large, sumptuous office where a man was seated behind a glass-topped desk.

Cardona approached and stood waiting. The man looked up.

"Good evening, commissioner," said Cardona.

"Hello, Cardona," came the brisk response. "I want to talk to you. Pull up a chair."

The detective obeyed. A few seconds later, he was sitting face to face with Police Commissioner Ralph Weston, chief official of the law in New York city.

Cardona and Weston were men of determination. In that one respect, they were alike. Otherwise, they differed. In contrast to the stocky, taciturn detective, Commissioner Weston was tall and of heavy build. His full face, with its pointed mustache, was keen and dynamic. Weston was a pusher who demanded action.

Often, the commissioner had berated Cardona for lack of gusto. On other occasions, he had waxed enthusiastic while the detective had remained critically silent. This latter mood was present to-night. After a few moments of silence, Weston burst forth with commendation.

"You deserve credit, Cardona," he declared, "for your work this morning. I have read your report in detail. The manner in which you and your squad beat off that raid upon the bank truck pleased me immensely."

The commissioner arose from his chair. He paced heavily across the room; then returned and faced the detective.

"Moreover," added Weston, "the way you used that single clue was excellent. Crime has been rampant of late, Cardona. You have dealt a decisive blow; the first stroke, I hope, in our campaign against the present epidemic."

The commissioner resumed his chair. He leaned with folded arms upon the desk. Cardona was about to speak; he paused, while the commissioner made another utterance.

"That is why I called Inspector Klein," stated Weston. "I told him to send you here. I wanted to commend you personally – and also hear your opinion on the situation as it now stands."

ORDINARILY, Joe Cardona felt ill-at-ease in the commissioner's presence. Weston's manner – overbearing at times – was difficult for him to meet. But when Weston loosened and gave commendation, Cardona's inferiority complex faded. Facing the firm-visaged commissioner, the detective suddenly voiced a challenge.

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"You want my opinion?" he inquired. "You want it straight? All right, I'll give it. First of all, you can wipe out all the credit that you've just handed me. I don't want a boomerang that's going to come back and sock me.

"You say I did a good job. I didn't. I got a lucky break and even at that I flivved. Listen, commissioner. We're not the ones who are just beginning to get somewhere. It's the crooks who are making their start. I mean it."

"But to-day," spluttered Weston, "you stopped the raiders –"

"Read my report again," suggested Cardona, abruptly. "You won't find any frills in it. Listen, commissioner. There have been three good-sized robberies in quick order. Jobs that left us standing goofy. Last night, I was expecting another. How – where – when – I couldn't have guessed.

"Then came this break. There was a gang fight about three o'clock this morning. A couple of bodies were lugged to the morgue. I went down to look them over. Up comes a smart reporter – fellow named Burke, with the Classic – and he suggests I search the bodies.

"Persistent bird, this Burke. I knew that everything should already have been taken out of the dead men's pockets; but just to please Burke, I made another search. You know what I found – a folded piece of paper that was missed before – on it the words: 'Manhattan Armored Truck – Eighth Avenue – ten o'clock.' How it happened to be in that gorilla's pocket, I don't know."

"But you followed the armored car," inserted Weston, "and you and your squad drove off the raiders in a running fight."

"Sure we did," admitted Cardona. "But we were lucky. The holdup gang had three cars, commissioner. By rights they should have given us a lacing. We hadn't prepared for anything like what we got.

"If that armored car had been standing still, those crooks would have smashed it and taken the dough. But when we busted in, the guy driving the armored car was smart enough to run for it. If it had been nighttime, the holdup boys would have smeared us. But they couldn't chance a long fight in broad daylight. That's why they beat it. We bagged a couple of small fry" – Cardona shrugged his shoulders – "and I'll take credit for that. But outside of that, commissioner, we've got nothing. We're back where we were."

"You mean that crime is still rampant? That this ineffectual raid will not deter the plans of other malefactors?"

"I mean just that, commissioner. I figure more jobs are on the way – bigger jobs than the taking of an armored car – and they're due to hit fast and heavy."

"You must find clues!" Weston pounded his fist on the desk. "We must anticipate crime before it strikes!"

"I landed one clue," returned Cardona. "This morning – by luck – that paper in the gorilla's pocket. But where's the next one coming from? Frankly, commissioner, I don't know."

CARDONA placed one elbow upon the desk. Leaning forward, he wagged his forearm in emphasis as he spoke. Weston listened, his forehead furrowed in a frown.

"Gangland is organized," asserted Cardona. "That's all I've learned, commissioner. Things are tougher there than ever before. It seems like nearly all the mobs are linked. I came through a tough district to-night. I had a hunch that I was being watched all along.

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"Peddlers, loafers, small-fry crooks like pickpockets – even storekeepers – I suspect them all. Everybody is answering to some one else. Unless I'm mighty far wrong, it's all part of the same chain. Crooks are lying low – like they're waiting for orders. On the surface, commissioner, the underworld looks tame. Beneath – it's fierce."

Cardona paused. Weston sat silent. The commissioner was waiting for more. The detective gave it.

"The stool pigeons are scared," declared Cardona. "We've got thirty of them on the job and twenty-five of the lot are afraid for their dirty hides. They think they're being watched. They won't go near the places where they usually get information."

"And the other five?" interposed Weston, dryly.

"Drawing blanks," replied Cardona. "They hear whispers – buzzings – but no talk. The best of the lot is Squawky Sugler. I talked to him when I was getting on the el, twenty minutes ago. He says there's nothing stirring. On his way to a joint called the Pink Rat when I left him. Maybe he'll land something there; but I doubt it."

"This is serious, Cardona," observed Weston. "Let me commend you again – this time for your frankness. Then let me ask your opinion. What do you intend to do – what would you intend to do if left to your own resources?"

"Wait," asserted Cardona, summing his chief plan in the single word. "That's the best I can do, commissioner. I'm going from here to headquarters; then back into the district where I was before."

"To visit the dives?"

"No. But to be ready if anything stirs. Some of these stool pigeons may get knocked off. There may be another mob scrap. There's no telling what may hit. But if you're leaving me to my own plans, commissioner, I'll head back to the neighborhood of the Pink Rat."

"Very well." Weston arose. "Go your way, Cardona. I am relying on your judgment; and I hold the hope that you may find new clues of coming crime."

"And meanwhile?" questioned Cardona, anxiously.

The commissioner was silent for the moment. When he replied, his tone was grim as he phrased his answer:

"The law must wait!"

## CHAPTER II. THE SHADOW ACTS

WHILE Joe Cardona was in conference with the police commissioner, Squawky Sugler, the stool pigeon, was slouching his way toward the Pink Rat. Shambling through the baser districts of Manhattan, the sweated stoolie was observing signs that Cardona had already noticed.

The Italians in the barber shop; the loungers by the pawn shop; the riders in the elevated car – they were but typical. Members of society's upper crust might share the elation which Commissioner Weston had felt over the episode of the armored truck; but those who dwelt close to the realm of crime could scent the beginning of a wave of terror.

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Squawky, scruffing along the sidewalk, was watchful. Like Cardona, he suspected spies everywhere. The detective's movement had been reported from the little shop where he had stopped to phone. Cardona could assume such a risk; but Squawky, the stool pigeon, could not.

Conditions were precarious so far as stoolies were concerned. Ordinarily, an informant might expect trouble only from the crooks on whom he squealed. But Squawky, to-night, seemed to accept all passers as his enemies. At times, he paused to raise a knuckle to his nostrils. A sniff – and again Squawky was on his shambling way. Acting the part of a dope addict, Squawky felt more secure in his present venture. Cokers were seldom banned from the Pink Rat.

With shifty strides, Squawky neared his destination. He followed a darkened alley; paused when he reached a dilapidated doorway; then opened the barrier and took a poorly-lit passage that brought him into the dive itself.

THERE was tension in the Pink Rat to-night. Squawky sensed it the moment that he entered the big room that constituted the major portion of the joint. Men were seated in small groups at scattered tables. Mumbled conversation buzzed through the smoke-filled room.

Squawky seated himself in a corner. He nodded as a sour-faced waiter approached with bottle and glass. He pulled a crumpled dollar bill from his pocket and gave it as payment. But Squawky was slow about drinking. He spurned the bottle while he indulged in pretended sniffs.

Coke and hooch were not a usual combination. Squawky knew that fact; hence his reluctance with the liquor. Satisfied that he was getting by, the stool pigeon began a series of furtive glances about the dive.

Hard-faced gangsters prevailed to-night. Among the thugs and rowdies whom he observed, Squawky saw none who looked like police agents. Stools were keeping clear; Squawky felt sure that he was the only one who still had the nerve to pry into gangdom's secrets.

Crime was the theme. Squawky knew it, although he could not catch words of conversation. Were mobsters talking about the episode of the armored truck? Or were they discussing the probability of coming crime?

Squawky did not know. He was sure of but one point: namely, that a shroud of peculiar mystery had lowered over the affairs of the underworld.

Squawky spied a trio of men seated at a table twenty feet away. He knew their faces. One – the most imposing of the three – was "Trigger" Maddock. Square-chinned, blunt-nosed, with beady eyes that blinked with snakelike stare, Trigger was a character highly feared where gun fights were concerned.

The swiftest shooter in the underworld, a gunner who could drill a mark while on the draw, Trigger had surrounded himself with a band of capable sharpshooters who were equipped for rapid duty. The two men with him were evidently members of his select squad.

There were others of Trigger's ilk in the underworld – raiding mobleaders like Louie Harger, "Pigeon" Melgin, or "Turk" Bodell. They either worked swift jobs of their own or sold their talents to big shots who might need them. Meanwhile, they were clever enough to evade the law. So far, the police had never been able to hang sure evidence upon Trigger Maddock.

Trigger's presence in the Pink Rat was not unusual. This place was one of his favored hangouts. Others of his type had their own chosen spots. They, like Trigger, made it a practice to meet their henchmen at appointed places in the badlands.



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Squawky Sugler became watchful. His furtive glances returned at regular intervals toward Trigger Maddock. Anxious to gain some information, the stool pigeon was looking for any sign that might indicate coming action on the gangleader's part. Yet no such sign came.

HALF an hour passed. Squawky shifted in his chair. He began to feel uncomfortable – afraid that some one might be noting the watch that he was keeping on Trigger. Squawky's eyes roved about the room. They came to a sudden stop.

In watching Trigger, Squawky had been looking toward the left. For the first time, he observed a person on the right. Seated at a table not more than a dozen feet away was a lone gangster whose eyes met Squawky's as the stoolie stared in his direction.

Squawky did not recognize the mobster. But he crouched uneasily as he studied the stranger's visage. Squawky saw an immobile face – a countenance as fixed as a statue's. A hawklike nose, from its sides a pair of piercing eyes that held the compelling stare of a hypnotist.

The focused gaze seemed to burn through the startled stool pigeon. Squawky's clawing hands scratched at the table beside the bottle. Squawky feared that this strange watcher had spotted him as a police informant.

The stranger was wearing a turtle-neck sweater, black in color. Its heavy folds gave him an impressive bulk; though seated, it was apparent that he must be at least six feet tall. Sinking in his chair, Squawky managed to wrest his gaze from those weird, blazing eyes. Slowly, the stool pigeon looked toward the floor beside the other table.

There he saw a streak of blackness. It might have been a continuation of the bulky sweater. It loomed wide upon the floor; and Squawky, staring as he blinked, observed that it ended in a striking silhouette – a profile of the hawklike visage that lay as motionless as though it were etched upon the floor.

Squawky shuddered. He reached for the bottle. His hand shook as he poured himself a drink. Drops trickled from the lip of the glass; the liquid dabbed Squawky's hand. More splattered on the stool pigeon's chin as Squawky raised the glass to his lips.

There was reason for Squawky's terror. That silhouette, as formidable as the form above it, brought grotesque thoughts to the stool pigeon's fevered brain. It reminded Squawky of a dread being whose name he had heard whispered through the underworld – The Shadow!

Big shots had quailed through fear of The Shadow. For The Shadow was known as a superfighter, a lone wolf who roved the underworld, preying upon all who dealt in crime. A phantom of darkness, a living being who could travel unseen, The Shadow was the mighty foe of crookdom.

Dying gangsters had gasped The Shadow's name. Others, who had gained respite through flight, had told of seeing him. A figure clad entirely in black; his eyes like living coals beneath the brim of a slouch hat; his form concealed by an inky, flowing cloak; his gloved hands gripping a pair of deadly automatics – such was The Shadow.

The Shadow, it was rumored, was a master of disguise. The Shadow, it had been proven, knew much, if not all, concerning activities in the underworld. He gave no quarter to those who dealt in crime. None were immune once The Shadow had marked them for destruction.

THIS was why Squawky feared. The unknown gangster; the black sweater; the silhouette upon the floor – these brought beads of perspiration to the stool pigeon's forehead.

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The Shadow was independent of the police. Squawky, as a stool pigeon, could gain no immunity should he incur The Shadow's wrath. The presence of this mysterious stranger kept Squawky in a tremble. Until he found proof that The Shadow was watching some one other than himself, Squawky was afraid to move.

Wresting his gaze from the floor, Squawky blinked at the bottle as he helped himself to another drink. He did not dare to gaze to the right. His furtive, timorous glances were all brief ones, toward Trigger Maddock, at the left. Even these were few. Squawky still feared that The Shadow's eyes were upon him.

Two men entered the Pink Rat. They looked like small-fry mobsters. One came slouching over toward Trigger's table. He clapped the gangleader on the back and mouthed a friendly greeting. Trigger, apparently annoyed by the fellow's approach, snarled in reply. The newcomer grinned in apologetic fashion. He began to sidle away. Trigger arose and followed him a few paces.

For a moment, the pair stood jaw to jaw. Trigger shoved the other man's shoulder. Still snarling, the gangleader went back to his table. The small-fry crook rejoined his companion.

Squawky had seen the brief altercation. His eyes naturally followed the man whom Trigger had rebuked. But there were eyes that followed Trigger instead. Those watching eyes were the optics of the sweated stranger whose gaze Squawky Sugler feared.

The sweated watcher had seen a shift of hands. He saw Trigger, as he moved away, thrust his fist into his inside pocket. The small-fry crook had delivered something to Trigger Maddock.

Neither of Trigger's gorillas had detected the move. Like Squawky, they had taken the affair only as an unpleasant meeting that had not been to Trigger's liking. But the sweated watcher was ready for the aftermath which came.

Trigger Maddock swallowed a drink. He spoke to his companions. They nodded. Rising, the gangleader strolled toward the door. Squawky, gripping his bottle, began to pour a third drink.

There was a motion at Squawky's right. The sweated mobster arose. His trousers, like his sweater, were black. He strolled toward another exit. No one was concerned with his departure.

When Squawky Sugler had gulped his drink, he gazed unthinkingly toward the floor beside the table on the right. The silhouette was gone. Squawky looked up; he blinked when he saw that the table had been vacated.

With a sigh of relief, the stool settled back in his chair. Concerned no more with Trigger Maddock, relieved of the fear which he had felt toward the stranger whom he had suspected to be The Shadow, the stool pigeon began to observe others in the Pink Rat.

MEANWHILE, Trigger Maddock was departing from the outside alley. The gangleader had reached the street beyond. He paused to gaze over his shoulder; then resumed his course. He walked rapidly along the street.

From the darkness of the alley, a pair of keen eyes had seen Trigger's move. A sweater moved upward; from beneath its bulk came the girdling folds of another black garment. A cloak swished over shoulders.

A flattened hat took shape. It capped the head above the cloak. A form moved forward. Gaining the sidewalk of the street, a fleeting figure merged with the gloom of a house wall. Burning eyes spied Trigger, less than a block ahead.

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Then began a weird pursuit. One block – two – three – the gliding phantom trailed Trigger. The space was closing. Trigger did not suspect that he was being followed.

The gangleader reached a brick building which, though old, was more pretentious than others of the neighborhood. He stopped just outside the door. The place was a cheap apartment.

A man stepped from beside the door. Trigger spoke to him in a low growl:

"Hello, Herb. Where's Greasy? Upstairs?"

"Yeah, Trigger, waitin' for you."

"All right."

Holding his hand in front of him, Trigger spread his fingers, then closed his fist. He repeated the action twice. Herb nodded. Trigger entered the apartment. Herb slouched away from the door.

It was dark on the other side of the street. Herb did not see the figure that arrived there. He did not catch a glimpse of the blackened form that moved along toward the corner of the apartment house; nor did he see those burning eyes that stared upward toward the third floor of the building which Trigger had entered.

A light had appeared in a room on that floor. A soft laugh came in eerie whispered tones. A phantom shape glided across the street, unseen by Herb. It reached the side wall.

A squidgy sound occurred. It was made by concave rubber disks, attached to hands and feet. A batlike figure began its ascent straight up the precipitous bricks. Its goal was that lighted room.

Squawky Sugler had been right in his fears. The mysterious watcher was The Shadow. Like Squawky, the master of the night had chosen the Pink Rat as a post of observation. But where the stool pigeon had failed to see evidence of coming crime, The Shadow had detected it.

That was why The Shadow had left the Pink Rat. His disguise covered by his cloaking garb of black, The Shadow was planning a surprise visit. He was here to learn what Trigger Maddock had received from the small-fry crook during that interlude in the Pink Rat!

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THE Pink Rat was a cross-roads of the underworld. Gangsters, con men, dope peddlers – the scum of Manhattan made the place their rendezvous. Two rules governed the patrons of the joint. Men wanted by the police were barred; gang fights or lesser altercations were taboo.

The enforcement of these two provisions kept the Pink Rat unmolested. Although gambling and dope were ever present in the dive, the law violations were not on a large scale. Technically, the police should have closed the Pink Rat. They left it open because it drew customers from secret and more dangerous dives; also because it was a spot where stool pigeons had opportunities for picking up information.

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## CHAPTER III. TRIGGER TALKS

TRIGGER MADDOCK had reached his apartment. The place was a tawdry, two-room affair. Both rooms had windows on the side. It was the first room – the living room – that The Shadow had observed from below.

Trigger had closed the door behind him. Standing just inside the room, he was tearing open an envelope that he held in his hands. Trigger had lost no time. This was the object that he had received in the Pink Rat.

Paper crinkled as Trigger opened a note. He scanned the lines hastily. A match crackled. The flame caught the paper; Trigger tossed it, burning, into a wastebasket. Again reaching into the envelope, he brought out an inner envelope. Stepping to the inner door of his apartment, Trigger rapped. A muffled voice responded.

"Come on, Greasy." Trigger spoke in a growl. "Hurry up. I've got a job for you."

The door opened. A sleepy-looking mobster appeared. "Greasy" was the counterpart of the two mobsters whom Trigger had left back at the Pink Rat.

"Wotcha want, Trigger?"

"Take this envelope." Trigger handed the man the inner packet. "You know what's to be done. Slip it along. Like you've done before."

Greasy nodded. He held the envelope between his big paws. It was a plain, white envelope; it crinkled as Greasy bent it.

"What're you waiting for?" snapped Trigger. "Get a move on, Greasy. Hop to it."

Trigger was scowling as he eyed his henchman. Greasy shrugged his shoulders and grinned.

"All right, Trigger," he responded. "I didn't know you was in a hurry. Leave it to me. I'll pass it along in a hurry."

Greasy was looking toward Trigger as he spoke. Hence neither man was gazing toward the window. Neither caught a glimpse of the burning eyes that had arrived above the sill.

The Shadow had reached the window. He had seen Trigger deliver the inner envelope to Greasy. More than that; he observed the outer wrapper which Trigger still held.

Trigger nudged his thumb toward the door. Greasy nodded. Shoving his packet in his pocket, the big-fisted gangster strode across the room, opened the door and made his departure.

IT was then that Trigger looked again toward the opened envelope which he held in his own hands. It bore his name upon the face; that was all. Trigger tore the envelope into four pieces. He went to the metal wastebasket. The flames had subsided. Trigger dropped the fragments of the envelope in with the ashes of the message that he had destroyed.

Bringing a cigarette from his pocket, Trigger lighted it. He blew out the flame of the match and tossed the burnt stick in the wastebasket. He laughed in growling fashion as he puffed the cigarette. He turned toward the window.

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A sudden, blurted oath came from the gangster's lips. His fingers dropped the lighted cigarette. His right hand shot toward his pocket; then stopped midway. Thinking better, Trigger let both hands come up toward his shoulders while a frozen scowl appeared upon his blunt-nosed face.

Trigger Maddock was staring squarely into the muzzle of an automatic. That was a factor in itself; but Trigger had faced too many guns in his time to quail at the sight of a new one. What brought Trigger to rigidity was the sight of the intruder who held the looming weapon.

The automatic was projecting from a black-gloved fist. Above the gun, peering from between the upturned collar of a cloak and the brim of a slouch hat were a pair of fierce, relentless eyes.

"The Shadow!"

Trigger's voice was an awed gasp. The whispered laugh that came in return was proof of the arrival's identity.

"What – what do you want?" Trigger's stammer was an attempted growl.

"The message." The Shadow's tone was a hiss. "Give me the information you received at the Pink Rat."

Trigger hesitated. The Shadow's gaze meant business. Trigger knew his eyes could see the opened window – that The Shadow might have witnessed Greasy's departure.

"There's nothing here," protested Trigger. "I got an envelope down at the Pink Rat. Yeah – I'll admit that. But I gave what was in the envelope to Greasy –"

"I saw the inner packet." The Shadow's interruption was cold. "I saw you tear the outer envelope. I also saw the flames from the paper that you destroyed."

Trigger had no answer. The wastebasket, in the center of the floor, gave its own mute testimony. The ashes showed along with the fragments of the envelope that Trigger had thrown there also.

"The message!" hissed The Shadow. "Speak!"

"It wasn't much," growled Trigger, finding his voice at last. "It just told me to have a few guys ready – that's all."

"Proceed," came The Shadow's orders.

Trigger knew that he could not stall. He shifted as his eyes met The Shadow's gaze. His lips were dry as he licked them nervously.

"It's some kind of a job," admitted Trigger. "A big shot wanted me and my crew. Say – suppose I tell you all I know. What do I get out of it?"

THE SHADOW'S laugh came in a whispered taunt. The shuddered mirth seemed to fill the room. It reverberated from the walls with sinister echoes that made Trigger shake.

"Death." The Shadow phrased the word weirdly. "Death – unless you speak."

"But if I talk?"

## THE CRIME MASTER

"Speak – then you will learn."

The terms were unconditional. Such was The Shadow's way. Trigger blinked; then, in a voice that showed eagerness, the gangster made a plea.

"I'll talk," he said. "I'll tell you what the lay is. But I'll do more than that. I'll tell you everything else I know. Maybe you'll give me a break –"

"Speak."

Trigger paused. His snakelike eyes continued their blinking. For a moment, they wavered as Trigger glanced about the room. Then, in a hopeless voice, the mobleader began to talk.

"It's the Titan Trust Company," he announced. "The big shot's going to crack it to–night. Don't ask me how – I don't know. The orders I got were to be in the parking lot across from the door on the side street. He wants me to cover up with my crew. The bunch is coming out that way."

"I'm talking straight. It's set for eleven thirty to the dot. That's the time I'm to get there. That's all I know about the job. But if you'll listen" – Trigger paused earnestly – "I'll give you an idea of what you're up against. This guy is bigger than any big shot you ever heard of –"

"Speak."

Again, Trigger shifted. He glanced about in half scared fashion. He seemed to fear consequences should he talk. Then came the dominating whisper of The Shadow. Trigger stalled no longer.

"I don't know who the big shot is," declared the trapped gangleader. "All I know is – he's got everybody working for him. All except a couple of gangs – and if they don't join up, it'll be too bad for them."

"I had to get in the game. It would have been curtains if I hadn't. He moves me around like he does the rest of them. Maybe you saw me get that note at the Pink Rat. That's the way I get all my orders. Some guy comes up and slips them to me."

"What's more, I pass them on the same way. You saw that envelope I gave to Greasy? Well, Greasy slips it to any mug he meets. The guy opens it – I figure he finds some dough inside it – and along with it an envelope addressed to some bird like myself. He delivers it – that's all."

"You get it, don't you? The mug that brought me my envelope don't know where it came from. The guy that Greasy hands the envelope to don't know that it came from me. That's the way we've got to work."

Trigger stopped. He had told all. He had mentioned The Crime Master. He had divulged the big shot's system, so far as he knew it.

THE SHADOW saw the efficacy of the plan. Mobleaders like Trigger apparently formed an endless chain, with Greasy and small–fry denizens of the underworld serving as carriers. A single packet, thrust into a carrier's hands, could go the rounds through these gangster workers!

The Shadow knew that Trigger had spoken the truth. Thus The Shadow had scored an important start against this supercrook called The Crime Master. The Shadow had let Greasy go. The Crime Master's orders were still being passed along. The overlord of crime would not know that The Shadow had learned his plans for to–night.

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Trigger began to speak again. His tone was pleading. Yet it carried a surety that it had not held before. The Shadow listened.

"I know you're working to get The Crime Master," declared Trigger. "Joe Cardona queered that raid on the armored car. They say Cardona found a message in some dead gorilla's pocket.

"Gorillas don't carry The Crime Master's messages. Somebody wised up to that raid. Somebody planted that note on the dead gorilla. A wise guy told me he bet it was The Shadow. I know he was right."

Trigger moistened his lips. He was staring toward a little clock that was ticking on a table in the corner of the room. He began to speak again, while The Shadow stood immobile.

"I guess you trailed me here," declared Trigger. "I guess you saw me talking to Herb at the front door. Maybe you saw me wiggle my fingers—three times – making fifteen. Maybe you didn't see me – it don't make any difference.

"You know why?" Trigger's voice became suddenly confident, also louder. "Because that meant fifteen minutes – and the time is up. That's why I told you all I knew – because you'll never have a chance to tell –"

Trigger had made three sidewise shifts. These nervous actions had taken him away from the direction of the door. Trigger's blinking eyes had gained a glance toward the portal. Now, as he delivered the challenge, Trigger looked that way again.

"They've got you this time!" shouted Trigger. "They've got you!"

As he spoke, Trigger stared quickly toward the door; then, as The Shadow's gaze shifted, the gangleader made a backward, sidewise leap toward the inner corner of the room, to avoid the line of The Shadow's automatic.

Trigger's cry had served as a signal. The door shot open as The Shadow swung. Herb and the gorillas from the Pink Rat sprang in view. Trigger Maddock had placed keen reliance on his henchmen.

In one brief moment, the tables had been turned. Trigger, wary for his own safety, had called The Shadow's attention to the menace, that he might escape the first shot from the looming automatic.

In a twinkling, The Shadow, master of the situation, had been placed against unexpected odds. To use the knowledge that he had gained of coming crime, he must save himself from the danger which had so suddenly confronted him!

## CHAPTER IV. THE NEXT CLUE

HAD Trigger Maddock been willing to sacrifice his own life for the fame of bringing doom to The Shadow, he might have gained success by his stratagem. Trigger had played his game well. He had gained The Shadow's full attention by his statements concerning The Crime Master.

But Trigger, like all men of crime, placed his own self first. He did not care for the safety of the men who had come to save him. He was willing to throw them as bait to The Shadow, in order to save his own hide.

Through his eagerness, Trigger gave The Shadow a much needed break. Knowing that danger at the door would compel The Shadow to drop him for the moment, Trigger had grabbed opportunity as soon as it presented itself.

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Herb and his two companions had not reckoned with The Shadow. They knew that Trigger was in trouble. They were ready to combat the enemy who had trapped them. But they had expected an ordinary foeman.

Three guns were flashing as the door swung inward. They were guns wielded by sharpshooters who were peering for their mark, guiding their aim by the direction from which Trigger's voice had come.

Trigger, springing toward the corner, was a plain object to his henchmen. Their eyes swung back the other way, with gun muzzles following. But The Shadow, better than Trigger, was a master at the fadeaway. As Trigger sprang backward toward the corner, The Shadow, whirling, spun in the opposite direction, toward the door of the inner room.

Herb saw a twisting mass of blackness. He fired – a split second late. His bullet pounded the wall on the near side of The Shadow. A booming report came in answer. The Shadow, in his whirl, had loosed a shot straight for the door.

Herb crumpled. Above him, the other mobsters aimed to kill. But that one shot was but the first blast of The Shadow's rapid fire. Zimming bullets came with bursting flame as The Shadow spat quick shots to the source of danger.

One mobster toppled forward; the other dropped back, with a cry of anguish. Five bullets, drilling in quick succession, had found human marks within the space of a single second.

Trigger and The Shadow had reached corners simultaneously. While The Shadow's automatic was spelling its rat-tat-tat, Trigger's right hand was starting for his pocket, ready for its famous draw. It was to be a match for quickness: Trigger, aiming as he pulled his gun from his pocket; The Shadow, swerving after his quick volley against the mobsters.

Then came the unexpected. The Shadow, in his fading drop, had reached a chair beside the wall. Even as his right hand delivered its thundering reports, his left had seized the light piece of furniture.

The Shadow's left arm swung as his right hand dispatched its swift shot. The chair came hurtling through the air, a flying missile that preceded The Shadow's aiming swing toward Trigger Maddock.

It was a move of perfect execution. The chair was hurled in Trigger's general direction. It was in mid-air as the gangleader came up with the draw.

Instinctively, Trigger ducked to the left; then frantically regained his aim, just as the chair crashed close to the spot where he had been.

A roar from The Shadow's corner. Trigger's aim faltered. In the split second whereby he had diverted the mob leader's aim, The Shadow had fired one quick shot. Snarling, stopped by a bullet in his shoulder, Trigger managed to fire in reply. His weakened aim was wide. Trigger steadied for another shot. The automatic roared before the gangleader could deliver a second shot. Trigger sprawled on the floor.

The Shadow's form rose like a specter from its corner. Keen eyes looked toward the door. Herb was lying motionless. One mobster, beside Herb, raised his arm weakly and tried to fire. The effort was too great. The man collapsed. The Shadow's laugh rippled in sardonic tones.

The second gangster – the one who had staggered from the door – had managed to reach the stairs. The echoes of his scrambling footsteps could be heard from below. The Shadow, ghostly amid the echoes of his taunting laugh, moved toward the spot where Trigger lay.



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Slumped in a heap, the gangleader looked up and snarled at the sight of the black-garbed enemy. Trigger had dropped his revolver. Vainly, he reached for it. The Shadow stooped; his gloved hand whisked the weapon way from Trigger's faltering grasp.

Then, with iron grip, The Shadow raised Trigger's limp form. Dragging the wounded gangleader forward, he slumped the man's helpless body in a chair beside the table. Odd scraps of paper were upon the table; a pencil stump lay in view. The Shadow picked up the shortened pencil and placed it in Trigger's right hand. His gloved fist pressed the mobster's fingers tight.

Then came a weird scene. Trigger, choking, lay slumped upon the table. His right hand, forward, was in The Shadow's grasp. Like a spirit hand guiding the fingers of a medium, The Shadow was forcing Trigger to make a penciled scrawl.

WHISPERED words came to Trigger's ears. Those were commanding words. Weakly, Trigger followed them. Letter by letter, the words of a message appeared. When Trigger's hand faltered, the guiding fist of The Shadow forced it to its work.

The shrill blast of a whistle came from the street. A distant blare – like an echo – was the answer. Still, The Shadow persisted in his task. Then came the far-away whine of a siren. Trigger was motionless, save for his right hand, which The Shadow guided.

Shouts from below. The sound of footsteps at the bottom of the stairway. Trigger's hand, enveloped by the black glove of The Shadow, came to the end of its scrawl. The black fist slowly released its grip. Trigger Maddock did not move.

One last cough had spelled the end of the mobleader's useless life. Mortally wounded by The Shadow's second shot, Trigger was dead. His hand, tightened by the final rigor, clutched the pencil stump. A soft laugh came from The Shadow's hidden lips.

Pounding footsteps. The police had reached the second floor. The Shadow turned toward the door of the inner room. He swished from view and closed the door behind him. Three seconds later, a uniformed officer appeared at the door of the outer room.

The policeman hesitated on the threshold. The Shadow had counted on such action. Within the inner room, the victorious fighter was adjusting his rubber suction cups. A window opened softly. A few seconds later, it closed. Squidging downward, The Shadow began his descent, invisible against the blackened side wall of the old building.

More footsteps. Another policeman had arrived. The first officer crossed the living room, took a look at Trigger's body, then opened the inner door. He threw the gleam of a flashlight into the second room. The place was empty.

"Nobody here," said the officer. "They must have cleared out. Here comes a car" – he nudged his hand toward the window as a siren's whine sounded from the street – "so we'd better wait."

A patrol car had arrived below. A moment later, another car pulled up. Out jumped Detective Joe Cardona. Striding forward, the headquarter's man barked orders to the policemen. They started into the apartment building.

THE street was practically deserted. Trouble in this district dispelled crowds instead of attracting them. Joe Cardona, glancing about, spied only one man close by. A shambling figure was stealing furtively in his

## THE CRIME MASTER

direction. Joe heard a plaintive whisper. He stepped away from the door of the apartment building.

"It's me," came a low voice. "Me – Squawky. The trouble's up there, Joe. Trigger Maddock – I seen him at the Pink Rat. He went out; then a couple of his crew followed. I trailed 'em."

"They're up there now?"

"Two of 'em. One came fluking out. He'd been shot up. Looked like he was goin' to cave in before he got far. I gotta scram, Joe. Look out for Trigger."

Squawker shifted away along the street. The stoolie was making for a hideout. Cardona entered the apartment building. He shouted from the foot of the stairs. Answers came from the police above. Joe hurried upward.

"Three of them got it," informed one of the patrol officers as Cardona reached the apartment. "Looks like a fight started while one of the bunch was writing out a note. Guess he was going to send it along by one of his men."

Cardona nodded. He entered the apartment. He glanced at the bodies of Herb and the other mobster. They looked like Trigger's men. It was the body of the gangleader that attracted Cardona's chief attention.

Striding to the table, Cardona stared at the scrawl that showed on the piece of paper beside Trigger's pencil-clutching fingers. Though roughly formed, the letters appeared to have been written by a steady hand. Cardona read the words:

Parking lot across from side door. Titan Trust. 11:30. Will cover for outfit coming from bank.

The policemen had approached. Cardona made no comment as he pulled the paper from beneath Trigger's dead hand and folded it into quarters. Then the detective turned to the officers.

"Did any of you read this note?" he questioned.

"No," replied one. "I didn't know what it was – just going to take a look at it when you came in –"

"All right," broke in Cardona. "Keep it mum. Pry that pencil out of Trigger's fingers. Get the bodies to the morgue. It's another gun fight.

"This" – Cardona paused to explain as he showed the folded note and thrust it in his pocket – "was a note Trigger was going to send out. It may be a clue to some job that's coming off. That's why I want it kept quiet. I'm going to headquarters."

With that, the detective left the apartment. His footsteps sounded in rapid tattoo as he pounded down the stairs. Joe Cardona was in a hurry. He had found another clue.

Like the note planted in a dead gorilla's pocket, this sheet of paper from beneath Trigger's hand was a tip-off to coming crime. Joe Cardona had time to prepare for the thrust before half past eleven.

Once again, Joe Cardona thought that he had gained a lucky clue. He did not know that both notes had been planted by The Shadow!

Clyde Burke, reporter who served as secret agent of The Shadow, had pointed Joe the first note which the master worker had planted.

This new clue had needed no suggestion for its finding. The Shadow had left it – convincing to its every detail – in a spot where Cardona would be sure to find it for himself!

### CHAPTER V. THE MASTER MOVES

"TRIGGER MADDOCK."

The name was uttered with a chuckle. It came from the lips of a grayish face that peered toward the surface of a table, where knob-headed cylinders of wood were set on squares, like chess men.

The peering face was that of an elderly man. Thin lips were spread in an evil smile. Discolored teeth were revealed like insidious fangs. Above the face, a shock of pure white hair topped off the visage of a fiend.

Alone in a room with paneled oak walls, sitting in a corner where light showed the checkered table, this grinning creature was engaged in a most amazing game. The squares of his board were etched on transparent glass. Beneath the transparent surface, set on the wooden top of the table, was a large scale map of a portion of Manhattan – the district that included the location of the Titan Trust Company.

There were many more squares than on an ordinary chess board. The pieces, too, were different from those used in the famous game. They were all alike in pattern – cylinders like chess rooks, but with the knobby heads of pawns. These pieces were all alike in shape; but they were of three sizes. Moreover, they varied in colors. Red, blue and green – they formed intriguing hues upon the board.

The Crime Master! Alone in his chosen room, this fiend of evil was setting his pieces for to-night's game. A clock beside him registered the time as half past ten.

The map below the square showed no more than a few blocks of Manhattan. Every building was defined in detail. Hence the squares, themselves, covered but fractions of a block.

"Trigger Maddock."

Again the chuckle. It was obvious that The Crime Master still regarded the dead gangleader as a living henchman. A scrawny, clawlike hand was holding a green piece above the board. The fingers set the cylinder upon a square. That spot indicated the exact location of the parking lot across from the side door of the Titan Trust Company.

The hand moved away. On the top of the knobby piece appeared the letters MK – the abbreviation for Maddock. All the other pieces, large and small, had identifying letters.

Red men for crime workers; blue for hidden watchers and snipers; green for fighters – these were the symbols that The Crime Master used. The sizes of the pieces determined their strength. The small ones showed individuals; the middle, pairs or trios; the large, gangs.

Hence the piece that represented Trigger Maddock was green in color and of the largest size. It was one of the important blocks in The Crime Master's fiendish game against the law.

THE board was set; the hands, however, were not finished. They produced white pieces of a different shape – cones with square tops. These were also of different sizes; yet The Crime Master used them indiscriminately. He was playing a game against himself. The white pieces represented the forces of the law.

## THE CRIME MASTER

One by one, the man with the shock of hair used the cones to attack the impregnable positions of his minions. His chortling tones came with convulsive regularity. Each gambit of the whites was futile. Moving from any direction, the police would encounter trouble.

The old man began to shift the reds. He was comparing their positions with the greens and blues, showing himself how his bank-crackers could come in and out under perfect cover. At intervals, he rested one finger upon the large green piece marked MK. Though he did not move it, his actions showed that he considered it of vital consequence in his strategic arrangement.

A buzzer sounded behind the table. The Crime Master did not notice the sound until it occurred a second time. Then he stretched out a talon and pressed a button on the side of the table. A click came from the opposite side of the room. A door opened and a figure entered.

A smug man came into the light. Of middle height, solemn in demeanor, this individual was as curious as the old man at the desk. The arrival was of middle age, quietly dressed and almost prim in his appearance.

"I have finished, Henley." The old man's voice was almost sneering. "See – my plans are as perfect as they were last night. I have made a new study of these key positions."

Henley leaned over the board. He shook his head as he placed a pudgy finger upon the green piece marked MK. He mumbled, in troubled fashion.

"What is the matter?" The Crime Master's quiz was a snarl. "Try to move the whites against it –"

"It will not do, Master," inserted Henley. "I have received a bad report. It went through two hands to reach our emergency man."

"What is it?"

"Trigger Maddock is dead."

"How?" The old man's snarl was vicious. "Who killed him?"

"Details are meager," reported Henley. "Some of his henchmen were killed with him. There was only one relay message beyond Maddock. It was completed."

"You have checked?"

"Yes. Through emergency delivery with return signal ordered. The check was made promptly."

"Good." The Crime Master leaned back in his chair and cackled in satisfaction. "That is all that matters, Henley. What is one man, in our game?" He waved his hand toward the board. "Any one of these puppets can be replaced."

"Time is short, Master," warned Henley. "It is approaching eleven o'clock."

"Very well." The Crime Master picked up a box from beside him. He opened it. From an assortment of pieces, he chose a new one – large and green – that bore the letters HR.

"Louie Harger," decided The Crime Master. "I have been holding him in readiness. Emergency measures, Henley. Prepare the order at once."

## THE CRIME MASTER

"Very well, Master."

The solemn man hastened from the room. The Crime Master picked up the piece that represented Trigger Maddock; in its place he put the one that stood for Louie Harger. A new mobsman and his minions would take the assignment arranged for Trigger Maddock.

As Henley was returning, a few minutes later, The Crime Master took the discarded piece with the letters MK. With a strong twist of his scrawny, wiry fingers, he snapped the green man in half. That symbolized the passing of Trigger Maddock. The Crime Master tossed the broken pieces back into the box.

HENLEY laid a typescript note upon the checkered table. Orders to Louie Harger. The Crime Master read them. He produced a metal seal; he clipped the note between its halves and pressed the handles. Withdrawing the paper, he handed it to Henley.

Embossed at the bottom of the orders was the head of a skeleton; crossing behind it, a scimitar. This was The Crime Master's signed symbol.

Henley folded the note and sealed it in a small envelope which bore the name of Louie Harger. He placed the envelope with a banknote in a larger wrapper which bore no name. He sealed the outer envelope.

"Send it by Woodling," ordered The Crime Master. "Tell him to pick a man near the Black Ship – some small fry he has used before. Mention The Crime Master."

Henley nodded. The Black Ship was the dive where Louie Harger spent his hours of leisure. The gangleader was at that hangout to-night.

The clock was pointing to eleven as Henley departed for the second time. The Crime Master chuckled. Half an hour was sufficient. At most, it could mean but a short delay past the appointed time of Harger's arrival near the parking lot.

Yet the old man calculated upon this. He took the green piece marked HR and moved it, square by square, to the limit of the board. Then he retraced the moves. He was contemplating the approach of Harger's mob, assuming that the crook and his crew would still be short of their destination at half past eleven.

Again, the moves. This time, the wizened criminal took white pieces into consequence. Once more he was satisfied. So long as Harger's crew was approaching the Titan Trust Company, all would be well for his schemes. Troubles with police, a block or two away, would help, rather than hinder, the retreat of the red men who represented bank raiders.

In fact, when he had set his green piece on its appointed square, The Crime Master began a series of short moves, all starting from that point. These showed how Harger and his outfit could move forth to meet any attack; how they would serve to drive away approaching forces of the law.

The board was set; yet still, The Crime Master sat in contemplation. His thin, snarly lips were moving. His scrawny hand fumbled in the box. It brought out a white piece that differed from the others. It was the same size, but it bore the letter C.

THE CRIME MASTER repeated his police moves, using this one white piece at every strategic point. He gave it two squares – a jump on every move.

## THE CRIME MASTER

There was reason. This one piece represented Detective Joe Cardona. The Crime Master had recognized the star sleuth as superior to others in the service of the law.

Yet even with the exaggerated advantage that he gave to Joe Cardona, The Crime Master was satisfied. His own men, red, blue and green, formed a cordon about the Titan Trust. Wherever he allowed attack by the whites, The Crime Master could muster a prompt defense on the part of his own pieces.

Playing his strange game, the old man showed the complete progress of the colored pieces. He moved the whites, made jumps, retreats and captures. At the end, he had removed men of both sides; but meanwhile, his reds had escaped.

Satisfied, he replaced the pieces in their original positions. He settled back in his chair. The Crime Master's game was no longer play. Actual events would tell the story; afterward, the old man could move the pieces to correspond with facts.

The buzzer. The Crime Master pressed the button. Henley entered from the clicking door. A smile showed on the lieutenant's solemn face.

"All is ready, Master," announced Henley. "Louie Harger is on his way."

The Crime Master chuckled. His eyes shone through slitted lids as they turned toward the clock upon the table. Twenty-five minutes after eleven. The zero hour for crime would arrive within three hundred seconds.

Again, a fiendish chuckle came from snarling lips. The Crime Master was confident that his minions would prevail in their fight against the law!

## CHAPTER VI. THE ZERO HOUR

TWENTY-FIVE minutes past eleven. Men were already huddled together within the confines of the parking space opposite the side of the darkened Titan Trust building.

These watchers, however, were not the ones indicated on the checkered board. Whites, instead of green, had arrived at the appointed spot. Detective Joe Cardona, with a squad of efficient workers beside him, had moved into the position originally designed for Trigger Maddock.

Louie Harger and his crew were on their way. Cardona did not know that they would figure in the coming crime. At the same time, Harger and his outfit were approaching in total ignorance of the fact that a stealthy faction of the law had moved in before them.

"Easy, men." Cardona's growled whisper came from beside a parked sedan. "Remember – we're filling in where a cover-up crew was due. We don't know who may be watching us. Hold everything until I give the word."

"Ps–st!" The warning whisper came from a detective at Cardona's side. In the gloom, Joe could see the man pointing toward the whitened wall of the bank building.

"See somebody, Murph?" questioned Cardona.

"Looked like it," whispered the other detective. "Kind of a streak of black. Moved along in front of the white wall."

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"Where is it now?"

"Can't see it. Out of sight – up there in the shadows."

Cardona stared. He could see a glistening portion of the white wall; past that, darkness. But there was no sign of either life or motion.

"Guess I was seeing things," admitted Murph. "Anyway, it couldn't have been more than just one guy."

"All right," growled Cardona. "Keep watching – that's all."

Murph continued to stare. His eyes discerned nothing. Yet the detective had been right in his observation. He had seen the flitting form of a living being.

In the darkness close beside the Titan Trust building, The Shadow was crouched, on watch. He had expected Joe Cardona's maneuver. He had detected the presence of the star detective's squad. Trouble was due – within a scant few minutes. The Shadow, like the law, was prepared.

HALF past eleven. The zero hour had arrived. The detectives were waiting, tensely. Then came the sign of crime – a sudden boom that marked The Crime Master's attack.

From deep within the walls of the Titan Trust Company came a muffled explosion. Some crew of sappers had let loose a charge. Entering from underground, they had blown their way into the bank building.

"Hold it!" ordered Joe Cardona. "Be ready. They'll be coming out this way! We're here to block them!"

One minute – two – alarms were ringing merrily within the whitened walls. Then came a clang. The side door of the bank swung outward. A pair of mobsmen, revolvers in hand, came into view.

"Let's go!"

Cardona was on his feet. His revolver blazed the opening shot. A zipping bullet smashed from his weapon and plastered itself against the wall beside the mobsmen. Other detectives opened fire. With a round dozen at his heels, Joe Cardona sprang from the hiding place.

Shots came in return. One mobster fell. Others were firing from within the bank. The odds were with the police. Pounding across the sidewalk, Cardona and his detectives were bound for what seemed positive victory.

Then came sudden shots from the right. Bullets whined past the advancing detectives. Two men wheeled. They cried to their chief as they saw the approaching menace. Louie Harger and his underlings had arrived. They had opened a flank attack!

In a trice, detectives broke. Dropping for cover, retreating toward the parking space, they were trying to avoid this murderous fire that was coming in enfilade. With mobsters ahead, with mobsters at their right, Cardona and his men were trapped.

The darkness at the wall of the bank was formed by a flat, projecting pillar. Beside that spot, to the left of the door where mobsters were massed, the depression of the wall formed a natural shelter. It was from this unexpected nest that a sharp counter attack came to aid the foiled detectives.

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Louie Harger and his men were shouting in triumph as they came dashing up the street. They were counting on a hand to hand fight with the retreating detectives. A hidden power, however, was to stay them.

Barks came from the niche beside the pillar. Tongues of flame spat in quick succession from a mammoth automatic. A mobster staggered and sprawled. Another toppled beside him. The Shadow, sniping with machinelike speed, was withering the ranks of Louie Harger's horde!

Louie's crew broke for cover. Their leader dived for safety with them. Two mobsmen, caught flat-footed, sent chipping shots that cracked the marble pillar. Deflected, these bullets failed to reach The Shadow.

The response, however, did not cease. A second automatic had replaced the first. Two quick shots accounted for the firing gangsters. One gunman slumped in the middle of the street; the other, hand pressed to shoulder, staggered away and stumbled flat as he reached the curb.

"Let's go!"

Again, Cardona's leadership prevailed. The flanking fire ended, the detectives sprang forward en masse. Blistering shots came from their revolvers. The defending gangsters ducked inward from the door.

DISTANT sirens were whining. Shots came from other streets. The Shadow, watching from his post, knew what was happening. This battle at the side door was but a portion of the entire scheme. Agents of crime, scattered throughout the vicinity, were blocking the approach of the police from all directions.

Louie Harger and his thinned ranks had scattered. Sniping shots were all that came toward the advancing detectives. Cardona and his men dashed into the bank. The Shadow waited, listening to muffled shots from within.

Shouts from the front street. There was activity there. Then came gangsters, creeping forward. Members of Louie's crew were closing to block off Cardona's retreat, should he and his detectives reappear.

The Shadow stepped from his niche. Still in the gloom, he opened sudden fire, with a pair of fully-loaded automatics. Shouts sounded as the mobsters again scattered for cover. Weaving swiftly toward the door, The Shadow followed the path taken by Joe Cardona.

The interior of the bank was filled with smoky fumes from the explosion. Stairs showed dimly; The Shadow knew that the detectives had taken that route. Springing forward, the master fighter descended. He stopped suddenly at the bottom turn.

Lights were on in a stone-walled strongroom. There, The Shadow, as he watched from the darkened steps, could see four cowering mobsmen, covered by the guns of Cardona's detectives. Beyond was a gaping hole at the bottom of the wall.

The Shadow knew the answer. A squad of mobsters had been sent through the side door, to open the way and form contact with Harger's crew. The robbers were to follow with the swag. But The Crime Master had been too clever to rely upon a single avenue to escape.

The repulsion of the vanguard had caused the bank crackers to depart by the way which they had come – through the gaping hole which they had blasted in this lower room. That piece of strategy, worked with design, was proof to The Shadow that something else was due to happen. The Shadow watched.



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Cardona barked an order. Three detectives sprang toward the gaping hole. Their leader was dispatching them to follow the escaping robbers. The Shadow's automatics came upward. The weapons were none too soon.

Shots burst from the gap in the wall. One detective staggered; the others dropped away. As Cardona swung to see the source of trouble, a pair of mobsters sprang from the hole with leveled guns. They were the first of a safety crew, here in ambush, to stop the police from following.

Cardona and his men were caught flat-footed. But for The Shadow's presence, their doom would have come. The cornered mobsters, acting with the tribe from the broken wall, were yanking guns. The odds were all against the detectives. But they had The Shadow behind them!

Automatics blazed. Roars that echoed from the stairway were the markers of spraying shots with which The Shadow peppered The Crime Master's men. The detectives, caught in the open, were firing to save their lives. Above them whistled The Shadow's aiding shots.

One detective sprawled; then another. Joe Cardona staggered and fell. But for every one of these losses, three casualties resulted among the mobsmen. Scampering like rats, sprawling mobsmen dived for the hole that offered safety. The Shadow's booming shots could not be answered.

One mobster, alone, fell crouching beyond two fallen forms that cluttered the gap. Snarling, he fired toward the stairway. His first bullet clipped the stone work at the corner. He aimed for a second shot. An automatic answered. The gangster slumped.

That was the end. A stillness followed barking echoes. Then came choking gasps within the smoke-filled room where the smell of powder had blended with the fumes. Detectives, still unscathed, were rising to aid their wounded comrades; among the latter was Joe Cardona.

THE SHADOW'S form faded. Pursuit was futile, now. The fight had allowed the robbers time to make a getaway. Outside – at the front of the bank – that was the spot where the crooks could be blocked. Had Cardona headed there, he might have gained a victory.

The Shadow, though alone, could have caused trouble at the front. But he had sensed the trap into which Cardona was descending. He had come to save the lives of the star sleuth and his men. He had deliberately passed up the chance to deal with the escaping robbers when they reached the open.

The Shadow gained the top of the stairs. There, he paused. He could hear the clumping tread of detectives at the bottom of the steps. He could hear distant shots, whistles and sirens from spots outside.

With a weird laugh that shuddered through the upper room, The Shadow strode toward the broken side door. This time, he was the force that came to clear the way. He knew that a new menace lay ahead.

Cardona and the detectives, saved from their trap, were coming, crippled, toward vengeful enemies who awaited them. Once again, The Shadow had a duty to perform!

## CHAPTER VII. A FIEND DELIGHTS

LOUIE HARGER was crouched beside a bullet-riddled car in the parking lot. Before him, the remnants of his crew were ready, like entrenched fighters. They were grumbling as they heard the approach of sirens.

"How about it, Louie?" came a question, "What're we waitin' for? The bulls is comin' –"

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"Yellow, eh?" snarled Louie. "Well, keep sittin' tight. We can run for it in a couple of these buggies. What we're waiting for is to plug any of those dicks that come crawlin' out –"

The gangleader pressed the button of a powerful flashlight. He sent the beam straight toward the open door. Then, before his startled eyes could take in the form that the light revealed, a bursting shot came in response.

The Shadow had opened fire. Gangsters, their guns idle, were caught unaware. Louie Harger, as surprised as the rest, hurled his flashlight from him and dove back among the cars. Two of his men fired. Then came the crashes of the automatics. One shooter sprawled.

The mobsters were leaping for the safety of the cars which Louie had chosen for flight. Motors roared. The cars shot from the parking space. Louie, leading the way, was heading for an outlet at the far side of the space.

Gangsters were firing from the windows – still aiming at the door of the bank. The Shadow, however, was no longer there. His next shots came from darkness. They were aimed for the automobiles as the two vehicles shot forth, almost side by side.

Luck was with Louie Harger. His car was beyond the other. The Shadow's firm hand loosed a shot that drilled the driver of the nearer car. The speeding auto wavered; it whirled across the street and smashed a wall. As it toppled on its side, gangsters came sprawling to the street.

Louie's car, however, gained the corner, protected almost all the way by the erratic course of the second machine. Safe from The Shadow's shots, the gangleader met with new danger, less than a block away. A police car was speeding toward him from a side thoroughfare.

Gangsters fired. The chase began. Louie Harger was in flight. Speeding through this vicinity, off on a mad getaway, the gangleader was racing to avoid the law.

The Shadow heard the firing. His laugh rippled in the darkness of the street beside one bank. Approaching police had been diverted by Louie's flight. The Shadow stood alone. Turning, he made off through the darkness toward the front of the bank.

The Shadow's work was ended. It was his part to leave this beleaguered vicinity before the police closed in. Distant shots showed that The Crime Master's minions were scattering, now that their crime had been accomplished.

DETECTIVES were emerging from within the bank. Burdened by their wounded comrades, they would have been soft targets for Harger's lurkers. But The Shadow had dispelled that menace. The only members of Louie's crew that remained were the sprawled, groaning fellows who had hit the sidewalk from the overturning car.

A detective blew a whistle. There was no reply. A second blast; an answer from the block along which Louie's car had sped. A further signal, from a greater distance; then came a whining siren.

The detective persisted in his signal. A police car shot up beside the bank. Its searchlight revealed the detectives, who were supporting their crippled comrades. An officer leaped from the police car and dashed back toward the rear street. He shouted the word along.

Another siren. A car veered from the corner. It was an ambulance. Two interns piled out; stretchers were brought to carry the wounded men aboard. Flat on his back, Joe Cardona managed to form a grim smile as he

stared into the glare of a flashlight.

"They – they plugged me," gasped the sleuth. "But – but I'll pull through. How – how are the rest of the bunch?"

"All right," replied an intern. "Lay quiet. We'll get you to the hospital."

Cardona subsided as the ambulance backed from the narrow street. Whining its warning as it speeded toward the nearest hospital, the rescue car carried its quota of wounded detectives from the scene of battle.

It was half past twelve when a big car pulled up in front of the ravaged Titan Trust Company. Commissioner Ralph Weston alighted. He was met by a police inspector.

The commissioner's face was stormy. He followed the inspector to an old house across the street. There, in the basement, he was shown the tunnel which crooks had dug through the front wall of the bank.

"They had cars on the street," informed the inspector. "They made a break out through the side; then doubled back through the tunnel into this house."

"Where were our men?" demanded Weston.

"Cardona and his squad were waiting at the side," stated the inspector. "They drove the burglars back into the bank; then they were outnumbered. Meanwhile, we were coming up with reinforcements. But we couldn't get through."

"Why not?"

"Every approach was covered. Snipers were firing from windows. Gangsters were there in cars. When they finally began to break, it was too late. The cars that held the swag shot through before we could form a cordon."

Weston nodded. He realized that supercrime had taken place to-night. Scattered minions of evil had played their part. They had delayed the arrival of the police who had responded to the signal of Cardona's firing squad.

"What about Cardona?" demanded Weston, suddenly. "I was informed that he was taken to the hospital –"

"Seriously wounded," interposed the inspector, solemnly. "I just received a report that he is past danger. But he'll be crippled for a while, commissioner. You won't be able to use Joe Cardona for a couple of weeks, at least."

The commissioner clenched his fists. The temporary loss of his ace detective was as great a blow as the success of the robbers. Weston had banked heavily on Cardona. He didn't know how Joe could be replaced.

It was Cardona who had gained a clue to this night's episode. Twice in two days, the ace had produced a counterthrust at crime. The police department was faced by organized gang warfare. Weston recalled his conversation with Cardona. Joe was right; crime was beginning, not ending.

When the commissioner returned to the street, he met officials of the robbed bank. Their losses, in cash and negotiable securities, was estimated at a quarter million. The first blast had been followed by minor explosions. The vault had been rifled while the advance squad had been advancing toward the side door to

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open combat with Cardona's men.

The majority of the attackers had eluded the grasp of the law. While there was proof of this in the neighborhood of the Titan Trust, there was greater evidence in another section of Manhattan.

The underworld was seething with suppressed excitement. In every dive where gangsters gathered, the news of the successful raid was going the rounds. None present in any joint admitted their connection with the crime. Yet these denizens of scumland were remarkably well informed.

While bottles clattered and glasses clinked about the tables of the Pink Rat, raucous voices rose in jeering elation. Gangdom was enjoying a prompt celebration. Crime had risen in open defiance of order. Snatches of unguarded conversation were audible in the smoke-filled room.

Squawky Sugler was not here to listen. The stool had ducked for a hideout after the affray at Trigger Maddock's. But there was one who heard – a quiet, solemn listener who sat alone in a corner of the dive.

This was the sweated mobster with the hawklike nose. The Shadow, having played his part against hopeless odds, was back at the spot where he had gained his first inkling of coming crime. In all the buzz of conversation, he heard no mention of himself.

Thin lips wore a slight smile. The Shadow knew why his part had not been discovered. He had fought from darkness. Those with whom he had waged battle were not here to tell the tale. Louie Harger had escaped; the gangleader had been forced to flight. Harger, alone, could have seen The Shadow. The gangleader was not showing himself to tell the tale.

USUALLY, the buzzings of gangland were not heard beyond the confines of the underworld. But such was not the case on this occasion. Elsewhere, the details of the robbery were under close discussion.

Seated in his paneled room, The Crime Master was grinning gleefully as he read a report which Henley had brought to him. Details, passed along by prompt informants, had come to the headquarters of evil.

"The profits are here, Master," Henley was saying. "They were left at cache C, in accordance with your instructions. Woodling has just brought them here."

"Count them up, Henley," ordered The Crime Master. "Bring me a full accounting. Place the spoils in the strongroom."

"Yes, Master."

As Henley departed, the old man surveyed his board. The colored pieces were as he had left them prior to the advent of the crime. With the detailed report beside him, The Crime Master began to move the wooden objects like pawns on a chess board.

He started with the reds. Square by square, he converged them to the spot that indicated the Titan Trust Company. He followed with shifts of blues. Then he brought a large green, indicating Louie Harger and his mob, from the edge of the board toward the center.

The Crime Master shifted the whites. He paused. His white eyebrows bulked as he scowled. He was looking at an unoccupied square the spot where Louie Harger and his crew should have been stationed in the parking lot.

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With an angry gesture, The Crime Master picked up the white piece that bore the letter C. He set it emphatically upon that open square. He had learned, through the report beside him, that Joe Cardona had occupied the strategic post before the arrival of Louie Harger.

A hissing, venomous snarl came from the old man's lips as he shifted the white piece toward the square that indicated the side of the bank building. His scrawny hand moved reds in retreat. It brought back the white; then started the green piece moving away along the squares.

In miniature, The Crime Master was reconstructing the fight as he had heard of it. His reds were away; his green was gone; for a final detail, he moved odd blues and small greens from other points. The board cleared. All that remained was that damaging cone of white, with its cubical top – the piece that represented Detective Joe Cardona.

Crime had succeeded; yet the law had remained upon the field. The Crime Master's hands were clenching in a fury. Then his eyes turned to the report. A scrawny finger ran along the final line. It bore the statement that Joe Cardona was lying, seriously wounded, in the hospital. The detective was incapacitated for active duty.

A chortle from the snarling lips. The old man seized the white piece with the letter C. With a gesture of triumph, he seized the bit of wood and snapped it into two pieces. He flung the portions to the floor.

With a new gesture of impatience, The Crime Master raised the glass sheet that covered the table. His hands were sinewy as they lowered the heavy plate and rested it beside the table. His claws pulled away the large scale map and threw it to the floor.

From beneath the table, the old man drew forth another spreading sheet. He flattened it on the table – a new map that showed another section of Manhattan. He raised the glass and set it in position. Its griddled lines formed their checkered pattern upon the new chart that lay beneath.

From his box of pieces, The Crime Master began to draw forth reds, blues and greens. Like a general mapping a field of battle, he was planning a new campaign of crime. One by one, he massed his forces, in contemplation of a new raid against the law.

THE CRIME MASTER paused. He chuckled as he surveyed the beginnings of a coming battle field. Colored pieces, splotted upon the board, brought joy to this creature of evil. The Crime Master settled back in his chair. His gaze lowered as he shifted from the table. His eyes stared to the floor; his lips spread as he emitted a wild, maddened cackle of elation.

The Crime Master was looking at the broken cone and the cube that bore the letter C. White upon a maroon-hued rug, they made a tiny, pitiable sight. That broken piece was out of the coming game.

Joe Cardona, the only instrument of the law whom The Crime Master had considered worthy of individual distinction, would not be present at the next affray. The ace detective could make no thrust against The Crime Master's well laid plans.

That fact was the cause of the fiend's delight. Confident because of success, the plotter could see no block to trouble him. His hands went back to the pieces on the board. Among them, he scattered cones of white – pieces which he regarded with sneering contempt.

To The Crime Master, all was clear ahead. He trusted in the reliability of the report. What if gangsters had been slain? What did it matter that Louie Harger was in flight? More minions could be had. Louie Harger would return. Again, the old man chuckled with contemptuous delight.

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The Crime Master thrust the scanned report away. He had digested all its contents. He thought that he knew all. In that supposition, however, he was incorrect. Neither The Crime Master nor his informants had learned the truth concerning the counterthrust that had come from the law.

No report had been made about The Shadow. Nothing told of the weird presence that hovered in the background. Nothing had been said of a mysterious, hawk-nosed stranger who had appeared among the denizens of the underworld.

Exhaustive though The Crime Master's plans might be they were lacking in one vital point. Those colored pieces on the board; the white ones that opposed them – were of little consequence.

For The Crime Master had neglected the greatest factor in the game. Until he took cognizance of it, his schemes would be open to disaster that he could not foresee.

Among those blocks that rested upon checkered squares was none to represent the king piece of them all. The Crime Master had made no provision to meet the power of The Shadow!

## CHAPTER VIII. THE SHADOW'S CLUE

IT was the second night after the raid upon the Titan Trust. Crime was in abeyance. Newspapers screamed the news of the successful foray. The underworld was still troublous beneath its calmed surface. Tension – not action – prevailed.

In all the dives of the badlands, there were no signs of the mysterious mobster who had been garbed in black sweater. The strange observer had disappeared as mysteriously as he had arrived.

The Shadow had sensed the coming situation. He had gained inkling of the methods whereby The Crime Master was controlling forces of the underworld. He knew that a big job like the robbery of the Titan Trust Company would be followed by a lull.

The Crime Master, no matter how great his hidden power, would be at fault in his strategy should he strike again while turmoil still persisted. Though the supercrook might actually govern an invisible empire of crime, his thrust, if over frequent, could prove disastrous.

One stroke; then plans for new evil, while weak points were being strengthened – such was the invariable law that ganglords must obey. The Crime Master, whose giant intellect had accomplished a merger of gangland's forces, would certainly follow this process.

Hence The Shadow had departed from the underworld. He had no need to be there, while speculation, alone, was the talk in gangster hangouts. Stool pigeons, recovering from their temerity, were back on the job, trying to glean information for the police. Their task would be a futile one, since crime had already been accomplished.

The Shadow, when he mapped campaigns against crime, chose measures which matched those of his hidden foemen. This was the work that engaged him for the present. On this night, forty-eight hours after his encounter with Trigger Maddock, the master sleuth was contemplating a stroke of his own.

A light was burning in a black-walled room. Bluish rays shone on the polished surface of a table. White hands, living things that extended from blackness, were at work. A glimmering gem – The Shadow's girasol – sparkled from a tapering finger. Its iridescent hues, changing in constant procession, seemed to reflect the mystery of The Shadow himself.

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The Shadow was in his sanctum. While his hand inscribed names upon a sheet of paper, his eyes, peering from darkness, studied the written columns. A soft laugh came in sibilant tones from the gloom on the near side of the table.

A STRANGE contrast! Somewhere in Manhattan, secluded in his paneled room, The Crime Master, wizened and gray-haired, was placing pawnlike pieces upon a many-squared board. Meanwhile The Shadow, within his shrouded sanctum, was planning methods to defeat the supercrook.

Hidden foemen! The Shadow, lone wolf of action, who used but a handful of trusted agents; The Crime Master, generalissimo of evil, relying upon massed hordes organized into a mighty fighting body!

Which would win?

Could The Shadow, by his daggerlike thrusts defeat this genius who could order forth a phalanx of fighting gunmen? Or would The Crime Master, precise in his maneuvers, prepared for all emergencies, down the hidden being who sought to thwart him?

The answer lay in the balance. Never before had The Shadow encountered an enemy who had risen to such swift prominence. Never before had either The Shadow or the law been faced by an organizer who had brought all gangdom beneath his domination.

The Shadow had observed The Crime Master's strength. He was reckoning it upon the sheet before him. Names of gangleaders, small and large, were in The Shadow's list. Through observation in the underworld, The Shadow had gained the names of all whom he suspected as members of The Crime Master's huge organization.

Often had The Shadow battled with powerful mobleaders. Sometimes, he had thrown opposing bands into conflict. He had also indicated courses which the law had followed. Unwittingly, police had often taken The Shadow's lead. But here, The Shadow saw the futility of former measures. Should he attack any point of The Crime Master's organized structure, the rest would come battling down upon his head. Secrecy, to date, had been The Shadow's strongest weapon.

The Crime Master's strength could not be discounted. The Shadow's hand had completed its listing. Dozens of names – those of dangerous underworld characters – were before The Shadow's eyes. Yet the whispered laugh came shuddering through the sanctum. In strength, The Shadow had spied weakness.

Rapidly, his hand began to form another list. This one, in a column of its own, was brief. It carried the names of half a dozen mobleaders of considerable repute. These, to a man, were not members of The Crime Master's chain.

Why?

The Shadow had the answer. He wrote a single name above the brief column:

Eagle Tabrick

This name was The Shadow's key. "Eagle" Tabrick was a crafty big shot. He was one who had long played a cagey game. Crime, racketeering, shady, crafty swindles – these were the triangle of Eagle Tabrick's career.

Shifting from one practice to another, allowing intervals between his thrusts, Eagle Tabrick had long baffled the law by his cleverness. It was known that he ruled certain factions in the underworld; yet nothing had been

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definitely pinned upon him. The police had suspected six mobleaders to be lieutenants under Eagle. The Shadow, more thorough than the police, had definitely proved the connection.

These aids of Eagle Tabrick were represented by the six name list which The Shadow had formed. With Eagle as their chief, they formed a band which was unique; hence The Shadow's laugh. Not one of the seven – chief or lieutenants – could be identified with The Crime Master's organization.

This was important. The Crime Master, to control the underworld to perfection, must hold complete sway. Yet it was evident, from The Shadow's findings, that he had not yet gained Eagle Tabrick as a vassal.

Six mobleaders – all would follow Eagle's word so long as he commanded them. Hence, during this lull in the underworld, The Crime Master had a task which must be performed. To be secure, he would have to gain feudal power over Eagle's small but well-organized group.

Two methods were possible. They represented extremes of action. One would be for The Crime Master to treat with Eagle. The other would be to eliminate Eagle. By either system, The Crime Master could force the six lieutenants into line.

In either plan, one fact was obvious. Through some agency, The Crime Master must reach Eagle Tabrick. Whether by friendly approach or by malicious action, there would be contact. To The Crime Master, the present must be most opportune.

Through his display of strength, The Crime Master had subjugated the underworld. He had won a mighty victory against the law. The capitulation of Eagle Tabrick would be an unparalleled triumph that would impress gangdom even more than the culmination of new crime.

A TINY light glowed suddenly from the wall beyond the table. The Shadow's hands moved forward. They produced a pair of earphones. The instruments moved upward, toward The Shadow's head. His whispered voice spoke from the gloom. A voice responded over the wire:

"Burbank speaking."

"Report."

"Report from Marsland. Back from a round. No sign of Eagle's men. All keeping under cover."

"Report received."

A pause. Through Burbank, his contact man, The Shadow had gained word from Cliff Marsland, an agent who patrolled the underworld. Cliff's report meant that none of Eagle's six lieutenants had been in evidence at any dive frequented by crooks of their importance. This was significant. More was to follow.

Burbank spoke:

"Report from Burke."

"Report."

"Eagle Tabrick has not left his apartment. Constant observation by Burke since noon. No one has entered."

"Report received."



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The earphones clattered across the table. The little bulb went out. The hands moved from beneath the bluish rays. A click from above; the sanctum was plunged in darkness.

The swish of The Shadow's cloak came faintly through the solid blackness. A whispered laugh rose to a weird crescendo. It broke; then ended abruptly. Echoes came in answer, gibbering mockery from shrouded walls.

The ghoulish reverberations ended. The room was silent. Those echoes, dying into nothingness, had marked The Shadow's departure. The sanctum was empty. Its sole visitant had fared forth into the night.

The Shadow had foreseen a move of The Crime Master. He knew that Eagle Tabrick must have reason for laying low. There was only one person whose opposition could keep Eagle under cover. That one was The Crime Master.

The Shadow was planning to attack the emperor of evil. He wanted evidence that would point to coming crime. He had found a way through which important information might be gained.

Following the clue which he had sifted, The Shadow was bound on an important mission. He was on his way to pay an unseen visit to the abode of Eagle Tabrick.

## CHAPTER IX. THE ULTIMATUM

SITUATED on a secluded uptown street, an edifice of ornate structure rose, like a looming sentinel, amid an array of lower, unsightly buildings. This was the Mid Gotham Hotel; it specialized in suites and apartments. Among its residents was the notorious Eagle Tabrick.

Surrounded by garages, antiquated theaters and abandoned warehouses, the Mid Gotham had been erected as a pioneer in this locality. Other building operations had been delayed; hence the ornate hotel with its fancy facades and grilled balconies appeared incongruous in its ugly setting.

After a brief period of failing business, the hotel apartment had gone into receivership. It was at present but half filled with guests; the elite who had been expected to patronize it were missing.

The Mid Gotham's loss had been Eagle Tabrick's gain. Tabooed from entry into other pretentious hotels, the notorious racketeer had found a welcome at the Mid Gotham. Here, in a sumptuous apartment on the sixth floor front, the big shot dwelt like a king.

Clyde Burke had been right in his report that Eagle was at home. At the very minute when The Shadow was departing from his sanctum, Eagle was pacing back and forth across his luxurious living room.

Tall, ferocious of countenance, Eagle Tabrick was well-nicknamed. His eyes were sharp; his parted, downward curving lips gave him an insidious expression. His nose was a veritable beak.

Eagle was worried. He paused at times to stare between the side curtains of a wide, opened window. The railed top of a decadent warehouse showed white from across the street. The rumbles of the thoroughfare were audible as the big shot listened.

After each prolonged pause, Eagle would turn and pace impatiently across the purplish, tufted carpeting. Closed doors showed at two sides of the room; the third wall was marked by a curtained opening – beyond it, blackness.

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Every action showed that Eagle was expecting some one. His paces toward the window were most indicative of that fact. The big shot, though he favored the seclusion of the apartment, seemed anxious to know what might be passing in the street below.

THERE was a small restaurant caticornered to the Mid Gotham-Hotel. There, seated in plain view at a table just within the plate glass window, was a young man who seemed in no hurry to finish the meal that lay before him. He was reading a newspaper as he ate; but all the while, his eyes were keeping intermittent watch upon the entrance of the Mid Gotham Hotel.

This was Clyde Burke, reporter of the New York Classic, secretly an agent of The Shadow. The table at which Clyde was seated had three chairs; its fourth side was drawn up against a ledge within the window. Clyde was in the central chair.

A thick-set man stopped at the entrance of the Mid Gotham. His face, though dark and thick of features, showed shrewdness, even at this distance. Clyde could not identify the fellow; yet he felt sure that the man was of the gangster type. He watched the thick-set arrival glance about; then he saw the man walk through the entrance of the hotel.

Clyde Burke reached beneath his chair. Methodically, he produced his felt hat and laid it on the table at his right. He reverted to the reading of his newspaper, still making short, brief glances through the window.

The reporter had set a signal. This center chair in which he sat was indication that Eagle Tabrick had not come out. Had the big shot appeared, Clyde would have moved to another chair.

The hat, placed upon the table, meant that a suspected visitor had entered to call on Eagle Tabrick. The signal was plainly in view to passers. In fact, a few minutes after Clyde had set the hat in place, it was observed by eyes that peered from across the street.

The Shadow had arrived. Secluded in the darkness in front of the Mid Gotham Hotel, the black-garbed visitant caught the word he wanted. There was a delivery passage at the side hotel. It was through this that a black form glided.

Not long afterward, a phantom shape appeared within the hallway on the fifth floor of the hotel. A spectral form approached the door of the front apartment. A gloved hand thrust a thin, blackened tool of metal into the lock. Slight clicks sounded; the door yielded.

THE SHADOW had arrived in an empty apartment. Swishing through the darkness, he reached the front window. He raised the sash and stepped out to the balcony. Projecting, ornamental stones showed against the darkened wall. Using them with marked agility, The Shadow ascended to the balcony outside of Eagle's apartment.

Less than one minute later, his keen eyes were peering through the darkness from the side of the opened window.

The Shadow's gloved hand had opened a space between curtain and window frame. Unseen, unheard, the mysterious sleuth was looking into the affairs of Eagle Tabrick.

Clyde Burke was again correct. Eagle Tabrick had a visitor. Like a fierce bird of prey, the big shot was glowering at the thick-set man whom Clyde had seen entering the hotel. Eagle was pacing back and forth; his visitor, calmly smoking, was seated in an easy chair. His thick-featured visage was toward the window. The Shadow recognized him immediately.

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The man was "Talker" Grube. A slick worker of confidence games, Talker had frequently acted as advance man for notorious racketeers. His presence here would have indicated that he was planning to enter Eagle's employ; but the big shot's scowl belied that normal theory. It was plain that Eagle resented Talker's presence.

"You've heard me, Eagle." The words came in glib, purring tones, as Talker spoke emphatically. "This is your last chance. You've got to come in with your outfits – before ten o'clock to–night."

"Yeah?" Eagle scowled. "So there's no buts about it, eh? Well, Talker, you may be hot when you deal with a lot of half-scared laundry owners; but I'm telling you one thing straight. You – or nobody else – can pull any racket stuff over on me. I know the game."

"That's why you'll listen," challenged Talker. "I'm working for the biggest boy there is and he means business. You ought to know that, Eagle."

"The Crime Master!" Eagle snarled derisively. "You're his mouthpiece, eh? Well – who is he? Spill it – maybe I'll listen when I know."

"I can't tell you, Eagle." Talker spoke persuasively. "I don't know who he is. Every now and then some hophead slides up and passes me an envelope. In it, I learn what I'm to do."

"You got one of those notes to–night, eh?"

"Yes."

"Let's see it."

"I destroyed it."

"So that's the stall, eh? This is the second time you've been here, Talker. How do I know you aren't handing me a phony line?"

In response, Talker pulled a watch from his pocket. He tapped the dial significantly, as he looked toward Eagle.

"It's getting close to ten," announced the mouthpiece. "You haven't long to make up your mind, Eagle. You can take my word for that."

The big shot looked worried as he stared at Talker's thick, steady face. Then, with a sour expression, Eagle spoke in a less challenging tone.

"If I knew you were on the level, Talker," he said, "I'd chance it. You say The Crime Master wants me to bring in my crews. You say that if I don't, he'll wipe me out – and make the crews come in. That's the kind of gab I don't like."

"I told you the other side," reminded Talker. "If you do join up, you'll get your fair return. I know that for a fact, Eagle."

"So you've been telling me. But how?"

"You'll find out – when you're in."

## THE CRIME MASTER

Eagle Tabrick pondered. He thrust his hands in his coat pocket. His eyes lighted as he looked toward Talker Grube.

"Count me in, Talker," declared the big shot. "I'm with The Crime Master. That's settled. What next?"

"I'll make a phone call," announced Talker. "Not to The Crime Master – just to some palooka who will pass the word along. That will put you in right."

"And then?"

"I'll spill some news that will make your eyes pop open. You'll find out what you want to know. You'll be in on the biggest job that's ever been pulled!"

Talker was rising. He was reaching for the French telephone that lay on a table close beside him. Eagle moved forward. He laid his hand on Talker's arm.

"Wait a bit." Eagle's tone was eager. "You've got until ten to make this call. I've told you I'm in. I'm with The Crime Master, just like you are."

"Maybe I may want to tell him something? When I work with anybody, I work all the way. See? Hold that call. Tell me what you're supposed to give me now that I'm in. Then pass the word along."

Talker deliberated. This, apparently, was a suggestion upon which he had no instructions.

It was evident that his report was essential; inasmuch as it depended on Eagle's verbal agreement – already given – there did not seem to be any objection to the big shot's plan.

"All right." Talker nodded as he settled back in his chair. "Here's the lay. Did you ever hear of the Associated Importing Company?"

"In the Fergis Building? Sure. They handle jewel shipments – but they've got a strongroom like a fort; and you never can tell how much swag there is in their place."

"Their strongroom is no tougher than the Titan Trust. What's more, you're wrong when you say we can't tell what's there. Right now, the Associated Importing Company is holding nearly half a million dollars' worth of uncut diamonds."

Eagle's eyes opened. The big shot could see that Talker was stating facts. He listened while the mouthpiece resumed.

"Tuesday night," resumed Talker, in a methodical tone, "The Crime Master is going to bust that place wide open. He wants some cover-up squads; and he's got his eye on your mobleaders."

"There's the story, Eagle. Take it from me – you're getting a great break. All you've got to do is pass the word to Pigeon Melgin and the rest of your lieutenants. Tell them who's their new boss. They'll get orders from The Crime Master direct. You sit back and get your cut because you've joined up."

"Why didn't you tell me this in the first place?" questioned Eagle, in a mollified tone. "What was the idea of coming around here and telling me I'd have to come in with the racket?"

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"Because that's the way The Crime Master wanted it," asserted Talker. "He doesn't make terms with anybody. I gave you the time limit. You came through. That puts you on the safe side."

Rising from his chair, Talker drew a packet from his inside pocket. He held the envelope in his left hand.

"Hold on to this," he said. "It's from The Crime Master. Don't open it. I may have new instructions when I come again to-morrow night; if so, I'm to take this envelope back. Otherwise, you can open it."

"Instructions for Tuesday?"

"I don't know. I'm simply following orders."

Talker drew his watch from his pocket. It showed seven minutes before ten. As Eagle drew closer, Talker made a gesture toward the telephone.

"I'll have to rush that call!" he exclaimed. "The limit's almost up –"

"Just a minute." Eagle was suave as he rested his long hand on Talker's bulky shoulder. "Wait'll you hear what I want to tell you. I'm only taking a second."

As he spoke, Eagle pressed the other man's shoulder. Talker shifted slightly backward, toward the curtained archway behind him. Eagle stopped; a curious gleam appeared upon his face as he stepped away, like a photographer posing a subject.

Talker stared. He wondered what was coming. He had not long to wait. Eagle Tabrick raised his hand, with a sweeping signal. The response was a muffled burst from the curtain in back of Talker.

The shot was dulled. A revolver, handled from the folds of the curtain, revealed itself by the scorching tongue of flame. Talker Grube doubled backward, a sickly expression showed upon his face as a choke came from his throat.

Like a toppled dummy figure, The Crime Master's mouthpiece crumpled to the floor. He rolled upon his back. His last gasp faded. Talker Grube was dead.

From the trembling curtain leered a rough face. A wiry man stepped into view, pocketing his smoking revolver. He, like Eagle Tabrick, was known to The Shadow. He was Pigeon Melgin, most notorious of Eagle's six lieutenants.

Eagle Tabrick was holding the envelope in his left hand; with his right, he clapped Pigeon Melgin on the back. The big shot was commending his lieutenant's skill.

Together, gloating, Eagle and Pigeon surveyed the corpse of Talker Grube, while The Shadow watched from the curtained window. The assassination of Talker Grube was Eagle Tabrick's final answer to The Crime Master's ultimatum!

## CHAPTER X. DEATH FROM THE DARK

EAGLE TABRICK laughed.

"Ten o'clock." The big shot's statement was disdainful. "That's the time he gave me, Pigeon. You heard?"

## THE CRIME MASTER

"Sure." The lieutenant nodded. "I knew he was stalling you, Eagle. Only thing bothered me was why you didn't hand me the signal quicker."

"I wanted him to spill something," growled Eagle. "He did, all right. Say – if that dope of his was straight, we've got until Tuesday night to beat The Crime Master to a big job. What do you think of it, Pigeon?"

"Sounds good." The came doubt in Pigeon's tone. "Just the same, Eagle, you can't be taking no long chances with The Crime Master."

"You're buffaloeed, too eh?" quizzed Eagle, with a snarl. "Say – maybe this hokum of Talker's had something to it. How about it – suppose I was blotted out. Would you join up with the Crime Master?"

"How do I know?" Pigeon shrugged his shoulders. "You ain't been put on the spot, have you? Anyway – I just croaked Talker Grube for you. That shows how I stand."

"What about the others?"

"They're hiding out, ain't they? That shows they're with you. Why get goofy, Eagle? We're all with you. I've been hiding up here, haven't I? What more do you want?"

"You're right, Pigeon. I've got nothing to squawk about. If somebody should get me, things would be different, of course. But until then, I can rely on your mob and the others. Nobody's going to get me, though. I've shown what I think of The Crime Master's bluff."

Eagle chuckled as he finished his decisive statement. He glanced at the envelope that he still held in his hand. His ugly smile flickered anew.

"Talker turned out to be a sap," he asserted. "Handed me my instructions. Right from headquarters. Let's see what The Crime Master has to say."

Ripping open the envelope, Eagle drew forth a folded sheet of thick paper. He spread it. His eyes took on a puzzled stare. Pigeon looked over his chief's shoulder. He saw the reason for Eagle's surprise.

The sheet of paper was absolutely blank!

"WHAT do you make of it, Eagle?" came Pigeon's question.

Tabrick tossed paper and envelope upon the table. He turned to make reply.

"It looks like The Crime Master figured what might happen," he said, seriously. "Talker was to come again to-morrow. Like as not, he would have brought a new envelope – with a real message – and asked for this one back.

"I don't like it, Pigeon. It's a funny kind of bluff. If there was a phony message on that paper, it wouldn't be so bad. But a blank –"

"Why does that worry you?" questioned Pigeon. "It looks kind of dumb to me. Like the guy didn't know nothing."

"You're wrong." Eagle spoke with assurance. "Figure it this way, Pigeon. Nobody could tell who sent this blank sheet of paper. That's why I don't like the look of it. Suppose somebody should plug me – suppose the

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bulls should find this dead-head envelope. What would it mean to them? Nothing."

"I get you," nodded Pigeon. "It's a bluff that can't come back on the guy who pulled it."

Eagle responded with a nod of his own. His tone became more serious than before.

"It's after ten o'clock," he mused, aloud. "We didn't give Talker a chance to put that call through. We've got to work from under cover, Pigeon. If The Crime Master means business, he'll be out to get me."

"Talker wasn't stalling when he told me about that swag up at the importing company. That's what The Crime Master's after, sure enough. He pulled a good job at the Titan Trust; but he'll be cagey about using his regular workers too soon after that."

"There's the lay, Pigeon. Talker talked too much. The Crime Master needs my outfits. He figures that with six new mobs, another robbery would be a cinch. Well" – Eagle paused confidently – "my crews are going to pull that job. But it won't be for The Crime Master. It'll be for me – before Tuesday night –"

Eagle was standing in the center of the rooms. His profile showed clearly to The Shadow, as the hidden watcher clung beside the window. Pigeon Melgin was standing directly in front of Eagle when the interruption came.

A sizzling whistle whined inward from the window. Something, traveling at high speed, plastered itself against the side of Eagle's face. The big shot staggered; something exploded with a puff; Eagle's head was smothered in a blanketing cloud of greenish vapor that dispelled like the spray from an atomizer.

A snarl ended in convulsive chokes as Eagle Tabrick slumped to the floor. Hands clawed the carpet; the sprawling figure writhed, then lay still. Death had struck from the dark.

There was an instant's pause on the part of Pigeon Melgin while the lieutenant stood horrified at the fate which had come to his chief. Then, with a venomous oath, Pigeon leaped toward the window, yanking his revolver as he sprang.

Against the glow of the Manhattan sky, Pigeon saw the railed top of the warehouse opposite. Picking that as his objective, he raised his revolver and fired two defiant shots. They found no mark, for Pigeon had no target. But the mobleader, in his mad spring, had placed his own form in open view.

Sssssssssss!

A second whine came through the outside air. Pigeon stumbled as a projectile smashed against his chest. A puff; the gangleader's head was enveloped in a noxious cloud of green. Coughing in agony, Pigeon staggered forward. His wild hands clutched the curtain beside the window. It gave. Enveloped in a fold of cloth, the mobleader rolled dead upon the floor.

The fall of the curtain revealed The Shadow. Like a grotesque silhouette, the black-garbed watcher was shown in outline by the new light from the room. He had seen the fate of Eagle Tabrick; he had witnessed the death of Pigeon Melgin. He was open to the same menace that had dropped the evil pair!

THE SHADOW, however, had turned. Swinging toward the warehouse opposite, he poised upon the window ledge. He saw what Pigeon Melgin had failed to find. Rising over the rail on the warehouse roof was the outline of a man's head and shoulders. Against the whitened surface, The Shadow saw the aiming barrel of a rifle.

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A burst of flame came from The Shadow's automatic. Aimed with quick precision, the bullet did its work. Skimming just above the rail, it found its mark in the shoulder of the snipping killer. The rifle barrel wavered; then came a deep, muffled pop, like the sound of an air-gun.

A whizzing projectile plastered the wall, above and to the right of the window. A puff; greenish gas formed a nebula upon the surface of the bricks. Diving inward, The Shadow escaped the deadly spray. His tall form reached the floor of Eagle Tabrick's living room. The Shadow swung quickly out of sight along the inner wall.

On the roof opposite, a huddled form was crawling away from the rail. Dragging his powerful air rifle with him, The Crime Master's henchman was panting as he sought to gain an opening in the roof.

He had fired three grenades from the muzzle of his weapon. Two had delivered death. The third, which he had fired while wounded, was one for which he could not account. Escape had become his one objective.

Amid the shots that had been delivered against the killer – two by Pigeon Melgin, one by The Shadow – the raucous sound of horns and the impatient bursts of motors had formed a symphony from the street below.

A traffic jam, with its attendant noise, had drowned the sounds of shots from above. Yet it was possible that some one had heard at least one of the three reports. Any one other than The Shadow would not have remained in a room where three men lay dead. Yet The Shadow lingered.

The master fighter knew that he had winged the marksman who had sent the gas grenades from the opposite roof. He expected no further menace from that quarter. Moving like a spectral shape, The Shadow reached the spot where Eagle Tabrick lay sprawled upon the floor.

There was no sign of the projectile that had caused the big shot's death. The Crime Master had plotted well. The projectile, evidently of some thin substance, had been shattered to bits when it had reached the mark. The Shadow knew that the same must be true concerning the grenades which had followed.

The Shadow picked up the telephone. He spoke, in a voice that was strangely like Eagle Tabrick's. He told the operator to connect him with detective headquarters. Then another voice responded. The Shadow asked to be connected with Inspector Timothy Klein.

"Hello..." The Shadow's tone was Eagle's nasty snarl. "Inspector Klein?... Good. This is Tabrick... Eagle Tabrick... Yeah, in my apartment at the Mid Gotham... Listen, inspector, I've got a friend here with me... We've just handed the bump to Talker Grube... I'm not kidding. It was self-defense. That's why I'm calling you... Listen, I'm slated for the spot. Talker came here to get me... Yeah, that's why I can't scram. I'm counting on you to get some men up here before they blot us out – me and my pal..."

The Shadow's feigned speech ended. His gloved hand hung up the telephone. A soft laugh came from the lips that were unseen behind the upturned collar of the cloak. The Shadow's keen eyes spied the envelope that lay on the floor.

Picking up the torn wrapper, The Shadow withdrew the folded paper from within. He produced a pen; in letters, he inscribed this message:

Tuesday night. Raid at Fergis Building. Pickets on watch. All off if police enter. Word will be passed along. Keep under cover.



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The Shadow folded the note. He replaced it in the envelope and tucked the wrapper under Eagle Tabrick's arm. The distant siren of a police car was whirring from a block away. The Shadow laughed.

Turning, the black-garbed investigator strode swiftly to the door. He reached the hallway and closed the door behind him. His figure disappeared in the direction of the stairs.

Again, The Shadow had planted a clue at the scene of death. He knew whom this note would reach – Commissioner Ralph Weston. The Shadow also knew that the very vagueness of the note and the circumstances under which it would be discovered would cause the commissioner to preserve secrecy and to act with caution.

The Shadow knew more. He knew that The Crime Master would have no way of learning that Talker Grube had talked too much. He also knew that The Crime Master would believe that the police had found nothing more than a blank sheet of paper in the envelope which Eagle Tabrick held.

This was the cause of The Shadow's sinister mirth. Crime was set for Tuesday night. The deaths of Talker, Eagle, and Pigeon would not deter it in the least.

The Shadow, through his cunning, had driven a wedge into The Crime Master's cunning game!

## CHAPTER XI. BLACK JOINS WHITE

IT was Monday, midnight. The Crime Master, seated at his checkered table, was studying the set array of pieces on the board. The map beneath the squared glass showed the complete detail of the Fergis Building as well as the closest blocks which surrounded it.

Reds, greens and blues – all were arranged for attack and defense. White pieces, scattered here and there, seemed hopelessly lost. The Crime Master was giving the police every advantage that they might possibly obtain; still, his game was sure.

The buzzer. The old man chuckled as he placed a scrawny finger on the button. Henley entered from the clicking door. The Crime Master's secretary was carrying a sheaf of reports. Approaching the table, Henley paused and handed the first sheet to his master.

"Good." The white-haired man chuckled, as he perused the paper. "So we have lined up the five mobleaders who worked for Eagle Tabrick. I have only one regret, Henley. It is too bad that this fellow Pigeon Melgin was sacrificed along with his useless chief."

"Melgin's men have joined with the other groups," remarked Henley. "That fact is clearly stated on the report, Master –"

"I see it," interposed the old man, in a querulous tone. "But that does not make up for Melgin's loss. One leader of his caliber is worth a dozen gunmen."

New sheets followed. The Crime Master chuckled as he read their details. The thoroughness of the reports pleased him. The underworld was in the hollow of his scrawny hand.

"Crime is a business, Henley," announced the old man, dryly. "It needed some one of my ability to make it pay. Come. Let me have the next report."

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Reluctantly, the solemn-faced secretary passed the final sheet to his chief. Fierce eyes sparkled though slitted lids as The Crime Master read the words before him.

"The Shadow!" The old man spat the name. "That spook – that scarecrow! So these fools think that he has been the cause of the trouble they encountered. Bah! It is their pretext to cover their own stupid mistakes."

"Louie Harger is a capable fighter, Master," reminded Henley. "He made a remarkable escape after his fight at the Titan Trust. This is the first report we have had in full from him."

THE CRIME MASTER made a new study of paragraphs to which Henley pointed. His snarl, though vicious, was impersonal. It was plain that on second reading, he had decided that his criticism of Louis Harger had been too bitter.

"Bullets from the bank building, eh?" The Crime Master contemplated the statements. "A black figure in the doorway. These could account for Harger's failure to wipe out Cardona and his men. At the same time, Henley, this may be Harger's alibi."

"I have a previous report, Master," interposed Henley, drawing a paper from his stack, "The raiders – the reds – stated after the robbery that shots increased as they fought with the detectives. They saw no one – and yet –"

"It could have been The Shadow. I agree with you, Henley. I thought they, too, were presenting an alibi. But none of them have had contact with Harger. This begins to appear important, Henley."

"Here is another old report, Master. It relates to the death of Trigger Maddock. We have been unable to trace any one who could have killed him and his underlings."

"A good point, Henley. Wait. I shall read the rest of this present report. It interests me, now."

The Crime Master scanned the typewritten lines. His lips moved in snarling fashion, though no sound came from them. With an angry gesture, he thrust the paper back to Henley.

"You are right." The old man settled back in his chair as he spoke. "This matter of our appointed killer – the man on the warehouse roof – is of vital consequence. He escaped, though mortally wounded. This delayed statement from the pal to whom he talked appears as convincing proof.

"Eagle Tabrick could not have slain him. We thought, logically, that Pigeon Melgin might have fired the bullet. But now that we knew he fired at a third enemy – this from his own statement – we can presume that it was the unknown foe who reached him instead."

Henley nodded. He studied his chief. The Crime Master formed a grotesque sight as he rested in his chair. His scrawny fingers were clasped beneath his chin. His grayish face, thin nosed, with scowling lips and fanglike teeth, was as terrible as his fiendish eyes. The mass of white hair added to his insidious appearance. He looked like a portrayal of the figure of Death, ready to hew down victims with a sharpened scythe.

"Bring me the file, Henley."

"Yes, Master."

THE secretary went to the wall. He produced a bulky book which proved to be a file. From it, he drew a folder which he brought to the old man. The Crime Master opened the folder. He plucked forth a stack of

## THE CRIME MASTER

papers which bore the title:

### THE SHADOW

Sheet by sheet, the old man began his study. Here in his files, the creature of crime had data concerning every individual who roamed the underworld. More copious than police records – for The Crime Master's information came from the inside – these files were remarkably complete. Even The Shadow had been listed.

Yet in these pages from a single file, The Crime Master could find nothing more than rumor. Here were the deeds of The Shadow as chronicled by crooks. One mobleader – so the records said – had met The Shadow. The man was not alive to tell his own story. Another, like the first, had died in battle with The Shadow. A third had disappeared. Where? Only The Shadow knew!

The schemes of cunning crooks; these, rumor had it, had been balked by The Shadow's power. Mysteries of the underworld; stolen pelf reclaimed; rogues captured red-handed by the law – such were the reputed results of The Shadow's activities through the badlands.

The Crime Master fumed. With an angry sweep of his arm, he sent the folder across the room, its contents scattering as the binder struck the wall. On his feet, the old man clenched a clawlike fist and pounded the table until the pieces rattled on their squares.

"The Shadow!" The old man spat the challenge. "Who is he? What is he? Where is he? Nobody knows. He is a being of mystery – a chimera that frightens stupid gunmen out of their superstitious senses.

"Now they say The Shadow seeks to balk me. We shall see" – the old man was chortling – "yes, we shall see. If The Shadow is merely a phantom, he is nothing. But should he be the reality that these informers claim, he must be regarded as a living foe.

"What is The Shadow's game? To ruin crime. What is his method? To find the heart of danger. He was on his way to the most menacing zone when he approached the Titan Trust – if we can believe Harger's story. The Shadow learned facts to guide himself that night. Perhaps he has learned new ones concerning to-morrow's crime."

The old man paused. Henley was nodding, half afraid, as he faced his maddened master. The Crime Master was a fiend incarnate. Gloating, fuming, his face had changed from gray to crimson. Then came the subsiding. The old man spoke in a calmer tone. His voice was caustic.

"Let us hope," he worded, "that The Shadow has learned facts. Let us hope that he will seek the central zone of crime. I see now that he has hitherto played a hidden part. It was through his doing that Joe Cardona learned certain facts.

"Cardona is out of the battle. He is a broken white piece. He no longer belongs upon my board. His departure is doubly satisfactory. I see him – Cardona – not only as a minion of the law, but as the unwitting instrument of The Shadow.

"Who can replace Cardona? No one. Therefore, The Shadow must play a stronger part. He must seek to thwart my crimes in person. By doing so, he thinks that he has increased his importance.

"He has not. That, Henley" – the old man was leering – "is where The Shadow has erred. By planning to appear as an actual foe, he has reduced himself to the level of these puppets!"

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The Crime Master grinned and waved his hand above the board with its colored pieces. Turning, he stalked to a small bookcase. He opened a lower drawer and drew out a box. He returned, while Henley stared. Opening the box, the old man produced a tapering wooden cone with a cylindrical knob, like the king from a set of chessmen. The new piece was jet black in color.

"I have foreseen this, Henley," cackled the Crime Master. "I am ready. This" – he held up the black man – "is The Shadow. I shall place him here!"

With an emphatic sweep of his hand, The Crime Master set the black piece upon the central square of his board – an unoccupied space in the midst of surrounding pieces. That square indicated the unbroken strongroom of the Associated Importing Company!

"There he stands," gibed The Crime Master. "The Shadow, in the heart of danger, waiting to surprise my legions. He knows that it is futile to attack me from without. He seeks to battle from within.

"What can he do? Look closely, Henley! You see this weak avenue? It would fail against an attack from within." So speaking, The Crime Master pointed to an irregular formation of open squares. "Very well, we shall fill that break."

Chortling, the old man brought new pieces from the box beside the table. He plugged the weak spot that he had detected. Again, his scrawny finger pointed.

"I have a small green on this square." He shook his head. "It is not enough. A middle sized one – this piece will do – and here, a large green.

"Another red over here – blues at these vital points." Square by square, The Crime Master was strengthening his board. "That will do – no – if the whites are strong here at the left, we must be prepared. A blue will do it. Ah! There is the game!"

SITTING down in his chair, The Crime Master surveyed the board with gleaming smile. Henley, peering as he made notations on a sheet of paper, was preparing to issue new instructions. Orders had already gone to those who were to participate in The Crime Master's original plan of action. Further commands were needed, for those minions whom the old man had added to his board.

There were changes, also. Henley noted all. His task completed, the secretary gathered reports and left the paneled room. Long minutes passed. It was half an hour later when Henley returned.

The Crime Master was still studying the board. He had not changed a single piece. The black marker in the vital square was totally surrounded by pieces of varied hues. Beyond those were the whites, blocked at every turn. The evil eyes of The Crime Master were glowing with delight.

"Orders, Master."

Henley placed the papers on the table. The old man brought out his stamping seal. As he read each set of instructions, he pressed the seal to emboss his certifying signature. When he had finished, The Crime Master waved his left talon toward Henley.

"This is final," he declared, with fiendish emphasis. "It is a double cordon. Where one may fail, another will succeed. Let The Shadow come!"

## THE CRIME MASTER

Henley nodded as he took the orders. He left The Crime Master staring in elation. Gibbering sounds were coming from the old man's lips as the monster continued to survey the merits of his game.

Until to-night, white pieces alone had constituted The Crime Master's opposition. A new factor had entered; the old man was prepared. The Shadow, like the law, was to be his foe. Black had joined white!

The Crime Master was ready for The Shadow!

## CHAPTER XII. TUESDAY NIGHT

ON the following evening, Commissioner Ralph Weston left his office after working late. His austere features were firmly set as he reached the street and looked about for signs of a signal. A hand was raised from the window of a light coupe.

Weston crossed the street. He stepped into the car. At the wheel was Grady, the commissioner's confidential man. Grady shoved the car into gear. They rolled along the street and turned a corner northward.

"A good car, Grady," observed the commissioner. "I am playing a cautious game to-night. I should not like to be seen – where we are going – either in my regular car or with my usual chauffeur at the wheel."

"I understand, sir."

The car rolled along. It finally made a westward turn. Weston pressed Grady's arm – a signal to slacken speed. The coupe was in the block where the Fergis Building was located. All was quiet.

Weston nodded to himself. His orders had been followed. No officer was in sight along this block. He knew that detectives had long since stationed themselves in buildings opposite. They would be on watch. Open signs of police protection were absent.

The coupe took the next corner. It went one block, then veered left. Here, Weston, shrewdly peering, saw the signs that he wanted. A few extra officers were on duty. As the car turned right, continued a few squares and kept on skirting the vicinity of the Fergis Building, the commissioner became more satisfied than before.

Everywhere – added men. Scattered detectives. Patrol cars a few blocks further away. At no one spot was their indication of police activity. Nevertheless, a powerful array of the law could close in at short order. All was ready for the formation of a cordon.

The coupe rolled past the Fergis Building for a second time. Weston noted a trio of parked cabs; a fourth came up behind them as the coupe passed. These meant nothing to the commissioner, however. He ordered Grady to leave the vicinity.

NOT long after the coupe had departed from the block, a figure appeared a few doors below the main entrance to the Fergis Building. Its form was hazy; its motions swift and shift. Stopping by the closed entrance of a ground floor shop, the figure merged with blackness. A pick clicked in the lock.

A minute later, The Shadow was inside the deserted shop. Here he found a more formidable barrier; an entrance to the building itself. In the darkness of the store, concealment was an easy task. The Shadow worked with precision. He forced the barrier. He reached the deserted lobby of the building. His form moved up the stairway.

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The big building was empty. Moreover, its doors were firmly closed. Only The Shadow could have made an unseen entry. So far, the place seemed immune from attack. The Shadow knew well that a search must have been made – in routine fashion – at the time the building closed.

Reaching the third floor, The Shadow made his way to the front. Here he found the dim panel in a glass door; the name showed by dull light that came through the street windows:

### ASSOCIATED IMPORTING COMPANY

The pick began to work. The door opened. The Shadow entered the office and closed the door behind him. Beyond, at the side, he saw a heavy door of steel that bore the statement:

### PRIVATE

This was obviously the way to the strongroom. Again, The Shadow set to work. The locks of this heavy door were formidable; yet it required only a few minutes for The Shadow to unloose them. The black-garbed investigator entered a room that was windowless. Its furnishings consisted only of table and two chairs. In the far wall was the door of a heavy, built-in vault.

After a brief inspection, The Shadow returned to the outer office. He left the door of the strongroom ajar. He reached the windows and peered to the street below. There, he observed the taxicabs that Weston's coupe had passed. The row now numbered five.

A soft laugh came from The Shadow's hidden lips. He saw significance in those cabs. He watched while another drove up and joined the line. Softly, The Shadow raised a window and peered directly below.

He could not see the sidewalk. This office was directly above the entrance to the Fergis Building. A marquee extended over the sidewalk just above the door. It was thirty odd feet to the street; the projecting surface of the marquee was more than half way down.

Like a slightly sloping roof, the marquee consisted of a heavy metal frame in which were set a grillwork of thinner metal, filled with panes of glass. The Shadow's inspection ended. The black form moved into the office.

Apparently, the Fergis Building had entrances only in the front. Old, but well-built, it was set between a smaller and more ancient office building on the left; a low garage on the right. The strongroom was built against the left wall. Narrow and with open stairway from ground floor to the top – the tenth – the Fergis Building was the type of structure in which any sound could be heard.

Could The Crime Master's workers enter from the front? The Shadow had done so; but crews of marauders would surely encounter trouble. The Shadow, as he waited, sensed that the unusual was due to occur. Then came evidence – sounds from outside the office.

MUFFLED clicks. The noise of chipping stones. Softly, The Shadow stole to the outer door. He peered through a crack; he saw the results of what he had heard.

At the end of the hallway – from the side where the other office building was located – pieces of plaster were breaking from the wall.

A gaping hole was coming. Workers from the other side were finding an easy way into the Fergis Building. The Shadow closed the door of the office. He moved back to the strongroom. He worked upon the locks of

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the metal door. He entered and closed the barrier behind him.

There was not long to wait. Lurking in total darkness, The Shadow heard slight clicks from the other side. The Crime Master's men were here. They were trying to break in. They were going to succeed without much difficulty, thanks to The Shadow.

He had loosened the locks to make their progress easy. The Shadow was anxious to lose no time in meeting The Crime Master's horde. He was ready with a surprise that they could not anticipate.

The door swung open. Creeping men moved forward. Then came a weird sound that chilled them to immobility. With eerie mockery, The Shadow's laugh burst from the strongroom. Members of the advancing mob halted. A flashlight gleamed from a gangster's hand. The answer was the thunder of an automatic.

The Shadow had chosen a danger spot. He was opposed to criminals – potential murderers – the flower of The Crime Master's cohorts. This was no time for parley. Bullets were the arguments that counted. Tongues of flame spat from The Shadow's guns, squarely into the ranks of the massed raiders.

Gangsters broke for cover. Leaving their companions sprawling, those in the rear dashed for the outer door of the office. Reaching the hall, they turned to give battle. Until then, they had not fired a shot.

But The Shadow was still prepared. Firing with one hand at the fleeting mobsters, he had yanked the metal door almost shut. A gun wedged in the crack between door and frame, he was ready for those who turned to fire back.

Gangster bullets smashed against the metal door. The Shadow answered, directing each shot toward spots where revolver flashes had shown. Gangsters fell, groaning. The remainder turned in final flight. It was then that The Shadow issued forth. He headed for the outer door to take up the chase.

As he reached his goal, The Shadow paused. He was allowing one short interval before he resumed the pursuit. It was in that space that an event occurred which totally changed The Shadow's plans.

AN explosion came with a mighty roar, back in the strongroom! The entire building seemed to shake. The Shadow caught his footing, as he wheeled. Smoke was pouring from the strongroom. The Shadow realized what had happened.

New marauders had blown through the wall from the garage! The first attack had been no more than a preliminary sortie. Here were the real raiders, coming through into the strongroom itself!

The Shadow pounced to the open door. Defying the stifling fumes, he peered toward the corner where the blast had shattered a jagged opening. His automatics dropped beneath his cloak. His gloved hands swept out a second brace of weapons.

A light glimmered from the broken wall. The Shadow loosed a shot. The light fell. Then came the responses of revolvers. Men from the opening were aiming to give battle. The sides of the hole were their cover; The Shadow was again using the metal door as his barricade.

Bursts of a single automatic thrust past the edge of the door. These timely shots were keeping the new forces at bay. The Shadow was expecting a mad rush. He was equipped to handle it. All was going well for the time; then, while the expected attack still held back, a new onslaught opened from another quarter.

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A whistling bullet flattened itself against the metal door, a scant inch from The Shadow's head. The cloaked warrior whirled. The shot had come from the outer door. A new mob, held in reserve to replace the outfit which The Shadow had put to flight, was on hand to battle with the lone fighter!

The opening shot, had it been less hasty, would have settled The Shadow once for all. Swinging from his narrow escape, The Shadow aimed toward the outer door and opened fire as a deluge of mobsmen sallied into the room.

Amid the smoke that still hovered from the explosion, swift fight was waged. The Shadow, had he remained at the door of the strongroom, would have been quick prey for his opponents. But he shifted as he fired. He headed toward the window, intent upon meeting his foemen as they advanced.

Amazingly, The Shadow seemed to precede the enemy's aim. Spattering bullets followed him while the men who fired were diving away to avoid return shots. It was the swiftness of the struggle that aided The Shadow during his course to the opened window.

A mobleader – Harger – was at the heels of the crowd that had sallied through the door. More deliberate than his hurried henchmen, Louie aimed for the blackened target that he could barely see. He fired. The Shadow wavered.

Wounded, the superfighter staggered at the window sill. A single automatic loosed flame toward the door, A mobster, his body protecting Louie, began to sink as his leader was aiming above his shoulder. Harger dived away toward the safety of the hall.

THE door of the strongroom swung open. A light glimmered full upon the window. The Shadow, barely freed from the menacing mob which had attacked from the hall, was forced to turn and fire single-handed at the light.

The Shadow's right arm was limp; his left, however, loosed a pair of final shots with deadly precision. The light went out; a staggering mobster screamed. A gunman's hand yanked the metal door shut.

The Shadow's triumph was brief. Before the cloaked fighter could make another move, three men surged inward from the hall. Louie Harger, behind another pair of underlings, was coming back to fight.

One mobster fired. His bullet singed The Shadow's wounded arm. The second man was aiming; The Shadow flung an empty automatic squarely in the fellow's face. Louie Harger loosed a shot. The Shadow toppled. Backed against the window, his only refuge, the trapped warrior sprawled sideways on the sill. Louie fired again, as The Shadow's form went outward. His bullet clipped The Shadow's thigh.

Then the form was gone; the window clear – save for a clutching hand of black. A dozen feet away, Louie aimed point blank for those clinging fingers, which he could see upon the white surface of the woodwork. Before the mobleader could pull the trigger, the fingers loosened. The Shadow's form was plunging toward the rooflike marquee, nearly twenty feet below!

Louie heard the crash as he sprang for the window. The shattering of glass – the snapping of metal – these were the sounds that had marked The Shadow's vertical plunge. Reaching the window, the mobleader looked downward. Spread upon the broken surface of the marquee lay the cloaked figure. The Shadow seemed to be writhing in agony.

Louie Harger aimed. The Shadow was helpless. Here was his chance to finish the archenemy of crime. Despite his belief that The Shadow must have already suffered mortal wounds, Louie was determined to gain



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the privilege of pumping lead into the black-garbed form.

As Louie's hand steadied on the trigger, The Shadow seemed to hunch together. Then, to the gangleader's amazement, the blackened form dropped. In his fall, The Shadow had shattered the center of the marquee. He still possessed sufficient strength to wriggle himself through the gap!

The Shadow had chosen the hard sidewalk a dozen feet further down in preference to the lead which he knew was coming from above. From his angle of vision, Louie could see but the fringes of the black cloak as The Shadow thumped, sprawling, on the sidewalk.

Viciously, the gangleader fired through the gap that showed in shattered glass and twisted metal. His zipping bullets smashed against the cement sidewalk. Changing his aim, Louie shattered another pane of glass, in maddened effort to uncover The Shadow's dragging form.

Bursts of flame – whining bullets – crackles from below – then the click of Louie's emptied weapon. The Shadow, wounded by gun shots, crippled by two successive plunges, had crawled toward the protecting entrance of the building.

The Crime Master's moves had been well planned. The Shadow had been trapped within the central square. Eliminated from the fray, he had taken a desperate measure to avoid certain death in the face of overwhelming odds.

Even yet, he was not clear. Louie Harger knew that fact as he stood snarling by the window. Guns were echoing in the street below.

The Shadow had moved from one square to another. Unarmed, incapable of fight, he was still within the range of The Crime Master's minions!

## CHAPTER XIII. THE FLIGHT

WHILE The Shadow had been waging battle in the offices of the Associated Importing Company, strife had broken loose upon the street below. The gunfire from above; the explosion which had followed it – these had served as signals for other action.

Prompt with the beginning of the upper fray, men had issued from buildings across the street. Half a dozen in number, they represented detectives who had been smuggled in to watch.

These men had sent the alarm before they appeared in view. The distant police who surrounded the district were notified that crime had struck. The half dozen detailed to watch were then ready to force their way into the Fergis Building.

But where Weston had relied upon a slim vanguard, The Crime Master had placed full crews of fighters. Hardly had the detectives appeared before the doors of parked taxis opened. Armed gunmen tumbled into view; they opened fire on the plain-clothes men.

Thus, while The Shadow had fought furiously above, shots had been ricocheting along the street below. Weston's men, hopelessly outnumbered, retreated to the buildings from which they had come. Of the six detectives, four were wounded.

During the last phases of The Shadow's upstairs battle, taxis were swinging along the street. These cabs were moving fortresses in The Crime Master's scheme. Each contained its quota of mobsters.

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Three cabs shot ahead; the gangsters who had fired at the detectives were on the running boards. Three made sharp, quick turnabouts in the center of the street and rolled toward the opposite end of the block.

One at each corner; second cabs in reserve behind them; third cabs further back – such was The Crime Master's blockade. Mobsmen – some in cabs, some on the street – were ready with their guns to ward off any police attack.

The Crime Master had designed the front street as one possible outlet for a getaway. Weston, in opposition, had picked that block as the converging point for the police. As The Shadow, backed against the window in the office, was poised for his wild plunge, heavy gunfire broke from both ends of the beleaguered block.

LOUIE HARGER, after emptying his revolver through the hole in the marquee, stared savagely out into the street. For the first time, the gangleader realized that a furious fight was under way below. Glancing hastily to left and right, he could see the flashes of guns from the ends of the street. He spied revolver bursts from the sides of the cabs. He saw gangsters retreating toward the center of the block.

Wildly, Louie leaped back into the office. He snatched up a fallen mobster's gat. Springing to the window, he leaned forth and fired three quick shots above the heads of two retreating mobsmen. The gangsters looked up, swinging savagely to meet what they took for an enemy's fire.

Louie waved his arms. The men stopped. They recognized an ally. In the lull that hung in the center of the block, Louie's voice barked its message, as the gangleader motioned straight downward with his gun.

"Get him!" ordered Louie. "The Shadow! Get him by the door! I plugged him –"

The mobsters were across the street. They looked toward the door of the building. One clutched the other's arm and pointed. His companion nodded.

The front of the Fergis Building formed an alcove. Set on each side of the entrance were pillar bases; above them, fluted, ornamental columns. Further away, on each side, were inset basement windows, fronted with heavy bars.

The columns showed white; their bases formed ledges upon which a person could recline. The first mobster, looking toward these conspicuous spots, had spied the object that he wanted. A huddled, pitiful form – black cloak with topping hat – formed a grotesque splotch at the base of the right column.

Viciously, the mobster fired. His shot cracked against the fluted pillar. His companion leveled his gun and loosed a bullet. The figure did not move. Snarling their triumph, the two hoodlums dashed straight for the blackened form.

One stopped short. Taking no chance, he fired three quick shots at a range of a dozen feet. The other man, seeing the gun lower, sprang forward and seized the folds of the black cloak. He yanked it away.

The slouch hat rolled to the sidewalk. Beneath was the whiteness of the bullet-cracked column. The mobsters had spent their fire to no avail. Crawling to this spot, The Shadow had managed to cast off his black garments. In the precious seconds that had followed, he had moved to some other spot.

The savage mobster flung the cloak to the sidewalk. He kicked the slouch hat toward the gutter. He stared at his companion; then pointed to the right. The inset window – black – could be a hiding place. Together, the two men sprang toward that spot to search.

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They found no one. One mobster kicked against the grated bars. Snarling an oath, he turned to his companion.

"He's somewhere near," growled the gunman. "Maybe he ducked the other way. The window on the other side is –"

Before the second gangster could respond, both were forced to heed an interruption. Amid the sounds of gunfire came wild shouts. Mobsters at the wheels of taxicabs were calling to their scattered fellows. The police attack was increasing. A drive for freedom was the order.

There was no time for this pair to resume their hunt. Sensing that they would be trapped, they dashed madly away from the front of the building. They reached the last cab and leaped on the running board. The cab did not move.

Slumped behind the wheel was the mobster driver, dead. The cab ahead was moving. Abandoning the motionless car, the two gangsters dashed for the one ahead. They gained the running board just as the car shot forward, shots bursting from its interior to run the police cordon.

LOUIE HARGER, standing by the window, saw the dash. He grinned. He was sure that the men whom he had summoned had clinched The Shadow's death. He had heard their shots from beneath the marquee.

Leaning from the window, he saw the onslaught of the cabs. Two were hurtling forward at one end of the block. Looking the other way, Louie saw a trio of cabs speeding in formation. Then came a fury of fire. Police, dropping to cover, were giving the cabs a gantlet of bullets. The mobsmen in the cabs were firing in return. The cabs sped along the street, careening as their drivers swerved.

Whistles sounded. Pursuing shots came to Louie's ears. Then the gangleader heard the whine of sirens as the gunfire faded. The police cars were taking up the chase.

Louie turned. He found silence. Dimly, the excited gangleader recalled a muffled blast while he had been standing at the window. He went to the door of the strongroom. He flashed his torch through heavy smoke.

The door of the vault was blown. The raiders had left by the hole in the wall. Mobsters lay motionless upon the floor of the office and in the strongroom. Louie realized that his small crew of sharpshooters had been practically eliminated in the battle with The Shadow. The few who remained had followed through the hole in the strongroom wall. Such had been Louie's order.

DOWN on the sidewalk, something moved from blackness. A figure crawled out of the inset window on the left side of the building entrance. Like a mammoth beetle, this shape reached the spot where the cloak and hat were lying. Half rising, The Shadow slipped cloak upon shoulders and planted the hat at an angle on his head.

Wisely, The Shadow had crawled to the window on the side away from the pillar where he had doffed his garb. The two mobsters had searched at the right – a natural procedure – while The Shadow was at the left.

Again, precious seconds had served The Shadow well. The mobsters had fled when he was almost in their grasp. It was The Shadow's turn to look for new safety.

Gloved hands clawed at the base of the nearer pillar. The crudely cloaked form rose upward. Stooped, The Shadow staggered across the sidewalk. He nearly fell as he stepped from the curb. Then, with hands clasped to his bent body, he wavered onward.

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LOUIE HARGER had returned to the window. The gangleader wanted one last look at the deserted street. He noted the cab standing in the thoroughfare. Beyond it, he saw policemen edging in from the corner. Louie glanced again at the cab.

For a moment, the gangleader was astounded. The door of the taxi had opened. He saw a mass of black lurch forward; then rise and slump. In an instant, Louie Harger knew the truth.

The Shadow had reached the cab! With a final effort, he had thrust the dead driver from the wheel. As Louie stared, he heard the grind of gears. The cab lurched forward.

Cursing, Louie aimed. He fired at the moving target. The range was too great. Going into high, the cab was zigzagging toward the corner, straight into the zone where police were ready to advance.

Like the mobsters who had fled ahead of him, The Shadow was running the gantlet. Revolvers barked; the cab swept on at a dizzy, swerving speed. Louie saw it careen almost to the opposite curb; then it was jerked to the center of the street. It was past the corner – shots were coming from behind.

The Shadow had passed the bluecoats.

Louie could linger no longer. He heard police whistles; a dozen officers were dashing from the opposite direction, bent on reaching the Fergis Building now that the coast was clear. Louie headed for the strongroom. He dashed through the broken wall and reached a stairway.

Below, Louie found a rakish touring car on the garage floor. Four mobsters were in the machine. The driver called to the gangleader to hurry.

"Waitin' for you," were his words. "The others made their getaway. The swag went first. Anybody else comin'?"

Louie delivered a negative response as he leaped into the car. A gangster yanked a lever near the garage door. The barrier swung open; the man jumped aboard the touring car as it passed. The escaping mobsters were leaving by the rear, through a door that led to the street in back of the block where the Fergis Building was located.

A whistle sounded. Police had arrived in this block. Too late to flag the previous cars, the officers were determined to stop this machine. They fell back, however, as shots came from the guns which bristled at the sides of the touring car. The swift machine sped along the street.

Mobsters were benefiting by The Crime Master's strategy. In forming his game, the cunning supercrook had counted on the flight of the taxis to draw police away from this rear exit. The gangster-manned cabs had experienced much trouble; the touring car, however, was in the clear.

Swinging along the nearest avenue, Louie Harger and his companions gloated on the fact that their own escape must be proof that the men with the swag had made a clear getaway. Such was the case; Louie's crew, however, was due for trouble.

As the car reached a corner four blocks from the scene of crime, a siren sounded up ahead. Commissioner Weston was maneuvering his forces like fire engines after the third alarm. For each police car that had headed into the danger zone, other cars were coming in reserve.

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The driver cursed as he swung the touring car down a side street. The rakish machine roared through a canyon of silent buildings. It crossed another avenue. As it reached the next broad thoroughfare, the driver gave the wheel a sudden twist.

The right wheels took a low curb. Louie Harger, staring from the rear seat, saw the reason for the unexpected maneuver. A taxicab, coming at a breakneck, rolling speed, was skidding past the crossing. The driver of the touring car had swerved to avoid it.

"Smash him!" shouted Louie, as the touring car bounded from the curb toward the center of the avenue. "Smash him – it's a guy we've got to get –"

The order was too late. The taxi had careened past. As the touring car finished the crossing and came to a jolting stop with its nose down the side street, Louie was spending futile shots after the fleeing cab.

"Get him –"

Louie's startled companion joined in the fire. They, like the driver, had taken the taxi for a vehicle that contained escaping mobsters. Louie's blazing shots, however, seemed to indicate a purpose. The surprise of the sudden meeting rendered bullets futile. The Shadow's lurching cab had reached a point more than half a block away.

"After him!" rasped Louie. "We've got to get him! It's The Shadow!"

An oath came from the driver. The man shot the touring car into reverse. The machine swept backward into the avenue. The taxi was two blocks away; but this swift car could overtake it.

THE chase never began. Just as the driver was shifting to low gear, a siren whined. From a corner one square below, a police car appeared upon the avenue. It was in chase of The Shadow's taxi.

The driver of the gang car sensed the menace. To pursue the taxi would mean a course squarely in front of the police car. He yanked the wheel and headed toward the direction from which he had backed – along the side street.

Anxious gangsters fired from Louie's side. Bullets whistled toward the police car. At sight of this new foe, the officers slackened speed. As the touring car sped down the side street, they forgot the cab that they were chasing and took up the pursuit of the car which contained Louie Harger.

Block after block – a twisting, tortuous chase. The swift touring car outdistanced its pursuer. Louie and his companions were safe; but they had made a damaging error.

Not only had they failed to stop The Shadow; they had also diverted the police chase from the cab which the wounded warrior had commandeered. Far up the avenue, the taxi was whirling along, unmolested. Then, as it passed a crossing, its speed began to slacken.

Coasting crazily, the taxi continued for another block. Behind the wheel lay a limp, helpless form. The Shadow had weakened. His foot no longer pressed the accelerator nor did his hands control the steering wheel.

The cab climbed a curb. Pedestrians scattered as the vehicle jounced tilting toward the corner. A black glove gripped the steering wheel and gave it a twist. The cab rolled catcornered into a side street, bounced down from the near curb, climbed the sidewalk opposite and came to a crashing stop against a high stone steps.

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A door wrenched open. The Shadow sprawled against the steps. Contact with the stone seemed to bring him to a revived state. Spontaneously, the black-cloaked form arose and went tottering, with a flash of its accustomed stride, along through the darkness away from the wrecked cab.

Pedestrians who had fled from the path of the taxi came rushing over to give rescue. They came from the direction of the avenue. They found the cab empty. During their approach from the near side of the smashed vehicle, The Shadow had limped a dozen yards.

Then he faltered. His form collapsed beside a pair of steps further down the street. The shouts of the persons by the wrecked cab seemed faint at the spot where The Shadow lay.

Feebly, the cloaked fighter pressed his left hand to his side. Dripping blood smeared the black glove. From beneath the black cloak, fumbling fingers drew forth a tiny vial. The hand rose to the lips beneath the hat brim.

The vial was corked. The Shadow bit the stopper free with his teeth. A pungent odor came from the vial. With an effort, The Shadow swallowed the contents. The bottle made a tiny tinkle as it fell and broke upon the cement beside the steps.

Clutching the stone beside him, The Shadow arose. The elixir had given him a new taste of life. Though he limped and staggered, while his right side drooped, the game warrior began to cover the remaining distance of the block.

The next crossing marked a quiet uptown avenue, for The Shadow had arrived far north of Times Square. The black-clad figure wavered as it reached the far side of the crossing. Then came two dozen steps away from the corner. After that, The Shadow paused; he swayed and crashed upon the sidewalk.

A minute passed. No one chanced to come along the sidewalk while The Shadow lay there motionless. The figure moved again, with pitiful weakness. The power of the elixir had ended; its passing had brought an opposite reaction.

Crawling foot by foot; dragging himself by the sheer strength of his left arm, for his legs were weakening, The Shadow reached the white wall of a low apartment building. The entrance showed ahead. The Shadow, however, stopped at a nearer door.

The left hand crept upward. Fingers, moving spiderlike, gained the knob. The hand drew the form below close against the door. Then the left arm drooped; once again, fingers fumbled. The hand came up, carrying the metal pick.

Faltering fingers probed the lock. One click failed – another had a like fate. The Shadow's hand persisted. The lock yielded. The pick dropped; the hand clutched the knob. A final twist; the door opened inward and The Shadow's form went sprawling forward.

Barely across the threshold, The Shadow made a last motion of his arm. This action closed the door – not quite tight. The hand sought to finish the work. It failed. A sigh came from The Shadow's lips; his form dropped flat. The slouch hat rolled from the head that wore it.

Stretched prone upon the floor, The Shadow lay motionless. Slow, labored breathing such was the only sound that came from the spot where he had lost all consciousness. The folds of the blood-soaked cloak lay like a shroud upon the crippled shape.

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Ten minutes – fifteen – twenty. All was silence where The Shadow lay. Occasionally, the rumble of a passing car sounded from the street outside; at other intervals, clicking footsteps of pedestrians came from the sidewalk.

Then came a different noise from without. A cab had pulled up in front of the door through which The Shadow had entered. A serious-faced young man alighted. He paid the driver; the cab rolled away.

The man turned to the door in the building. He pressed a key in the lock. He was surprised as the door yielded. He entered and stopped short to keep from stumbling over the form that lay on the floor.

This arrival had found The Shadow. Stooping in the gloom, he bent over the black-garbed figure. A surprised gasp came from his lips as his hand felt the bloody wrinkles of the cloak.

The Shadow had escaped The Crime Master's trap; yet his flight had left him on the verge of death. Upon one man, whose timely return had now occurred, rested the fate of The Shadow!

## CHAPTER XIV. THE NEW CAMPAIGN

ONE week had passed. A light was burning in the ground-floor room where The Shadow's flight had ended. Revealed by the illumination, the place showed as a small waiting room. Beyond it was the open door of a doctor's office.

A sober-faced young man was seated at a desk. He was making a telephone call. His voice was quiet and unmistakably professional in tone.

"Yes," he was saying. "I shall be here to receive the delivery. At once – that is right... Be sure of the name and address... Yes... The name is Doctor Rupert Sayre..."

His call finished, the young physician arose. He crossed the office and opened a rear door. He stepped into the hallway of a small apartment that connected with the office.

A door was ajar near the end of hall. Sayre went in that direction. He stepped into a dimly lighted room where a tall form lay propped in a bed. Doctor Sayre stood looking at the pale face which showed upon the pillow.

The visage was a remarkable one. Its present color was almost the whiteness of marble. This was appropriate; for the countenance looked like a chiseled face of stone. Firm, steady features were predominated by an aquiline nose that gave the face a hawklike appearance.

In repose, the countenance seemed weary. This impression changed as the eyes opened. From the sides of the hawkish nose blazed orbs that seemed to sparkle fire. They were eyes that bespoke unquenchable power and determination.

The dominating gaze exerted a command. Doctor Sayre drew up a chair and seated himself beside the bed. He detected an inquiring look in the burning eyes. Quietly, the physician spoke in answer.

"Your strength is returning," asserted Sayre. "All delirium has passed. Conversation will not exhaust you."

A thin smile appeared upon the lips which had hitherto been straight beneath the hawklike nose. The expression, like the gaze, seemed questioning.

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"Perhaps," suggested Sayre, as he viewed the smile, "it would be wise for me to talk at first. Would you like me to review my impression after your arrival here?"

A nod from the head upon the pillows.

"Very well," resumed Sayre. "One week ago to-night, I happened to return home a bit earlier than usual. That, I may remark, was a most fortunate occurrence. When I opened the door of my office, I found a body upon the floor. It was that of a man wearing a black cloak and a slouch hat. He was alive – but his heartbeat was feeble.

"Imagine my amazement when I discovered who this personage was. Beneath the slouch hat, I found the features of Lamont Cranston, a prominent New Yorker who has long been a friend of mine. Cranston" – Sayre's tone was impersonal, although he gazed directly at his patient – "was in a most serious condition. He had three bullet wounds; he had evidently suffered gashes by falling through glass; between loss of blood and heavy bruises, it was a miracle that he had managed to reach my office under his own locomotion."

The smile still showed upon the thin lips. The head upon the pillows delivered another nod.

"What surprised me most," declared Doctor Sayre, "was the garb which Cranston had been wearing. Your cloak and hat, my friend, are hanging in this closet. It was because of them that I kept you here, instead of sending you to a hospital. It occurred to me that you might wish to preserve your condition a secret."

So speaking, Rupert Sayre approached the closet and opened the door. Eyes from the bed surveyed the battered hat and the blood-clotted cloak.

"ONCE – not so very long ago" – Sayre paused reminiscently as he, too, studied the hat and cloak – "my life was saved by the timely efforts of a being who wore this very garb. Since then, I have had occasional contact with the mysterious personage called The Shadow.

"I may say that I have two powerful friends. One is a multimillionaire – a famous globe-trotter named Lamont Cranston. The other is a miraculous being known as The Shadow. Sometimes, I have wondered. I have identified the two. I have thought that Lamont Cranston might be the person who poses as The Shadow. On further deliberation, I have decided that it is The Shadow who sometimes chooses to play the part of Lamont Cranston.

"This belief" – Sayre swung toward the bed as he spoke – "has been mentioned to no one. I am a man who believes in loyalty. I shall always show that trait to its fullest whenever I have dealings with either friend: Lamont Cranston or The Shadow."

There was a table by The Shadow's bedside. Sayre opened a deep drawer and made a gesture.

"Here," he declared, "are weapons which I take it are your property." The Shadow viewed the automatics that lay in view. "This telephone" – Sayre raised the instrument from the floor and rested it on the table – "is for your sole use. As your physician, I recommend only that you do not attempt to leave your bed for at least another week."

Turning toward the door, Sayre stopped just before he left the room. He viewed the appreciative smile that showed on the thin lips of Lamont Cranston; then added a statement.

"I can obtain copies of newspapers," said the physician, "dating from Tuesday last. Would they interest you?"



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"Yes." The reply came in a quiet tone – the voice that characterized Lamont Cranston. "How soon can you bring them?"

"Within an hour," promised Sayre. "I am waiting for the delivery of some medicine; after that, I have an outside call. I shall bring the newspapers when I return."

The door closed, marking Sayre's departure. Lamont Cranston's face seemed to lose some of its pallor. The bed spread moved – a long, pajama-garbed arm came into view. This was the left arm; the right, heavily bandaged, lay across Cranston's chest.

The stretching hand picked up the French telephone and carried it toward the bed. Cranston's quiet tones gave a number. A pause; then came a solemn response across the wire:

"Burbank speaking."

"Report." The voice was Cranston's no longer. It was the weird whisper of The Shadow.

For a moment, there was no reply. Evidently Burbank had been startled by the return of his missing chief. Then came the contact man's words:

"Report from Marsland."

The Shadow listened. As Burbank's voice continued, the blazing eyes seemed to sparkle with new splendor. When the contact man's statements had ended, The Shadow's whisper again sounded in the room:

"Instructions to all agents. Ready for constant duty. Send frequent reports..."

The Shadow's voice continued. Heartened by Burbank's opening report, the recovered fighter was starting his new campaign. Even though helpless, so far as his own individual action was concerned, The Shadow was determined to fight The Crime Master's schemes.

ONE hour later, Doctor Sayre, returning with the promised newspapers, found his patient slumbering peacefully. The physician placed the journals on the table beside the bed; he arranged bottles of medicine, left a brief note stating the time that he would return; then departed.

At that precise time, Cliff Marsland, agent of The Shadow, was making a telephone call from a phone booth in an East Side drug store. Through Burbank, he was receiving orders from The Shadow.

A grim smile showed on Cliff's face as the agent left the store. Keen of visage, square of chin, Cliff was a young man of predominating vigor. They called him a killer in the underworld. Cliff had never denied the reputation. Recognized as a free lance mobster of high skill, Cliff was able to serve The Shadow and at the same keep clear of suspicion.

There was a reason for Cliff's smile. Cliff had accomplished something during this week that he had been working on his own. Like other lone hands like himself, he had joined the parade. Cliff Marsland had become a minion of The Crime Master!

The Shadow had assigned Cliff to this duty prior to the battle of last Tuesday. But The Shadow had added the proviso that Cliff must delay the action until opportunity arose for association with important members of The Crime Master's huge band.

## THE CRIME MASTER

Cliff's chance had come within the last few days. Louie Harger, his forces depleted after the fight at the Associated Importing Company, had been looking for new sharpshooters. Cliff had learned of this; he was now a member of Louie's new crew.

Louie's mob had its hangout at the Black Ship, a dive as notorious as the Pink Rat. Here, Cliff had noted single members of the mob stroll out; one had left two nights ago; one had gone last night.

This evening, a call had come for Cliff. It was Louie; the gangleader had ordered his new henchmen to come over to his room at the Hotel Spartan. On his way to the appointment, Cliff had called Burbank. By a stroke of real fortune, he had received timely orders from The Shadow.

"If you are given an envelope –"

This had been the opening of Burbank's statement. Cliff was puzzling over the words as he paced along beneath the high structure of an East Side elevated. It was apparent that The Shadow must have gained some important knowledge that pertained to The Crime Master's methods.

THE Hotel Spartan was a decadent structure that fronted on the elevated. Cliff Marsland reached the building; he entered the frowsy lobby and inquired of the suspicious looking clerk if Louie Harger happened to be in his room.

"Your name's Marsland, ain't it?" questioned the clerk.

Cliff nodded.

"Go on up. Room three six four."

Cliff reached the room. He rapped at the door; a growl sounded. Cliff entered to find his new boss, Louie Harger, seated at a desk in the corner of the room.

"Hello, Cliff."

"Hello, Louie."

The greetings were terse. Though their motives and principles differed widely, Cliff Marsland and Louie Harger had certain characteristics in common. Both were men of determination. They possessed a hard-boiled manner that made them contemptuous of the small-fry denizens of the underworld.

It was plain that Louie was pleased with his new underling. The gangleader wasted no words as he handed an envelope to Cliff. Louie spoke in terse fashion.

"I want this passed along," he declared. "Give it to some heel. Tell the mug to open it, take the dough inside and deliver the inner envelope to the guy it's addressed to."

Cliff nodded.

"Be careful about the bird you pick," added Louie. "Grab some mug who's easy to scare. Tell him to move – and nudge him with a rod just to hurry him along. Get me?"

"Right."

## THE CRIME MASTER

Cliff thrust the envelope in his pocket. He smiled grimly as he left the hotel room. He knew the import of this envelope. It was a message from The Crime Master, passing through the hands of Louie Harger, for delivery to some other crook whom Louie did not even know!

Leaving the Hotel Spartan, Cliff started briskly toward the Black Ship. Making sure that he was not followed, he suddenly changed his course; doubling through an alleyway, he turned back along another street. He entered a blind alley; at the end of the cul-de-sac, he entered a doorway. Up one flight, Cliff came into a room and lighted a gas jet. This was Cliff's temporary abode.

The Shadow's agent produced the envelope. It was sealed; but that meant nothing. Cliff lighted a tin of canned heat and placed a tiny kettle over the flame. Soon water began to boil. Steam issued from the kettle's spout.

Holding the envelope in the vapor, Cliff loosened the flap. He found a ten-dollar bill inside the envelope; with it, an inner packet that bore the name:

### TURK BODELL

Cliff grinned. It was a certainty that any small-time skulker of the badlands would certainly deliver this note. Turk Bodell was head of a most insidious outfit. Safe blowers, pineapple throwers, men who handled explosives and stirred "soup" – these were the kind of minions whom Bodell governed.

Cliff steamed open the inner envelope. He found a folded sheet of heavy paper. Opening the message, he stared at the peculiar signature – an embossed seal that showed a scimitar behind a skull. Then Cliff read the orders.

NODDING thoughtfully, The Shadow's agent replaced the paper in the envelope. He sealed the wrapper carefully; added the banknote and placed both in the outer envelope. Cliff Marsland was in on the know. He had learned the vital point in The Crime Master's newest scheme – a stroke that was due to arrive to-night!

Cliff extinguished the flame beneath the kettle. He turned out the gas light. He was stealthy as he left his room. Reaching the alleyway, he headed westward. Soon he was clear of the badlands. Cliff arrived at a hotel; he entered and found a telephone booth. He called Burbank.

"Turk Bodell..." Cliff was terse in his report. "One o'clock... Wingroft Jewelry Store... Blowing the outer door – then a cleanup. There's more besides.

"It looks like The Crime Master is stealing an idea from Weston. No mobsters will be near there at one. The note tips off Bodell... Yes... Squads will move in at the zero hour... That's the idea; they're coming up just ahead of the police.

"Cars will pick up the burglars... Running fight all along... No concentration."

Cliff paused. He heard Burbank's voice telling him to stand by. Cliff hung up the receiver. He waited for five minutes. The telephone rang; Cliff was prompt in his answer. He had given Burbank the number of the pay station; he knew that the contact man had communicated with The Shadow.

"Hello... Yes..." Cliff grinned as he listened. His replies were brief affirmations until Burbank completed the orders. Then came Cliff's final utterance: "Instructions received."

## THE CRIME MASTER

The Shadow's agent left the telephone booth. Clutching the sealed envelope in his pocket, he started back on his eastward journey. It was not yet ten o'clock; three full hours remained in which to forestall crime.

From the note in his pocket, with its complete orders to Turk Bodell, Cliff had given The Shadow a perfect picture of to-night's lay. There would be others in The Crime Master's game besides Turk Bodell; but the head of the dynamite crew was the key man in the game.

Orders from The Shadow! They were instructions that Cliff could follow promptly. The new campaign had come into its own. The envelope that Cliff carried would go to its destination; but it would not further The Crime Master's plan.

Simply, but effectively, The Shadow had decided on a counterstroke. The disabled warrior was counting upon Cliff Marsland to pave the way in a thrust against crime!

### CHAPTER XV. SHATTERED CRIME

ELEVEN thirty. Squawky Sugler was sitting in a corner of the Pink Rat. The beady-eyed stool was watching those about him. His right hand clutched a bottle that was nearly full; his left kept making gestures toward his nostrils, in the manner of a coke-fiend.

Nothing new to-night. Moreover, Squawky was becoming nervous. He did not like to remain too long in any dive. He had been here nearly an hour; again, his quest for information seemed hopeless.

Squawky poured himself a drink; he gulped the liquor, then arose and shambled from the dive. At the other side of the room, another man arose and took a different exit. It was Cliff Marsland. The Shadow's agent had been watching the stool pigeon.

On the street, Squawky was pursuing his shambling way. He threw a furtive glance over his shoulder; that was all. Conversant with the ways of the badlands, Squawky knew that it was poor policy to keep on the lookout. Many a stoolie had created suspicion by being overcautious.

Two blocks – three – Squawky entered a ramshackle building and ascended a dimly lighted pair of stairs. He reached the darkness of an upper hall. He unlocked the door of a room. This was his abode.

The stool pigeon groped his way toward a gas jet. Squawky had taken his time in coming here; always, the stoolie shambled in his course. He felt positive that no one had been on his trail; it did not occur to him that some one might easily have beaten him to this destination.

A frightened, ratlike squeak came from Squawky's lips as something thrust against him in the dark. A firm hand had gripped his shoulder; the muzzle of a revolver was jammed against the stoolie's chest. A growling voice was ordering quiet.

Squawky nearly slumped to the floor. His captor thrust him backward. Squawky sat down suddenly upon the tumble-down cot that he used for a bed. He could sense a man standing above him; the point of the gun still rested in Squawky's ribs.

"No squawk out of you." It was Cliff Marsland's growl, but Squawky did not recognize the voice in the dark. "Unless you keep your trap shut, there's going to be one less stool pigeon working. Get that?"

"I ain't no stool –"

## THE CRIME MASTER

CLIFF'S harsh laugh ended Squawky's protest. The shambler subsided, gasping from sheer fear. He expected a bullet from the gun that pressed close to his heart.

"Get this." Cliff's growl was emphatic. "I know you for what you are – a stool. You worked for Joe Cardona; now that he's on the shelf, you're still squealing to the bulls.

"But that's not going to hurt you. Not if you listen to what I've got to say. I want you to do some squealing. If you do – it's all right. But if you don't –"

Cliff's statement ended with an emphatic pressure of the gun muzzle. Squawky whined. His captor laughed.

"You were at the Pink Rat," asserted Cliff. "All right. You heard something there. Get that? You heard a couple of mugs talking – you don't know who they were – and you wised to what's coming off.

"Somebody's going to get into the Wingroft Jewelry Store on Sixth Avenue. Who – how – you don't know. It's happening after midnight. Word has been passed along. You've got a hunch – a good one – that there's only one way to beat the game.

"That's a bunch of cops to be inside the joint, all ready. There's got to be a break in – that's the only way to beat it. You're afraid the crooks will wise up if the bulls are hanging around outside – but you know they can be stopped if a lot of coppers get inside, pronto. Do you get it?"

"Yes," gasped Squawky. "But I ain't no stool –"

He was making the protest, fearing this to be a trap. Cliff ended the plea.

"If you're not one," scoffed The Shadow's agent, "you're going to be tonight. There's an old store down at the corner. A telephone in the back room. That's where you're going – and I'll be on your trail.

"One peek over your shoulder – one sneaky move – it's curtains. Get that? You're going to call Police Commissioner Weston. You're going to tell him your name – and you'll say you're one of Cardona's stools. If you don't like it, you can have this –"

Again the thrust of the gun muzzle. Squawky whined his willingness.

"I ain't no stool," were his words, "but if I've got to squeal, I'll go ahead. Don't plug me – I'll do anything you say –"

"You'd better." Cliff was gruff. "There's a couple of heels that I want to get. They're going to be in that raid to-night – and I'm letting the bulls get them. That's why I'm using you, understand? Now get going."

Prompted by the gun muzzle, Squawky arose. The stool went through the hall; he descended the stairs. He could hear Cliff's footsteps behind him. He did not dare to turn around. Along the block, Squawky shambled with the knowledge that a gat was ready in back of him. He entered the store and went into the rear room.

Outside, he could hear the growl of the man who had forced him here. Cliff was buying cigarettes; he was talking with the old storekeeper. At times, Squawky felt sure, the man with the gun would edge toward the door of the back room. Squawky lost no time in dialing the number.

A brisk voice over the wire. Squawky knew it must be Weston. In a plaintive whisper, the stool pigeon announced his identity. He gave the information as Cliff had ordered. He could hear Weston's excited

## THE CRIME MASTER

exclamation. Squawky hung up.

Shambling from the back room, the stoolie found the old storekeeper alone. Squawky kept on his way. His captor had left, confident that Squawky would obey. Furtively, the stool pigeon drifted back to his abode.

MEANWHILE, Cliff Marsland was leaving the vicinity. He had given The Crime Master's envelope to a small-fry crook. He knew that the message had reached Turk Bodell. He had handled Squawky Sugler. Word had gone to the police commissioner. No one was the wiser – The Crime Master least of all.

Cliff did not know the identity of the mobleaders who had been assigned to cover up and aid Turk Bodell. He knew only that Louie Harger's outfit was out of it to-night. That was logical, since Louie's crew was undergoing new formation.

Numbers, positions – such factors did not matter now that the law could strike from the vital spot. Cliff Marsland sauntered toward the Black Ship to convene with other members of Louie Harger's gang.

ONE o'clock approached. At the table in his paneled room, The Crime Master was chuckling as he pointed to pieces arrayed upon the checkered board. A new map was underneath the squared sheet of glass. Henley was standing by, nodding, as his master spoke.

"Here, Henley, is the center." The Crime Master indicated an empty square; then placed his scrawny hand squarely in the middle of the board. "All these squares – a dozen – are empty. This game, Henley, is a surprise one!"

Again pointing, the old man motioned toward pieces of various colors that formed a wide-circled fringe about the vacancy. At one spot, he stopped and tapped red men that were on the squares.

"The raiders," he stated. "They are moving. Square to square, toward the center! They arrive" – the first red piece had reached its goal – "and the attack begins."

Leaving the center, The Crime Master began to move blues and greens. Into their spread ranks, he brought whites. He indicated skirmishes while he moved. The greens and blues were cutting inward, blocking the whites at every point.

"That will take time," cackled the old man. "Meanwhile, the reds again!" He retreated the raiders. Thanks to the interference of the blues and greens, a path was open. It divided into two sets of diagonal squares. "Either way! They will be safe. My vaults below will hold new spoils to-night!"

Henley nodded. There seemed no flaw in The Crime Master's procedure. The old man chuckled as he rearranged his men in their original order.

"This center," declared The Crime Master, "is the only spot of danger. But the whites could never be located there. Only that black piece – the one that I discarded – could be a menace to my plans.

"I did not break the black piece, Henley. We have eliminated The Shadow for the time, according to the reports that we received. Let us hope that he is dead; yet we have no proof of it. We know only that he is disabled. He may return to annoy us later on. To-night however, we need not worry."

THE red moves made by The Crime Master were being enacted while the old man talked. Near the vicinity of the Wingroft Jewelry Store, men were approaching in the manner of chance idlers. While some stationed themselves at the corner of Sixth Avenue, others approached a doorway on a side street.

## THE CRIME MASTER

Preparations followed. They were skillfully done. Less than a dozen seconds after one o'clock, a mighty boom reechoed in the side street. A heavy door was shattered. Raiders sprang to life.

Into the smoky opening they dashed. Jimmies wrenched open an ordinary door. Bull's-eye lanterns threw their powerful rays into the jewelry store. Eager rasps came from gangster lips.

Suddenly, revolvers answered. From counters, niches and ledges of barred windows sprang officers of the law. Outnumbering the bombers three to one, they had the strength to back their surprise attack.

Bullets pumped into the mobster ranks. Curses mingled with groans as hoodlums sprawled upon the tiled floor. Turk Bodell, squatty, vicious chieftain of the blasters, fired venomously from behind the men who had preceded him. Then, as bullets zipped in his direction, he broke and fled with the remnants of his shattered crew.

Whistles – sirens – police and patrol cars were approaching. Shots broke out from blocks close by. A touring car shot up with two police machines in pursuit. Turk and four henchmen sprang for the running board. Bullets from police cars flattened two of the underlings. Officers coming from the shattered door of the jewelry store picked off a pair clinging to the rear side of the touring car.

Only Turk, on the far side of the running board, was making a getaway. A powerful band of The Crime Master's raiders had been overwhelmed by the terrific odds mustered by the police.

Half a dozen detectives and policemen were on the sidewalk, with guns ready as they watched the police cars continue the chase. From the shattered door came an imposing figure. Police Commissioner Ralph Weston had taken personal charge. He was the commander of the thirty-odd officers who had been waiting within the jewelry store.

Elsewhere, scurrying minions of The Crime Master were presenting useless interference. Thanks to the readiness of the law, they were unable to beat the arriving police. Guided by sounds of gunfire, members of Weston's legion spread out through the neighborhood. Soon all of The Crime Master's minions were in flight.

TWO o'clock. The Crime Master, his fists crumpling the papers which they held, was reading reports that Henley had brought. The superfiend had met a Waterloo. Failure had followed previous successes. Beaten, scattered, the escaping minions who served him had sought the safety of the East Side.

Turk Bodell's outfit had been eliminated. Mobs were depleted. Snipers and cover up men had been slain or captured. Disaster had befallen all the forces that The Crime Master had used to-night.

A THIN smile showed upon a pale face that lay pillowed on a bed. Lips were moving as The Shadow spoke to Burbank. Already, Cliff Marsland, lingering late at the Black Ship, had heard reports of The Crime Master's failure. Clyde Burke, on late shift at the Classic, was relaying facts that the newspaper had gained from the police.

The Shadow had used the forces of the law to make a counterthrust. With Cliff Marsland's aid, he had sent the precise type of information that had encouraged Commissioner Weston to proper action.

Yet The Shadow was thinking of the future – not of the present. He knew the power of The Crime Master. Deeds of evil would be abated, thanks to this victory for the side of justice. But one defeat could not damage The Crime Master's coming plans.

## THE CRIME MASTER

The hidden overlord of evil still had hundreds of mobsmen at his beck. New minions would be groomed to replace those who had fallen. Craft – not brute power – was the only means by which the final curtain could be lowered on The Crime Master's drama.

While the supervillain made new plots, The Shadow would be planning. While The Crime Master schemed to gain new wealth, The Shadow would be finding ways to thwart him.

Eventually, these two must meet. Such accounting was inevitable. The Crime Master – superman of evil; The Shadow, superfoe of crime.

Theirs would be the final conflict. Mobsters and police, no matter how fierce their battles, were but ordinary pieces of The Crime Master's board.

## CHAPTER XVI. THE CAPTURE

ONE week had passed. All was quiet in scumland. Yet there was something ominous in the placid situation. Men of crime – great and small – were waiting, afraid to move.

The Crime Master had declared an armistice. Save for his message passers, none were performing active work. The generalissimo of evil was waiting until the triumph of the law had been forgotten.

Crooks, still in awe of The Crime Master's power, were doing no jobs of their own. Gorillas who needed funds found money from their leaders. Cash was plentiful in the underworld. It was advance payment of crime that was to come.

Since that one night when he had acted so efficiently, Cliff Marsland had not been called upon to serve as courier. This was a disappointment. Cliff knew – through advice received from Burbank – that somewhere among the string of message bearers, envelopes must come directly from The Crime Master.

Could Cliff discover one of these points where messages were infused into the underworld, he would be accomplishing the vital result that The Shadow sought. Cliff knew that his chief was recovering from grievous wounds. He was anxious to serve The Shadow to the utmost during this emergency.

All the while Cliff sensed that spies were at work. The Crime Master had stool pigeons – more capable than those of the police. Cliff was sure that they had ferreted out all informants who worked for the law. He felt, however, that his own position was secure.

The police – not The Shadow – had smashed the raid at the big jewelry store. The Crime Master's chosen investigators would be looking for those who had passed the word to Weston.

It was up to Squawky Sugler to take care of himself. Cliff had seen the furtive stool on several occasions since the big night. Each time, Squawky had been at the Pink Rat, feigning the part of a hop-head. Cliff could see through the pretense. He suspected that others would do the same, if Squawky were not careful.

TO-NIGHT, Cliff was at the Black Ship. He was chatting idly with members of Louie Harger's gang, when another of the outfit entered. The fellow – an ugly faced rowdy – dropped into a chair beside Cliff.

"Louie wants to see you," informed the newcomer. "Up at the hotel. Says to be there inside an hour."

"All right."



## THE CRIME MASTER

Cliff arose and left the Black Ship. There was no need to call Burbank until after he had seen Louie. Twenty minutes later, Cliff was knocking at the door of the gangleader's room in the Hotel Spartan.

"Come in."

Cliff responded to the growl. He found Louie seated at the corner table. The gangleader produced one of The Crime Master's envelopes.

"Pass it along, Cliff," ordered Louie. "Same way you did before."

Cliff nodded. He left with the envelope in his pocket. He made for his own place – the little room in the house off the cul-de-sac.

Here, by the vapor from the kettle spout, Cliff steamed open the outer envelope. He found a ten-dollar bill; an inner envelope, sealed, addressed to Turk Bodell. Cliff steamed the second wrapper. He unfolded a sheet of paper. He stared. It bore no message whatever. The paper was blank!

A sudden suspicion rankled Cliff's brain. He turned toward the door. Paper and envelope fluttered from his hands as they moved upward. Covering him, Cliff saw a pair of revolver muzzles. Looming smoke-wagons, they were formidable weapons. The men who bore them were members of Louie Harger's crew – rowdies whom Cliff had left at The Black Ship!

Cliff expected death. It did not come. The entering men had been waiting behind a door at the other end of the hall; they were still silent as they backed their prisoner toward a corner of the room. Cliff realized that they were expecting some other arrival. One minute later, footsteps sounded on the stairs. Louie Harger appeared at the door.

"We got him," growled one of the mobsters. "He's a phony, right enough, Louie."

The gangleader nodded. He motioned to his underlings to bring Cliff through the door. With the muzzles of .45s jostling against his ribs, Cliff descended the stairs. He was forced into a car that Louie had brought into the blind alley.

Cliff found himself between two mobsters in the rear seat. He made no move. The car followed a circuitous course, avoiding busy thoroughfares. It pulled up at the rear of what appeared to be an abandoned garage. Cliff was dragged out, shoved through a door and cornered in a room where only the glare of Louie's flashlight furnished illumination.

A growl from the gangleader. Cliff's captors set to work. In a few minutes, The Shadow's agent lay bound and gagged upon the floor. The light clicked out. Helpless, Cliff heard the rumble of Louie's motor. The gangleader and his henchmen had abandoned their prisoner.

Ten minutes passed. A smooth motor purred from in back of the garage. Footsteps clicked on the stone floor. The rays of a flashlight were focused upon Cliff. The new light went out; powerful arms raised Cliff and hoisted him like a sack. Out through the doorway, Cliff was tumbled into the broad tonneau of a limousine.

THE big man who had come to get the prisoner took the wheel and the large car moved forward. Jolts rolled Cliff to the floor. Trussed, he had no way of telling where the car was going. When it finally stopped, the driver came to get Cliff. Hanging from the big man's shoulder, Cliff's only impressions were those of a paved courtyard and the rear entrance to a large house.

## THE CRIME MASTER

Through passages – then a doorway. Cliff tumbled from his carrier's shoulders and plopped helpless in a large arm chair. Blinking in the mellow light that pervaded a paneled room, he found himself staring at one of the strangest creatures whom he had ever seen.

An old man, his grayish countenance topped by a shock of white hair; sharp eyes, with slitted lids that flanked a thin, peaked nose; lips that showed fangs as they formed a snarling smile – these were Cliff's impressions.

No further explanation was needed. The Shadow's agent knew that he was face to face with the evil genius who dominated all the underworld. He had been brought to The Crime Master's lair; the gloating fiend before him was The Crime Master himself.

"Henley!" A solemn-faced man stepped forward as the old man spoke. "Bring me the bottle – the cloth – and the knife."

The objects appeared. With an evil glare, The Crime Master soaked a rag with a brownish liquid. He applied the cloth to Cliff's face. A nauseating odor stifled the prisoner. Cliff felt his senses swimming.

It was not chloroform that The Crime Master had used, yet it was something even more potent. Though Cliff retained consciousness, he felt a helpless weariness. He knew, dully, that The Crime Master was cutting his bonds; yet he had no strength to offer once he was free.

Again the soaked cloth; this time, Cliff felt strangely detached from his body. All was like a dream; this paneled room; the old man with whitened hair; a voice that came from far away.

The Crime Master had seated himself at a table which Cliff had not previously noticed. On the level from which Cliff observed it, the board showed odd pieces that looked like chess men: red, blue, green and white. Though his vision was blurred, Cliff could make out the colors. He saw The Crime Master add a large, black man to the others.

"The Shadow!" The old man's lips formed a venomous snarl as The Crime Master turned toward Cliff. "He has sought to thwart me, even since my cunning eliminated him from the game. While I am planning, he is recuperating.

"It is well." There was a sudden easing of the old man's tone. "Since The Shadow wishes to move upon my board, he shall have the opportunity. Through you – the one who served him – I shall bring The Shadow back into the game."

THE CRIME MASTER motioned to Henley. As the servant approached, the old man also arose; together, they advanced to Cliff's chair. The prisoner raised his hands in feeble opposition; then came the sopping rag upon his face. Groggily, Cliff slumped.

The Crime Master and his minion slid Cliff's chair forward to the table. Cliff's weak hands rested on the edge of the checkered board. When his eyes reopened, Cliff found himself staring, dazed, at the map beneath the checkered squares. He saw claws – the old man's hands – shifting the pieces away.

"Here" – The Crime Master pointed with a bony finger as his lips formed a honeyed purr – "is a problem for The Shadow. This square represents the side of the Apex Silk Warehouse. Here, in this square, is the rear of a house across the street.

## THE CRIME MASTER

"My men can move from square to square. There is a secret tunnel, hollowed by my workers, beneath the street. Once, not long ago" – there was sarcasm in The Crime Master's tone, an irony which Cliff was too groggy to detect – "you intercepted one of my messages. You sent information to The Shadow. That, I presume, was your duty.

"You have new information which I have just given you. The Shadow, tonight, can find my tunnel. To–night, you understand, not later! For my men will occupy that house at midnight."

Slitted eyes were glaring at Cliff Marsland. Ruled by The Crime Master's new tone, Cliff could only nod. Woe to the Shadow! That was the point which the old man was impressing. The voice seemed to carry a commanding power.

"Listen to me." The Crime Master's tone came as a suggestion, not as a threat. It was artfully designed to sway Cliff's groggy brain. "You will send word to The Shadow. You will tell him of The Crime Master's scheme. Do not say that you are a prisoner; that would divert him from the great work that he can accomplish. Do not think of yourself. You will be safe. You must tell The Shadow how he can thwart The Crime Master."

Venom had ended. Cliff, staring at the board, heard the voice, but no longer looked toward the old man's face. By adopting an impersonal speech, by appealing to Cliff's loyalty, The Crime Master had forced one thought upon The Shadow's agent.

Dully, Cliff realized that he had learned something. Under the influence of the powerful drug which The Crime Master had used, Cliff could think of but one basic matter, the discovery that had been revealed to him. The fact that he was a prisoner faded from his thoughts.

The Crime Master motioned. Henley brought a telephone and placed it on the table. The Crime Master stared keenly as Cliff's hands fumbled with the dial. Then, as Cliff held the receiver to his ear, a voice clicked over the wire:

"Burbank speaking."

"Marsland reporting." Cliff's tone steadied, mechanically. "Old house opposite side of Apex Silk Warehouse. Entrance from the next block –"

The Crime Master was whispering in Cliff's ear. Automatically, Cliff repeated the words that were thrust upon him.

"House number seventeen eleven. Tunnel from rear of cellar. House empty. Will be occupied at midnight..."

"Report received," came Burbank's click.

Abruptly, The Crime Master took the receiver from Cliff's yielding hand. He ended the conversation by hanging up. Cliff stared; a sudden flash of antagonism showed upon his face. Then Henley bobbed forward and thrust the soaked rag over his mouth and nose. Cliff gasped and sank back in his chair.

"Summon Woodling," ordered The Crime Master.

THE big man who had brought Cliff appeared at Henley's call. A powerful ruffian, he looked the part of a servant. Obediently, Woodling gathered up Cliff's collapsed form and carried it from the room.

## THE CRIME MASTER

The Crime Master chuckled. He carefully placed blue pieces on the board, surrounding the square that indicated the house. He beckoned to Henley.

"I suspected that The Shadow had an agent," he declared. "Turk Bodell encountered trouble; therefore, I chose to have Harger watch the man who had relayed the message. It was this fellow Marsland.

"Through him, I have reached The Shadow. The man to whom Marsland has just spoken was not The Shadow. That was another agent; and he means nothing to us. The Shadow has had time to recover from his injuries; the fact that he was in the game last week is proof enough.

"Look at this trap!" The Crime Master was gleeful as he swept his hand toward the board. "It will imprison The Shadow. He will be out of the great game which I plan for to-morrow night!

"Midnight! That is not the time my agents shall occupy the old house. That story was a blind. At midnight, The Shadow will be a helpless prisoner. It is better to bottle him, rather than to fight him. I can hold him as long as I please. Then, after to-morrow night, I can deal with him like a rat in a trap!"

The Crime Master studied the board; then, from a box he drew out a white piece. He pointed to its knobbed top. It bore the letter W.

"This stands for Commissioner Weston," scoffed The Crime Master. "He has taken personal supervision of the campaign against me. He is more dangerous than was Joe Cardona.

"I believe that The Shadow gave Cardona clues. I believe that Weston also received a tip. Very well; he shall have another – one that he will follow – one that will make him my helpless hostage.

"Your last report, Henley, tells of a stool pigeon named Squawky Sugler – a sneak whom one of my spies has placed under suspicion. We shall use him as the bait, Henley. Take this new order to Louie Harger."

Henley nodded. He brought out a pad and pencil. While The Crime Master dictated, the secretary wrote in shorthand. The Crime Master's words were broken by intermittent chuckles.

The fiend was plotting at his best. By a double stroke of preparation he had paved the way to nullify the only enemies who could counteract his coming crime!

## CHAPTER XVII. THE SHADOW TRAPPED

"PLENTY of rest to-night. To-morrow, perhaps, you can leave your bed."

Such was the advice of Doctor Rupert Sayre. He was giving it to his patient, who lay quietly in bed, with half-closed eyes. Sayre looked for a response. There was none. He feared that his patient had overtaxed himself. He knew that Lamont Cranston had been making telephone calls a short while before.

Thinking that the wounded man had gone to sleep, Sayre left the room. Immediately, the eyes of The Shadow opened. His left hand stretched forward and plucked the telephone from its hook. The voice of Cranston gave a number.

"Burbank speaking," said a solemn voice.

"Further report from Marsland." It was The Shadow's sinister tone.

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"No report," came Burbank's response.

A pause. The eyes of The Shadow flashed. Burbank had informed his chief of the abrupt ending which had followed Cliff Marsland's call. The Shadow was pondering upon the circumstances.

"Orders to Vincent." The Shadow's voice began anew. "He must find a suitable place in the block where the old house is located. Remain on watch."

"Instructions received."

The telephone clattered on its hook. The Shadow rested against the pillows. Minutes passed – ten – fifteen – then, as though strengthened by the interval, the tall form moved. The left hand pressed the light switch by the bed.

Doctor Sayre, passing in the hallway, noted the darkness at the bottom of the door. He decided that his patient had decided to go to sleep. He failed to hear the faint sounds of motion that came from within the room.

The Shadow was preparing for a journey. Dressed, he was at the door of the closet. His one hand brought out the blood-clotted cloak. It followed by removing the hat. The table drawer slid open. One by one, The Shadow loaded and withdrew the automatics.

Sayre, in deep concentration at the desk in his office, failed to witness the phenomenon which occurred shortly afterward. Like a materializing thing of night, a tall figure came softly from the darkness of the corridor. The Shadow, equipped for battle, stood gazing at the physician's back.

Stealthily, The Shadow moved across the office. His tall form paused, wavering; then regained its glide. Noiselessly, The Shadow reached the waiting room. The click of the outer door – a sound so slight that Sayre never heard it – was the final token of his departure.

THE house with the number 1711 was an unpretentious building in a secluded block. Many of the old residences on this street were vacant. Harry Vincent, trusted agent of The Shadow, had gained access to an old house diagonally opposite the one which he had been deputed to watch.

Harry had noticed no one in the street. Informed of all facts, he was keenly observant. He noted that the old house was dimly lighted. Evidently, it had been arranged to appear like an occupied residence.

Other eyes than Harry's were upon that house. The Shadow had arrived in the darkened street. He noted the gloomy glow that came from windows on both the first floor and the second. He, like his agent, watched for prowlers. There were none.

Midnight! That was the hour when crooks were supposed to occupy this place. There was an hour yet until midnight. The Shadow, knowing that the way was clear, approached the steps.

The door of the house was dark. The splotch that The Shadow's figure formed was something that Harry Vincent did not detect. The door opened; yet the skill of The Shadow was still in action. No gleam escaped from the gloomy vestibule as The Shadow sidled through the opening.

The Shadow had picked the lock. It had not been formidable. Nor was the second lock – that of the inner door – a problem. In the hallway, The Shadow paused. Then, with a soft laugh, almost inaudible, he moved upward instead of down.

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From room to room, the cloaked investigator made a brief inspection of the poorly furnished second floor. He descended and went through the rooms of the ground floor. Nothing escaped his notice. The house looked like a special set-up – the very spot from which a tunnel would be made beneath the street.

A projecting portion of the wall attracted The Shadow's attention. It was the indication of an old fireplace, now walled shut. The Shadow tapped; he could tell from the sound that his surmise was correct.

Moving to the hallway, The Shadow discovered a stairway leading to the cellar. His flashlight glimmered. He descended into a stone-walled basement, like a strongroom – ceiling reinforced with metal sheathing. This made The Shadow pause. It showed that this portion of the house had undergone reconstruction that fitted well with crime.

The Shadow's light, its glare a tiny, circular beam, was cutting a swath to the rear of the cellar. Beyond a narrow archway, The Shadow's keen eyes saw a heavy door that evidently led to a rear compartment. This was his objective.

The Shadow reached his goal. His hand tried the knob of the door. It refused to yield. The pick replaced the light. With his one usable hand, The Shadow pried at the lock.

An odd click. Like a flash, The Shadow sprang backward. His quickness would ordinarily have saved him from the trap that he had struck, for it was but a single leap to the archway through which he had come.

The sudden strain, however, was too great for his injured body. The Shadow's leg gave; his body crumpled on the floor. Then came the smash as a steel curtain crashed downward in the archway. The Shadow was trapped!

THE flashlight glimmered from the floor. While its rays circled, The Shadow surveyed his prison. He was caught in a space less than a dozen feet square. The steel curtain was formidable. The door ahead offered the only outlet.

Rising weakly, The Shadow limped toward the door. He worked with pick. The door was a tough obstacle, but it gave. The Shadow forced the barrier with his left shoulder. He staggered into a larger compartment.

So far as escape was concerned, this offered nothing.

Except for a disused furnace, an empty coal bin, a few lengths of pipe and a switch-box for electric lights, the place was deserted. The walls were irregular; one showed a bulge, the other an alcove; but all were of stone and mortar.

There was no sign of a tunnel. The Shadow realized that such talk had been a hoax. He saw the purpose of The Crime Master. New deeds of evil were coming; rather than risk men and cause commotion by an open battle, the superfiend had resorted to this trap.

The flashlight's beam began to waver. The Shadow's strength was on the wane. The light steadied. Seizing a piece of pipe, The Shadow approached the protruding portion of the wall. He delivered half a dozen strokes against the mortar. Cracks showed bricks beneath. Then the pipe clattered to the stone floor. The Shadow was exhausted.

Sinking downward, The Shadow laid his flashlight on the floor. His hand raised the fringe of his cloak toward the slouch hat. His teeth ripped at the lining. Powder – black in color – sifted into The Shadow's glove.

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The same process was repeated, at a different spot along the hem. This time a grayish powder appeared. The grains mixed. The Shadow let the powder trickle by the spot where he had hacked away the mortar.

Together, those powders formed a powerful explosive. Moistened by a liquid from a vial which The Shadow carried, they could cause much damage. The vial appeared. Its precious drops fell. Then, with a final effort, The Shadow staggered through the doorway, to escape the blast.

It came, but with fizzing, deadened noise. There was a clatter of falling mortar that seemed louder than the squibby explosion. The Shadow's form arose from the floor. With flashlight showing the way, the trapped invader approached the wall.

Some bricks had crumbled. A small hole showed; the cavity was but inches in diameter. Weakly, The Shadow laughed. He knew the reason for the unexpected failure. The powder had been soaked by blood, seeping down through the cloak on the night of The Shadow's momentous fight.

The explosive had lost its efficacy. There was the beginning of a break through this portion of the wall. Possessed of his accustomed strength, The Shadow could have used a piece of pipe to batter away at the bricks.

That was impossible at present. With one arm alone; with legs that were exhausted, The Shadow lacked strength for heavy effort. His left hand seemed weary even as it swept the light about the stone-walled room.

Out went the flashlight. The Shadow's form moved wearily. It staggered forward in the darkness. The extended left hand stopped the body as it struck the further wall. Groping as he managed to maintain his footing, The Shadow found the electric light switch.

The gloved hand alone seemed possessed with life as it pulled the switch down; then pushed it up. Again that motion; but with different interval. Then the hand apparently became intrigued with this new work.

DOWN – up; down – up; down – a pause – then up. The process continued while seconds ticked onward. Grimly, The Shadow seemed intent upon his work. Silently, he steadied in the effort as though utilizing every ounce of remaining strength.

At last came the finish. The switch clicked upward and stopped, after the long succession. The Shadow had performed the operation nearly fifty times.

The gloved hand relaxed. The black cloak swished as The Shadow sprawled to the floor. The tall figure stretched upon the stone floor. A weary gasp came from invisible lips. As he had settled upon the pillows at Sayre's so did The Shadow rest his head upon his arm.

Minute followed minute. Midnight arrived. On the street outside, prowling figures approached the old house. Cautious men unlocked the door that The Shadow had closed behind him. They entered and descended to the basement. They flashed lights on the lowered curtain of steel.

Harry Vincent had seen the prowlers enter. They were the first whom he had observed. Still watching, he saw the lights of the old house click off one by one. Then he noticed that the men were coming down the steps. They had locked the door behind them.

Five minutes later, Harry left his observation post. He hurried along the street until he reached a small corner lunch room. He entered and went to a telephone in the corner. He called Burbank.

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Harry's mouth was close to the receiver. Only Burbank, at the other end of the line, could hear the low words that he uttered. His call finished, Harry Vincent looked grimly about him.

Satisfied that none of The Crime Master's minions were stationed here, The Shadow's agent departed. Crossing the street, he slackened his pace and moved with caution as he proceeded in the direction of the old house.

BACK in the office. Doctor Rupert Sayre had finished his work. Entering the corridor of his apartment, he paused at his patient's door. He heard no sound; he smiled, satisfied that his convalescent visitor was asleep.

Doctor Sayre was correct in that assumption. The Shadow was asleep. His resting place, however, was not a comfortable bed. It was the stone floor of the old cellar which The Crime Master had provided as The Shadow's lodging!

### CHAPTER XVIII. ANOTHER PRISONER

"A GENTLEMAN to see you, commissioner."

"At this hour?" Commissioner Weston looked up from the desk where he was working. "What does he want, Grady?"

"Something confidential, sir. He wouldn't give his name."

"Very well. Tell him I shall see him in a few minutes."

Commissioner Ralph Weston was in the little office which formed a room of his apartment. It was one o'clock in the morning; yet he was still at work on problems of crime. There was a reason.

Earlier, there had been a slaying in the underworld. The police had found the bullet-riddled body of a scrawny mobster in a slovenly room of an old house. Inspector Klein, covering the case, had recognized the dead man as a stool pigeon – Squawky Sugler.

On Sugler, Klein had found a crumpled sheet of paper. It was this penciled slip that puzzled Weston. It bore an odd shaped diagram that looked like the floor plan of a house.

Weston was sure that this chart was a clue to coming crime. During the past week, the police had confirmed their belief that a supermind was controlling gangdom. The law had come to recognize the existence of an overlord of evil whom gangland knew as The Crime Master.

Did this penciled scrawl represent information that Squawky Sugler had gained? All stools had been ordered to learn whatever facts they could concerning the master mind who controlled the underworld. The Crime Master's previous efforts had been well-mapped attacks upon buildings where wealth was stored.

Yet a single paper – with plan alone – meant nothing. Weston continued his hopeless study of the chart; then, suddenly, his curiosity began to act. He wondered about the visitor who was waiting. Thrusting the penciled paper into a desk drawer, Weston summoned Grady.

"Bring the man in," ordered the commissioner.

Grady went out; he returned with a solemn-faced chap who wore an overcoat buttoned around his neck and who handled his hat in servile fashion as he fumbled it between his hands.



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THE visitor was perhaps forty-five years of age; his appearance was unimpressive; but he stood with worried expression until Grady had left at the commissioner's order. Then he approached.

"I have come from Mr. Dagron, sir," he announced, in a polite and methodical tone, "From Mr. Ganford Dagron. I am his secretary –"

"Ganford Dagron," interposed Weston. "You mean the famous financier who retired a few years ago?"

"Yes, sir," replied the visitor. "Mr. Dagron gave up active interests after the government ruled against further railroad mergers."

"I remember," declared Weston, tersely. "What does Mr. Dagron want?"

"He is in great fear, sir," declared the visitor, in an awed tone. "He has received some strange warnings. He has not told me the nature of the message; but it worries him. He stays in his library, sir, at night; he does not retire. This evening, he was very troubled. At midnight, he called me and ordered me to come to you. He says that he must see you, commissioner, at once; he added that your visit must be made with strictest secrecy."

"I came in the limousine, sir; but I left it around the corner, at Mr. Dagron's order. He did not wish his car to be seen in front of this apartment. He was afraid, even, to telephone to you. He asks that you come with me; he wants no other officers to accompany us –"

"Wait a moment!" snapped Weston. "What does Ganford Dagron mean by giving all these instructions? He must be a doddering old fool, to think that he can impose all these conditions without explanation."

"He is quite alert, sir," assured the solemn-faced visitor, as he leaned forward on Weston's desk. "You see, he has many valuables in the house. I think that he fears his protective measures are not sufficient. Some one – I believe – is seeking to rob him!"

A pen projected from an inkwell on Weston's desk; near it was a pad. Dagron's secretary reached for these; while Weston watched, the man began to draw lines.

"The house is like this, sir," explained the secretary. "The living room is here; the library – where Mr. Dagron stays – is next to it. This corridor leads –"

An exclamation burst from Weston's lips. The commissioner's eyes were staring. Line for line, room for room, Dagron's secretary was drawing a replica of the plan which had been found on Squawky Sugler!

"Stop!" Weston opened the desk drawer. He drew out the penciled sheet. "Is this the complete plan of the ground floor at Dagron's home?"

The standing man nodded. He appeared dumfounded. Weston tore away the sheet on which the secretary was making marks; he added it to the penciled paper.

"I'm going with you," he announced. "Come along."

Summoning Grady, Weston called for hat and coat. He spoke terse words to his man:

"I'm going to the home of Ganford Dagron. I shall probably be late returning. Don't wait up for me Grady."

"Very well, commissioner."

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WESTON left with his visitor. They found the limousine waiting around the corner. A man was at the wheel; he drove northward and finally reached a street where an old mansion showed among smaller buildings. The chauffeur drove to the rear; the car rolled through a gate and stopped in an old-fashioned courtyard. The secretary ushered the commissioner into the rear entrance.

They went through a passage. Weston's conductor rapped upon a door. A cracked voice responded:

"What is it, Henley?"

"The police commissioner, sir."

"Have him enter. At once."

Henley opened the door. Weston stepped into an old-fashioned library, where rows of towering bookcases lined the walls to the ceiling. An old man, with shocky white hair, was seated at a chess board. He waved Weston to a chair.

"I understand that you are worried," remarked Weston. He had recognized Ganford Dagron immediately upon entering. "I have come to learn the trouble."

"I am greatly worried," admitted the old man, in a crackly tone. "I have enemies – terrible enemies – men who seek my life, as well as my treasure. This" – he pointed to the chess board – "is my solace. Only by concentration upon such a game can I escape my troubles."

Weston smiled; Dagron noticed the expression.

"Crime threatens, yet I play a game." Dagron chuckled. "You think that is odd? Not at all, commissioner. Not at all. Crime is a game." The old man's eyes were flashing through their slitted lids. "A great game, commissioner – greater than chess. Yet" – Dagron paused thoughtfully – "chess and crime have much in common."

Rising, the old man stalked toward the bookcase. He opened it inward, like a door. He motioned to Weston to follow him into a lighted room that adjoined the library. Intrigued, despite his perplexity, the commissioner followed. The door swung shut after they had entered. They stood in a room with paneled walls; looking, Weston could not discern the place through which they had entered.

"Look at this board, commissioner." Dagron pointed to a table with a glass, checkered surface. "Here – take this chair. You will be interested, I assure you."

The commissioner surveyed the board before him. He was puzzled as he noticed the map beneath the glass. He realized that it showed streets and buildings. He was also astonished by the array of pieces on the board. Reds, blues and greens – all were of a shape. But among them were white men of a different formation.

"Interesting, eh?" Dagron chortled. "It should be – to you, commissioner. There in the center is the vault room of the Impregnable Trust Company. Three weeks ago, a shipment of Colombian platinum was stored there. The value of the metal – I believe I am correct – is four million, seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars."

Weston looked up. He stared at Dagron's face. It seemed gray and fiendish in this light. Weston wondered if the old man were insane. He looked at the board again, as Ganford Dagron pointed.

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"The reds are prepared to move," crackled the old man. "They are raiders – swift and certain. They are protected by the mobs – the greens – by the spies and snipers, who are blue.

"Against them" – Dagron paused in sneering fashion – "are the whites – pitiful whites who represent the forces of the law."

The fascination of the board had caught Weston unaware. The commissioner was studying the obvious perfection of the game before him. It was only of a sudden that he realized who must be its author. Straightening, he flung his challenge to the gloating fiend before him.

"You!" blurted the commissioner. "You – you are The Crime Master!"

DAGRON leered. Weston's hand shot toward his pocket. It stopped at sight of Dagron's eyes. Turning, Weston saw that the door had opened. Henley and another man – Weston recognized the chauffeur – were covering him with revolvers.

"I have capable assistants," snarled Dagron. "Henley – my secretary – was the one who hoaxed you here. Woodling – who serves as my chauffeur – is equally able. He, my dear commissioner, will be your jailor."

The men approached. Woodling thrust his revolver into the small of Weston's back while Henley calmly produced a revolver from the commissioner's pocket.

"I am The Crime Master." Ganford chuckled gleefully. "My aim in life is wealth – possession. Once I was known as a giant among financiers.

"Then my practices were declared illegal. Why? Not justly, but because my ways of accumulating wealth were too gigantic. In five years longer, I would have become the overlord of merged industries. I would have commanded billions – not mere millions.

"I was prevented. So I went back to millions. Preposterous laws had been passed to stop my plans for pyramiding wealth. So I resolved to proceed in defiance of the law. The barriers were down, so far as I was concerned. I spent thousands upon thousands in organizing crime. To-day, I am The Crime Master!"

The old man was approaching Weston as he spoke. He fairly spat the final words into the commissioner's face. Then, with a sweep of his hands, he ordered Woodling to new duty as he pointed a scrawny finger toward his new prisoner.

"Take him away!" shrilled Dagron. "Take him away! Keep him safely, Woodling. He is my hostage."

The old man's mirth trailed into a maddened cackle. Derisively, The Crime Master voiced the triumph of his capture. The chief official of the law was in his power. Already, minions had sent in the report of The Shadow's trapping.

AFTER Woodling had marched Weston from the room, Ganford Dagron settled in his chair behind the checkered table. As he surveyed the layout for his coming game, he spoke aloud to Henley.

"The police may visit us," chuckled The Crime Master. "But what if they do? You, Henley, will remain out of sight. I shall tell them that I have no secretary. They will believe that my name was used as a lure.

"That is the advantage, Henley, of my reputation. The police! Bah! Outside of Cardona, who is still disabled, and this man Weston, who is my prisoner, there is none among them who would have brains enough to doubt

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my integrity. The proof? We had it to-night – when Weston, himself, came to visit me.

"As for this crime" – the old man waved his hand above the board – "the very stupendousness of it serves as a protection. Compared with the Impregnable Trust Company's vault room, that of the Titan Trust was a toy bank. Moreover, we are dealing with heavy metal, Henley. The very weight of those platinum bars should render them safe from ordinary robbers."

Again, the old man cackled. He tapped the white pieces on the board; the reminder caused him to loose final derision toward the law.

"Fools!" he exclaimed. "They know that The Crime Master is mighty – that he must possess a wizard's brain such as my own. Yet they will not suspect me. They know that The Crime Master pursues mighty schemes; but they will overlook the one opportunity for unparalleled robbery – that wealth in the vault of the Impregnable Trust.

"No one would suspect either fact!" The Crime Master paused; a cunning smile showed on his evil face. "Yes – there is one who would suspect. One – The Shadow. But he is helpless within my mesh!"

While Henley, first of The Crime Master's own aids, was harkening to the babbling of his chief, Woodling, the second trusted servant, was listening to palaver of a different sort. Woodling had imprisoned Weston in a cell-like room beneath his master's library.

Behind a wicketed door, the commissioner was speaking to his jailer. He was studying the hard face of the servant while he presented persuasive argument. Weston had classed Ganford Dagon, The Crime Master, as a grasping miser. He was basing his plea to Woodling on the offer of cash.

"Here is a check" – Weston paused to draw book and pen from his pocket – "that will be cashed without question. It is my first payment for my release. Do you understand?"

Woodling nodded while Weston scrawled.

"I do not ask to be released to-night," resumed the commissioner. "To-morrow will be soon enough – after you have obtained your money. Take it to the bank; they will pay you five thousand."

He handed the check through the wicket. Woodling nodded as he read the amount.

"Then return," ordered Weston. "I shall have another check – the next one for ten thousand. It will be yours the moment that I am free.

"Keep me here until late to-morrow afternoon. That will lull this fiend you call your master – the man whom you must cease to serve. Remember, I guarantee you immunity from the law, if you will do your part to aid me in combating crime. Do you understand?"

"To-morrow." Woodling nodded. "I cash this check. I receive another. Ten thousand. I understand."

The Crime Master's minion departed. Commissioner Weston seated himself on a small cot. A smile appeared beneath his trim mustache.

Weston was confident that he had succeeded with his bribe. By to-morrow night, he felt sure, he would be free to thwart The Crime Master's greatest robbery.

## CHAPTER XIX. FORCES PREPARE

SHORTLY before five o'clock the next afternoon, a quiet, chubby-faced man was seated by the window of an inner office. High above uptown Manhattan, he was gazing complacently at the hazy sky-line of the great city.

"Mr. Burke is here, Mr. Mann."

A stenographer had entered. The chubby-faced man nodded. He ordered the girl to admit the visitor. A keen-visaged chap of wiry build appeared. He nodded to Mann and took a chair beside the desk.

Men of a totally different type, these two were in the same service. Rutledge Mann, easy-going investment broker; Clyde Burke, enterprising reporter of the New York Classic – both were agents of The Shadow.

Where Mann served in passive capacity, as information gainer and contact maker, Burke, like Marsland and Vincent, belonged on the firing line. Each, however, was important. This fact was about to prove itself.

Rutledge Mann produced an envelope. He handed it to Clyde Burke. The reporter opened it to find a message in code. He read the blue-inked lines; then the writing faded. Such was the way with The Shadow's messages. They disappeared after short contact with the air.

Clyde Burke nodded as he looked toward Rutledge Mann. It was plain that the investment broker had received a message similar to his own. They were free to discuss the subject.

"These clippings impressed me." Mann drew printed items from his desk. "They are duplicates of the ones I forwarded. That Colombian platinum, Burke, offers great opportunity for criminals."

"Provided they can get it," agreed Burke, grimly. "I have made a final search of the back files at the Classic. I find – as I intimated in my last report through you – that the shipment from Colombia was arranged several months ago."

"Then people in New York would have easily gained knowledge of it –"

"Yes. Here is the situation, Mann. Certain European governments require platinum. Russia controls almost the entire European output. Purchasers in the countries that have no trade agreement with the Soviet government must look elsewhere.

"Colombia produces platinum. A New York Syndicate arranged to purchase this vast supply. They are holding the metal to sell in Europe. Most of it is already ordered; small shipments are to begin before the end of this week."

Mann nodded.

"So far as crime is concerned," asserted Burke, "it is a natural. And yet –"

"No one would suspect it."

"Exactly. That is, the police would not suspect it. But –"

Mann smiled. He and Burke, as agents of The Shadow, had been trained to look for situations such as this. They had both been informed by The Shadow of The Crime Master's power and ways. Separately, they had

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been seeking to find indications of crime possibilities. Millions in platinum, despite the supposed security of the precious metal, would be an incentive to The Crime Master.

THE telephone rang on Mann's desk. The investment broker raised the receiver. He spoke quietly; then handed the instrument to Burke. It was Burbank on the wire. The call from this contact man indicated orders more recent than those that had come through Mann.

"Yes..." Clyde acknowledged Burbank's statements. "Yes... Vincent... I shall go there right away..."

Hanging up, Clyde took his leave without a statement to Mann. The reporter's face wore a puzzled expression. These new orders were both brief and odd. He was to report to Harry Vincent, at an obscure store known as the Century Accessory Exchange. Clyde had never heard of the place before; but the location was significant. The Century Accessory Exchange was situated in the same block as the Impregnable Trust Company.

As Clyde neared his destination, he saw that the accessory shop was caticornered to the Trust Company building. The block was unpretentious except for the Impregnable Trust Company, which towered, solid and imposing, on a corner.

There were garages in the block; perhaps this was why the accessory store had been opened there. Clyde noticed that truck supplies predominated, as he stared at the display on the sidewalk and in the window. Piled stacks of heavy truck tires looked like massive doughnuts.

Clyde spied Harry Vincent in the shop. He entered. Harry turned to shake hands; then introduced Clyde to a weary-faced man who was standing by the counter.

"I'm buying the place, Clyde," said Harry, with a smile. "This fellow – the present owner – seems glad to get out of the business."

"Things are slow," explained the weary man. "But a young fellow like you ought to make a go of it. Well, Mr. Vincent, we've finished the arrangements. The place is yours."

The man strolled from the store. Harry motioned to Clyde. The two walked out to the sidewalk. Harry pointed to the stacks of tires. There were two of them, near the curb.

"This fellow Chalmers whom you just met," stated Harry, "tells me that he has to bring in those stacks every night. A nice job, because they're rimmed. Look at the size of them, Clyde."

The reporter walked to the nearer stack. Heavy truck tires, of large diameter, they formed a cylinder nearly five feet high.

"I told Chalmers," resumed Harry, in a dry tone, "that I might keep the tires out. He said they would be stolen. I decided that I would risk it for a night. I picked a new spot for them – over here."

He pointed to a spot close by the show window. Clyde saw the opened doors of a small delivery elevator. The car, itself, obsolete and inadequate, was on the level of the sidewalk.

"Going to close the doors and set the tires on them?" questioned Clyde.

"No," returned Harry. "I'm going to remove the doors entirely. That's your job, Clyde. Take these pliers and pull out those long hinges."

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CLYDE complied, wondering. Just as he had finished the task, Harry appeared, carrying four flat bars of heavy iron. Kicking the discarded doors aside, he arranged the long bars in crisscross fashion over the top of the flat elevator.

"There's the support," remarked Harry, "just in case the car won't hold the weight of the tires. Help me set the doors."

He shifted one of the flat metal pieces so that it projected slightly inward from the left side of the elevator opening. Clyde did the same with the door on the right. The result was a makeshift grating, open in the center of the elevator car.

"Now for the tires." Harry approached the nearer stack. Clyde aided him. They shifted the top tire and carried it to the improvised grating. They continued with the other tires. When they had finished with the stack, Harry, puffing, suggested that they add more. It was with considerable effort that they finally raised the stack to a height of more than six feet.

"Looks a bit lopsided," observed Harry. "I'll fix that."

While Clyde stood puzzled, Harry went into the store and returned with two metal wedges and a small hand sledge. He inserted the point of one wedge between two tires near the top of the stack and drove it home. It made the stack tilt to the left.

"I thought that would happen." Harry inserted the second wedge further to the left. Again, he hammered. The result was satisfactory.

The stack of tires formed an irregular cylinder that had a slight forward tilt until it reached the wedges. There, a slight gap showed between two tires, six feet above the base of the stack. Above that, the tires were level.

"We'll roll these extras into the store," suggested Harry. "After that, we're through. How do you like my idea, Clyde? Those bars take all the weight from the elevator car."

Clyde Burke smiled. He was mystified. Harry's actions seemed nonsensical. Nevertheless, Clyde knew there must be a purpose. He asked no questions. He merely helped Harry with the extra tires; then agreed to his friend's suggestion that they go out to eat.

It was six o'clock. Inspector Timothy Klein entered Commissioner Ralph Weston's outer office to find two persons there: a stenographer and a young man who served, on occasions, as Weston's private secretary.

"Any word from the commissioner?" questioned Klein, anxiously.

The secretary shook his head.

"Bad business," muttered Klein. "I can't understand why we haven't heard from him."

"Have you called Grady again?"

"Yes – three times –"

The door opened. Klein turned. He recognized the tall, impressive form of Commissioner Weston. The missing official had returned.

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Weston was garbed in gray hat and overcoat. In his left hand, he carried a briefcase. He swung the bag toward the inner office. Klein opened the door; the commissioner went through and the inspector followed.

"Where have you been, commissioner?" questioned Klein. "We have been trying to locate you all day. People have been impatient because we couldn't tell them where you were, sir."

"I know it." Weston's tone was dry; his lips formed a smile beneath his pointed mustache. "In fact, I called here myself; and also called my apartment, just to hear what would be said. In other words, I inquired after myself – disguising my voice of course – and I learned that I was out but would return later."

"That was my order," declared Klein. "We couldn't let it out that the police commissioner had disappeared. It had me worried."

"Why?"

"Because of the circumstances. Grady told me where you had gone; when I learned that you weren't there –"

Weston's left hand was raised in interruption. Klein paused. Studying the commissioner across the flat-topped table, the inspector noticed that his chief seemed pale. Weston's full face lacked a bit of its usual contour.

"Tell me," came the commissioner's brisk order. "Just what did Grady say? When – where – how – did I leave my apartment?"

"At one o'clock last night," explained Klein. "A man came to see you – then you went away with him. You told Grady that you were going to visit Ganford Dagron, the retired financier."

"Very well." Weston's tone was still quizzical. "And then?"

"You did not return. I called you this morning. Grady told me the circumstances. I called Ganford Dagron."

"At his home?"

"Yes."

"What did he have to say?"

"That he did not send for you. He was willing to see me, so I went out there and took Grady along. We found that Dagron lives alone with one servant – a fellow named Woodling, who admitted us. Woodling was not the man who came to your apartment. Grady was sure of that."

"So you decided that I had been hoaxed?"

"Possibly. I hoped, however, that you had merely decided to mislead Grady. I could not see what the purpose might be. At the same time –"

"All right, inspector." Weston's smile was stern. "The latter surmise is correct. I wanted no one to know where I was. I shall visit Ganford Dagron later, in person, to explain the matter to him."

"I was engaged in special work last night, inspector. My efforts are completed. Call in my secretary. I wish to dictate orders."



## THE CRIME MASTER

Klein obeyed. The secretary seated himself by Weston's desk. While Klein listened, Weston's voice began to drone police orders. The inspector stared dumfounded.

"Coming robbery of the Impregnable Trust Company," were the words. "Scheduled for to-night. Detail patrol cars as follows –"

Tersely, the orders continued. Patrol cars, detectives, squads of policemen – the commissioner was arranging them in methodical precision. Concentrating powerful forces at strategic points, he was forming an array of strength that seemed amazing.

USUALLY, Klein knew, Weston deliberated upon such courses. This afternoon, his method differed. Never before had the inspector listened to such perfected plans. Handling hundreds of men, forgetful of no detail, Weston was presenting a system of police deployment that outmatched anything that Klein had ever known.

Secrecy seemed linked with strategy. Yet the plainness of the details impressed themselves firmly upon the inspector's brain. As the secretary arose to take the orders for triplicate typing, Klein gasped in admiration.

"It's in again?" he questioned. "The Crime Master business? To-night?"

"Deductively speaking, yes," asserted Weston. "Tonight is the logical time. Should there be postponement, we shall repeat our plans to-morrow. You will notice, inspector, that my orders leave nothing to chance. Followed perfectly, even our own forces will not know the nature of the crime which we are seeking to prevent."

"There can't be a leak," admitted Klein. "You handled that part of it perfectly, commissioner."

"You will notice, also," declared Weston, "that I have provided for all movements to be guided by one controller. You, inspector, will have that duty!"

"You mean," exclaimed Klein, "that you are turning the command over to me?"

"Yes. As my deputy."

Minutes passed while the commissioner gave verbal instructions to the inspector. The secretary entered. He was bringing the typed orders. Rising, Weston handed the sheets to Klein.

"Follow my orders," was the commissioner's statement. Then to the secretary: "You and the stenographer may leave. I shall remain a short while."

Five minutes later, Commissioner Weston's tall form was standing by the desk, alone. One hand moved – the left. The overcoat, which was now unbuttoned for the first time, dropped to the floor.

With the doffing of that garment, the tall form seemed to lose its bulk. The single hand opened the briefcase. It drew out two garments – a black cloak and a slouch hat.

A laugh came from the lips beneath the mustache. The face of Commissioner Weston, suddenly relaxed, seemed to lose its contour and become masklike. The free arm raised the cloak; it settled over shoulders. The hat was lifted to the commissioner's head.

The transformation was complete. Commissioner no longer, this personage who had directed the perfect massing of law forces under Inspector Klein, had now resumed his chosen part.

## THE CRIME MASTER

The Shadow, his face disguised in perfect fashion, his clothing padded to give it proper bulk, had taken the place of Commissioner Ralph Weston.

Somehow, The Shadow had escaped. Divining the crime that loomed, he had sought to reach Weston anonymously. Scenting that the commissioner's absence was due to some action of The Crime Master, The Shadow had decided to play a double role.

First, as Commissioner Weston, he had arranged the law for action. That task completed – to a perfection previously unknown – he was returning to his own part.

As The Shadow, he was ready to deliver telling strokes of a sort that he, alone, could make!

### CHAPTER XX. MASTERS MEET

TEN o'clock. All was quiet on the street in front of the massive Impregnable Trust building. Then came a rumble as a truck rolled along the thoroughfare. Stopping, a hundred feet past the bank, the big vehicle backed into the open door of a garage.

A second truck arrived. Like the first, it performed the turntable maneuver. A third truck came a few minutes later. Silence again prevailed until a fourth truck appeared upon the scene.

This machine stopped abruptly. Squarely in front of the Impregnable Trust Company, the driver alighted and went to the rear. He opened a door. From inside the truck came a dozen men. They approached the big building.

These arrivals worked rapidly. Their task completed, they scrambled back into the truck. The lumbering vehicle moved forward for one hundred feet. Then came a tremendous blast.

With a flare that was followed by rocketing echoes, the entrance of the Impregnable Trust was blown clear.

A gaping hole replaced metal doors. The truck moved backward. It stopped short of the smashed entrance. A dozen men sprang to the street. At the same time, three trucks came rolling from the garage. One faced in the same direction as the truck in front of the bank; the others headed opposite.

Alarms were clanging. Massed raiders seemed disdainful. Waiting for a signal, they were ready to advance. These were The Crime Master's reds. They knew that greens and blues were everywhere about. They did not fear the arrival of the police.

An order. Men moved forward. Their next work, in the bank, would be to blow the vault. Then the platinum, handled by a dozen stalwart gorillas, would be on its way to the waiting truck.

A muffled shot. A zimming bullet winged the gangster who had given the order to advance. While the underlings stared, their leader collapsed at their feet. Astounded, the ruffians paused. One man, turning, gave a sudden exclamation. A second report; he fell.

The others wheeled. They were at the mercy of the hidden sniper. They saw whence the shots had come. A wreath of smoke was curling from between two tires in a stack that stood before a store across the street. Revolvers flashed. They barked.

Zippering bullets seared through the rubber tires. The leaden messengers were flattened by the thick rims within. An automatic responded. Shots came in quick precision. As mobsters dropped, their fellows dashed

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for the safety of the truck.

SAFE in his improvised pill-box, The Shadow had covered the center zone of crime. Once again, he was defying The Crime Master's hordes; this time from a security which they could not shake.

The stack of tires – a natural sight in front of any store – had completely passed suspicion. Through the narrow slit, on a level with his eyes, The Shadow could spy forth while he fired with his single hand. His right arm, resting at his side, was not needed. New automatics were within reach of his left hand; at any time, a lowering of his body could bring him beneath the space that served as loophole between the steel rims of the tires.

Whistles blaring, sirens shrieking – gunfire roared from blocks around. Police, held in readiness at distant locations, were smashing in through cordons of mobsmen.

The Shadow had arranged their attack. They were breaking down The Crime Master's blockades. In a few minutes, they would be here, in this very block, where impotent raiders were unable to rush the door that they had shattered!

Suddenly, one of the trucks by the garage lumbered forward. It was moving away from The Shadow. From its interior came the rat-tat-tat of a machine gun. The truck stopped at the far end of the block. Like an armored tank, it resisted the advance of the police.

The blocking truck was beyond The Shadow's range. But as the hidden fighter watched, impervious to scattered shots that struck his pill-box, a second truck came rolling toward the corner.

Police cars were coming from the distance. As the truck rolled up to meet them, the first rattle of its machine gun began. The men in this truck knew nothing of The Shadow's presence. They did not know why the raid on the bank had ended so abruptly. They were to learn.

An automatic spoke. The gunner of the machine gun dropped. Another leaped to take his place. The automatic snapped forth new reports. Savagely, a gangster leaped to the gun and swung it toward the stack of tires.

Bullets sped from the belching muzzle of the machine gun. Lead rattled against steel tire rims. The pill-box was withstanding the fire. Crouched low, to avoid the danger of the loophole, The Shadow waited. He had diverted fire from the advancing police.

Sharp cries: gangsters turned their rapid-fire weapon on the law. They thought that they had quelled the sniper. They were mistaken. Again, The Shadow's automatic blazed from the opening. The new gunners fell.

A roar. The last truck, its driver informed of the trouble, was moving from the front of the garage. The man at the wheel was crouched as he drove his big machine toward the stack of tires where The Shadow lurked.

The Shadow saw the move. The truck had a hundred feet to come. The automatic ceased its fire. Unhindered, the mammoth truck lurched forward. Its front wheels jounced upon the curb. It smashed into the stack of tires; hurtling onward, it carried them through the plate glass window of the accessory store.

Glass – woodwork – bricks – all went with a crash as The Shadow's pill-box was scattered. Clear into the building; the truck flung tires before it as it came to a stop inside the store. It had passed the spot where the pill-box had been set; in the wake of the truck, a dozen mobsters were coming forward.

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They stopped short. They saw the rising floor of the elevator car, coming up beneath Harry Vincent's improvised grating. The foremost mobsters were too late. As the opening closed, they heard the weird cry of The Shadow – a mocking laugh of triumph.

The moment that the truck's attack had started, the fighter in the pill-box had released the car on which he stood. His body, passing between the bars, had descended to the safety below the level of the street.

Mobsmen were doomed. Police cars had arrived. Vainly, gorillas leaped to the machine gun. Bullets stopped them. Speeding onward, two police cars approached the distant truck from the rear. They arrived while the machine gun was being twirled toward them. They silenced the gunners before the men had time to open with a deadly spray of bullets.

The Crime Master's minions had failed. Flanked, scorched with enfilading fire, blocked on all sides, they had no chance. Inspector Klein had set the machinery in motion. The Shadow's strategy had guided the law to victory.

THE CRIME MASTER was in his paneled room. Seated at his checkered table, he was chuckling expectantly as he studied the pieces which he had not yet moved. Groggy, in chairs close by, were Cliff Marsland and Ralph Weston. Old Ganford Dagron had ordered them brought here, half-drugged, that they might witness his triumph.

"Any reports, Henley?"

The Crime Master's question was an eager snarl. Henley, who had entered a moment before, shook his head.

"Not yet, Master," he replied. "It is too soon. Woodling has not returned."

"Half an hour has elapsed," croaked Dagron. "I shall not have long to wait." He turned and leered toward Weston. "You, commissioner, will learn how puny the law can be."

Chortling, The Crime Master produced a slip of paper and wig-wagged it in front of Weston's half-closed eyes. It was the check that the commissioner had given Woodling the night before.

"You are a fool," sneered Dagron. "To think that you could bribe one of my trusted men. My servants – like myself – love crime. Money! Bah! I have all the wealth I need. They are entitled to their share."

The old man tore the check to bits and threw the pieces on the floor. A buzzer sounded beside his table. Dagron's face gleamed.

"Woodling has returned!" he exclaimed as he pressed the button to unlatch the door.

With Henley, The Crime Master gazed toward the clicking barrier. It opened. A snarl came from Dagron's lips; Henley emitted a stifled gasp.

It was not Woodling, returning with news of triumph. It was another, whose very arrival was proof of disaster. Caught unaware, The Crime Master and his servant could not make a move.

There, in the doorway, stood a figure cloaked in black. A raised left fist held a looming automatic. Burning eyes showed beneath the brim of a slouch hat.

It was The Shadow. Following the clue of Weston's disappearance; knowing that Ganford Dagron might well be The Crime Master, he had come in hope of uncovering the super fiend.

Victor in the fray against The Crime Master's minions, The Shadow, master foe of crime, had trapped The Crime Master himself.

### CHAPTER XXI. BLACK STANDS ALONE

A WEIRD laugh crept through the paneled room. Dagron and Henley, staring; Cliff and Weston, motionless in their chairs – the four formed a strange tableau before The Shadow's burning gaze.

As the black-garbed arrival moved forward, leaving the door ajar behind him, his keen eyes centered upon the table where The Crime Master's men formed their colorful array.

The hand with the automatic made a wide sweep. Its swing cleared the board. The pieces in The Crime Master's game went scattering across the dark-hued rug. Swinging, The Shadow came to a stand at the side of the room. From this point, he controlled both Dagron and Henley with the aim of his single gun.

"Your game is ended." The Shadow's sinister whisper was addressed to Ganford Dagron. "Your minions have met with final defeat to-night."

The old man snarled. Again, The Shadow laughed. He recognized the burden of The Crime Master's thoughts.

"Your trap" – The Shadow's voice was a sardonic sneer – "failed in its purpose. I lacked the strength to break it; but I found another method. Your one mistake was the light switch in the cellar."

The Shadow's tones were bitter gibes that brought a fiendish scowl to Dagron's face. The old man's claws were clutching furiously.

"Through that switch," jeered The Shadow, "I operated the lights upstairs. My agent, stationed across the street, caught my coded signals. He waited – at my order – until your men had come and gone.

"Then he arrived. He waited long – until I had revived from weariness. Then, by taps, he signaled. He broke into the walled-up fireplace. I had gained entry to the ash pit beneath. He lowered tools and explosives that I needed. The rest was a matter of time alone.

"I have been free since noon. I divined the crime you scheduled for to-night. I took measures to prevent it. The police moved under my direction. I was at the heart of crime – this time encased by rings of steel that withstood the bullets of your minions."

The Shadow's words ended with a startling hiss. A shuddering laugh; Dagron, like Henley, quailed. The Crime Master, seated by his cleared board, realized his total helplessness.

"The police are coming here." The Shadow's words were mocking. "They will rescue their captured chief, as I shall first aid my captured agent. Your game will be exposed when they have reached this lair."

The Shadow paused. The echoes of his words lingered in Dagron's ears. There was a sinister note of doom in all that the avenger had said. Yet Ganford Dagron, fiend to the end, managed to regain his evil snarl.

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HALF rising, the old man spat venomous words. It was a futile act; yet the fierceness of the challenge came as a warning to The Shadow. Realizing that Dagron might have some purpose in his action, The Shadow wheeled suddenly from the old man's gaze.

The door was swinging open. Woodling, returning with reports of failure, had heard the tones of The Shadow's voice. Hoping to deliver a surprise attack, he was entering by stealth. Ganford Dagron had spied the movement of the door; he was seeking to hold The Shadow's attention.

The instant that The Shadow wheeled, Woodling, peering from the side of the door, came upward with a gun. His hurried finger pressed the trigger of the revolver just as The Shadow fired with the automatic.

Woodling's bullet whistled past The Shadow's shoulder. The shot from the automatic, however, was loosed with sure delivery. It found its mark in Woodling's body. With a frenzied scream, the servant sprawled forward and rolled writhing on the floor.

Ganford Dagron shrilled an order. Henley, bounding forward, yanked a gun to cover The Shadow. Before the secretary could loose his shot, The Shadow's turning automatic barked its interruption.

Henley staggered. He dropped his revolver. He gasped as he clutched his chest. Then, like Woodling, Henley rolled upon the floor. The second of The Crime Master's aids had felt The Shadow's wrath.

Had Ganford Dagron joined in the fire, he might have gained belated triumph. Though prompt, The Shadow's shots had required an interval for action. The Crime Master was drawing a revolver at the moment of The Shadow's second shot; but he was inspired by a double purpose.

Dagron was springing backward. He timed the raising of his right hand – with its weapon – to a clawing motion with his left, as the latter clicked an ornament upon the wall.

A panel shot upward behind Dagron's retreating form; with the way to escape opened, the fiend pressed finger to the trigger of his revolver. The Shadow was already turning. As Dagron fired, the cloaked form slumped suddenly to the floor.

The action was timed to Dagron's shot. The old man's bullet grazed The Shadow's shifting shoulder. It did not stop the completion of The Shadow's aim. The automatic spoke before The Crime Master could fire again.

THE SHADOW'S form rose slowly upward. In the same tempo, Dagron's body slumped. The revolver rattled from the old man's hand. Clutching claws failed to break the fall. They only turned the drooping body so it rolled face upward.

Cliff Marsland was trying to gain his feet. The shots had aroused him from his lethargy. He saw The Shadow standing by the checkered table. He saw a gloved hand dip into a box. He heard The Shadow's laugh as something clicked upon the square-marked glass.

The Shadow turned. He viewed Commissioner Weston, still groggy. He saw Cliff's feeble efforts to leave his chair. With a sweep of his arm, The Shadow raised his weakened agent. As Cliff stumbled forward, The Shadow led him through the opening that Ganford Dagron had gained in the wall.

A throbbing, outlandish laugh broke through The Crime Master's lair. It rose to a pitch of strident mockery. Sardonic echoes answered. The Shadow's triumph! Weston, aroused by that ghoulish cry, came to his startled senses.

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The panel closed with a click. Weston stared as he heard the sound. Then came muffled shouts – the tramp of feet – Inspector Klein, at the head of four detectives, came bursting into the room through the outer door.

The commissioner was raised to his feet. Bewildered, he shook his head as Klein made inquiry. Ralph Weston could not recollect what had happened. He could only point to the floor – to the body of Ganford Dagon.

"The Crime Master?" exclaimed Klein.

Weston nodded. His eyes turned toward the board. They remained there, transfixed by the object that they saw. Upon the board rested a single piece – one that had replaced all others – a man of jet black color.

Dazedly, Weston saw the symbolism of that single block of wood. Out of the chaos in his mind, he realized who had gained the final triumph that had spelled The Crime Master's doom.

The Shadow was the victor. Master of vengeance had conquered Master of Crime.

THE END