

THE GOLDEN DOG MURDERS
by Maxwell Grant

As originally published in "The Shadow Magazine," September 1, 1938.

The blood sapphires, heritage of the Dog goddess, drip their trail across Manhattan in The Golden Dog Murders.

CHAPTER I

A PERFECT CRIME

A MAN was moving cautiously through the landscaped grounds that surrounded the quiet suburban cottage. His feet made no sound in the darkness. The man moved swiftly, as though afraid to waste a moment of time.

The wind carried with it a strong hint of rain. Clouds raced overhead past a ragged moon. Whenever the moon shone, the furtive figure halted. As soon as darkness followed, he was again swiftly in motion, making his way grimly from bush to bush toward the rear of the silent house.

All the front windows were dark. The man had expected this. Circling the house to the rear, he made sure that the back windows, too, were unlighted. He was absolutely certain that this house was empty.

The intruder peered at the rear cellar window through which he intended to enter this house. He was less cautious now. Moonlight laid a quick-passing brilliance on his out-thrust face.

Acting Inspector Joe Cardona, of the New York police, would have recognized that face. A sly countenance, with a brutal mouth and glittering, murderous eyes. The crook was Sam Baron. He was a trigger-man for a powerful underworld mob that specialized in "hot ice". Cardona had arrested Baron a half-dozen times, but had never been able to pin a single jewel theft on him.

A fence through which Baron worked remained unknown. So was the actual leader of this clever mob of thieves. Insurance detectives were as baffled as Cardona. And, no wonder! Not even Sam Baron himself knew who his big-shot boss was. A secretly relayed order had sent Baron to this quiet house in the suburbs.

He snapped the frail lock of the rear cellar window with a tiny bar of tempered steel. An instant later, Baron dropped inside. Moving swiftly toward the staircase, he snapped on a small electric torch. He didn't bother drawing a gun.

Drexel, the butler, was the only person who would normally be in the house at this time. But Baron had shrewdly taken care of that. A fake phone call had sent Drexel off on a wild-goose chase.

That left Sam Baron approximately fifteen minutes before Rodney Mason would arrive home with Isabel Pyne. Baron knew they were on the way now. Acting

on orders from his unknown chief, Baron had gone to a celebrated night club and had sat near the table where Rodney Mason was entertaining the beautiful Miss Pyne. He had been able to eavesdrop on their conversation.

Baron had heard Mason beg Isabel to drive out to his home for a highball before they ended a pleasant evening. Isabel had hesitated. Then Mason had told her about his private chemical laboratory. He had promised to show her

something

in the line of jewels that was worth seeing. Laughingly, the young chemist had alluded to the stodgy presence of his butler, Drexel, as a chaperon.

Isabel Pyne had smiled and nodded. She liked this tall, good-looking Rodney Mason. The two had leisurely left the night club and climbed into Mason's car.

It was then that Sam Baron had made his fake phone call to the unsuspecting butler. Now, having driven at reckless speed along back roads, he was alone in the young chemist's house.

He had a double plan in mind. If he failed to find the loot he was after, Baron intended to hide and await the arrival of Mason and Isabel Pyne. The chemist, anxious to impress the girl, would produce the jewels. The rest would be up to Sam Baron.

Theft or murder - or both - depending on the way events worked out. Baron had killed too many tough guys in his grim career to worry much about murdering

a young research chemist and a blond "deb" from Park Avenue.

MASON'S laboratory was in a ground-floor wing of the cottage, just beyond the chemist's living room and study. The crook's electric torch probed the dark

room, passing swiftly across a bewildering array of apparatus. His attention focused itself on a safe in the corner.

Baron attacked the safe promptly. He used only his ears and his sensitive finger tips. In seven minutes, he clicked the tumblers and swung open the door.

Then he cursed viciously. The jewels he had hoped to find were not in the safe!

The crook slipped on gloves and removed all marks of his finger tips from the safe door. He began to move swiftly about the room, searching for a hidden vault and careful to disarrange nothing in his search. Baron had already determined on a "fall guy" to frame with the cops; he was going to pin this job

on Drexel, the butler.

Suddenly, he heard a sound from the distant front door: the grate of a key

in the lock! Instantly, Sam Baron snapped off his torch and shoved the tiny cylinder back in his pocket. Rodney Mason and Isabel Pyne had arrived.

Baron tiptoed behind a heavy drape and waited. He could bear Isabel's silvery laughter. It was followed by the clink of ice in tall glasses. Mason's deep voice said:

"Here's to the loveliest girl in New York!"

"Thank you, Rodney." Isabel Pyne's gay voice sounded puzzled. "Where do you suppose Drexel is? You said that your butler would be at home."

"I can't understand where he went. I hope you don't think that I -"

"Of course not, Rodney! You're a sweet boy and I like you. But I really can't stay. It isn't quite proper - not while there are scandal columnists on the lookout for people like you and me."

"Please!" Mason sounded boyishly eager. "You haven't seen the surprise promised to show you. It will take only a minute or two. Then we'll go."

"All right."

THEY came into the laboratory. Mason switched on the lights. Sam Baron watched them grimly from behind the tall drape that concealed his rigid figure.

Mason was tall, slim, good-looking in his dinner jacket.

Isabel Pyne was a vision of gorgeous loveliness. She had honey-colored hair and deep-blue eyes. She was wearing an evening gown of powder blue, with

a

rather daringly cut bodice that revealed the smooth perfection of creamy skin. She was aware that the shimmering gown outlined her attractive figure, and she enjoyed Mason's breathless admiration. But her voice was calm and matter-of-fact when she asked:

"Where is this big surprise? In your safe?"

"Not at all. I have a special hiding place for my pets. Just a moment."

Mason moved a shelf sideways on a metal pivot. Bending forward, he opened a panel in the wall and removed a small chamois bag. The chemist emptied its contents on a table.

Isabel Pyne gasped with delight.

"Oh, how gorgeous! They're perfect!"

A dozen shimmering blue stones lay on the bare table. Sapphires!

"Not quite," Mason said. His voice sounded dryly amused. "Actually, they are not perfect. They're not even natural stones. They're the product of chemistry and heat. I made them here in my laboratory. But, unfortunately, I haven't yet succeeded in producing a large-size synthetic sapphire without a flaw. Hold one of them to the light and you'll see what I mean. Notice the blood smear?"

Isabel obeyed. In the center of the stone was a cloudy dot of crimson light. It was, as Mason had said, exactly as if a smear of blood were imprisoned within the sapphire.

Mason explained.

"Sapphires and rubies have almost the same chemical composition. The arrangement of the atoms within the molecule determines the color. All these synthetic stones are hybrids - sapphires with a faint trace of ruby in them. They are useless as jewels until I can find out what's wrong with my experimental methods. I've been two years on this problem, but the stones are still commercially valueless.

"Your uncle, Julius Hankey, would tell you that if he saw these beauties. However, I'm not ready to show them to a Fifth Avenue expert like Julius Hankey. Not until I have succeeded in removing the" - Mason laughed - "the fatal smear of blood."

Isabel shivered a little. "I don't like that talk about blood. It sounds sinister. Rodney, it's late! I want to go home."

The chemist smiled. "Of course! I had no right to bring you here so late. But I just had to show you my sapphires. Promise to keep what you've seen a secret? I don't want other chemists to get wind of what I'm attempting."

Isabel nodded. Rodney leaned forward suddenly and swept her into his arms.

He kissed her passionately, and for a second the girl lay in his arms without resisting. Then she stiffened and thrust him away.

"You're forgetting yourself!"

"I love you!" Mason gasped. "I - I -"

"I think you had better see me home!"

"Are you angry?"

"No. I'm to blame as much as you. I shouldn't have come here. Please get my wrap."

The two went out to the living room. Presently, they left the house.

There

was the faint echo of a motor, then a silence flooded the house and the grounds outside.

SAM BARON, stepped from behind the drape that had concealed his presence. His eyes were glittering with greed. Again his torch glowed. But this time, he did not approach the safe. He made for the shelf that Rodney Mason had pivoted back into place when he had replaced the blood sapphires.

In a moment, the synthetic gems poured from their chamois bag into the

itching palm of Sam Baron.

The thief knew nothing about chemistry or heat. He knew less about atoms. But he did know that Rodney Mason was a fool. And so was that blond dame with the cute figure. Both of them thought that these fake sapphires were valueless.

Sam Baron knew different!

He knew that the stones that lay in his gloved palm were worth the pleasant sum of two million dollars!

Hastily, Baron crammed them back into the bag. He stowed the bag in an inside pocket. A swift glance about the laboratory showed him that he had left no telltale marks of his presence to tip his identity to the police.

Chuckling, Sam Baron turned on every light in the laboratory and stepped behind the curtain. He was waiting for the return of Drexel, the butler. Baron had condemned that innocent butler to death!

His fingers tightened about the handle of a long-bladed knife. He waited patiently. Finally, he heard the slam of the front door. Feet came slowly through the silent house toward the lighted laboratory.

"Mr. Mason!" The voice was Drexel's. "I didn't intend to be out at this time, sir. A very queer thing happened. Someone telephoned and told me -"

Confident that his employer was working in the lighted laboratory, the butler stepped across the threshold, saw that the room was empty.

Fear came into his eyes. He backed toward the doorway, shouting shrilly:

"Mr. Mason! Are you home? Where are you, sir?"

Sam Baron leaped like a panther from behind the drape. Drexel had no chance to turn in order to grapple with him. The long blade of the knife plunged hilt-deep into the butler's back.

Drexel fell without a groan. He was dead before he hit the floor. The point of the knife had penetrated his heart.

Baron jerked the blade free. Coolly, he wiped it on the dead man's clothing; then bent over him and wrapped him in the rug underneath until the dead man was encased like a mummy. A stout length of cord made the gruesome bundle tight.

The window of the laboratory opened without a squeak. It was pitch-dark in the ground back of the house. A few drops of rain spattered on the peering face of the murderer. Baron grinned. A swell night for a job like this!

He lifted the wrapped corpse carefully over the sill and lowered it down to the lawn; then, his beady eyes made a last careful survey of the laboratory.

Not a single article of furniture was out of place; not a single betraying drop of crimson marred the floor or the window sill.

A perfect kill! All that was needed now was a perfect burial for Drexel's corpse. And Baron had arranged for that, too!

BARON'S car was parked under an overhang of shrubbery in a side lane. He placed the body in the back seat and drove off swiftly. His goal was a pond about eight miles distant. It was in a back area beyond the little suburban town, reached only by a rough and unfrequented road.

The drizzle of rain had stopped by the time Baron reached the pond. He was glad of that. This murderer was like a cat; he had an instinctive hatred of getting wet.

In a few minutes, he had carried Drexel's rug-wrapped body through a thick fringe of wind-tossed bushes. He stood on the muddy margin of the deep pond, keeping his neatly polished shoes out of the soft earth.

No footprints, thank you! Not for a wise guy like Sam Baron! He stood on

a
tiny hassock of grass, grinning ferociously as he eyed the surface of the pond.

It was covered with a flat, unbroken expanse of green scum.

That was the payoff - this green scum on the surface. Picking up a fallen branch, Baron pointed its thin end toward the pond. He used it like a makeshift

knife, cutting neatly through the green muck.

The parted sections floated aside under the careful guidance of the stick in the hands of the murderer. Baron was very gentle in his work. A dark patch of open water widened bit by bit.

Drexel's body went feet-first into the watery grave. Baron was careful to avoid making a splash. The heavy stone he had weighted to the victim's feet drew the body downward into the deep water with barely a sound.

Baron waited grimly, a grin on his twisted lips. The slight swirl the body had made as it slipped out of sight was drawing the edges of the surface scum together again. The open patch of water was getting steadily smaller. Finally, there was no water visible.

The green scum formed a solid covering on the surface of the pond. The edges that Baron had separated with his stick now merged together without a sign of a break.

Drexel's murderer drew a breath of hissing satisfaction. A perfect murder had been followed by a perfect disposal of the corpse. Drexel would never return to deny that he had fled with Rodney Mason's synthetic sapphires.

Mason would take it for granted that a trusted servant had fallen for temptation. And the presence of Sam Baron in the riddle would never be suspected.

Baron hurried back to his car and slid jauntily behind the wheel. He drove to a main highway and headed swiftly back toward New York.

In a chamois bag in his inner pocket were a dozen blood-flecked, synthetic sapphires which Rodney Mason thought were valueless. But that only proved that crooks were a lot smarter than scientists! Baron chuckled at the size of the split he would get from two million dollars of good money!

All he had to do was turn the sapphires over to Otto Muller. Muller would pass them along to the unknown big-shot who ruled the mob in which Sam Baron was a trusted trigger-man. Neither Baron nor Otto Muller knew who their powerful boss was. Nor did they care. Not when they were to get a slice of two million in loot!

Sam's car scudded swiftly along. Theft and murder had been accomplished. Other murders - infinitely more horrible than the death of Drexel - would follow. An amazing carnival of crime had begun.

Could the police stop it? And if they failed - could The Shadow?

CHAPTER II

THE DOG GODDESS

LAMONT CRANSTON was sitting in the lounge of the famous Cobalt Club, reading an evening newspaper. No one paid any particular attention to this tall, distinguished-looking man, for this New York club was membered with many wealthy and famous people.

Lamont Cranston was fabulously wealthy. His social position was of the best. The newspapers often recorded his exploits as a big-game hunter, a world traveler. To the world in general, he was simply a wealthy idler and charming host at his huge country estate in New Jersey.

But Lamont Cranston was not the wealthy idler he seemed.

He was watching a man who sat uneasily near by, smoking a thinly rolled, foreign-looking cigar. This man's name was Senor Ramon Ortega. He was living temporarily at the Cobalt Club under a guest card privilege. His home was in Singapore. He was a wealthy Spanish rubber planter on a vacation trip to New York.

Ortega's face was pale under its dark tropic bronze. He got up finally and began to pace up and down, as though enjoying the mild exercise after his long relaxation in a big armchair. Cranston, however, knew this Spaniard was frightened. His gaze kept veering slyly toward the clock on the wall. Cranston watched him over the top of his spread newspaper.

He was convinced that Ramon Ortega was a suave criminal!

Cranston's ideas about this sleek Spaniard were far from guesswork. He had been keenly interested in the activities of Ortega ever since the man's mysterious arrival at the Cobalt Club with excellent letters of introduction. A piercing gaze came into Cranston's steady eyes. They glowed like flame.

Lamont Cranston was The Shadow! For The Shadow, at times, adopted Cranston's personality.

CROOKS and police alike were aware of the existence of The Shadow. They knew he smashed crime when all other means failed. But no one suspected that The Shadow used the guise of Lamont Cranston.

Not even The Shadow's agents knew that. They never communicated with him directly. Their reports were relayed through a contact man named Burbank, himself utterly unknown except as a calm voice on an unlisted telephone.

Reports had come to The Shadow concerning this Senor Ortega. Cliff Marsland had furnished the information. Cliff was one of The Shadow's most trusted agents. And Cliff Marsland was now an undercover spy in the mob of a crook named Sam Baron!

Baron, The Shadow knew, was a trigger-man for a mob of jewel thieves. But the fence through whom Baron worked was unknown. So was the mysterious supercriminal who led the mob. Now, at last, The Shadow was aware of a strange fact: Senor Ortega had been secretly in touch with Sam Baron. That was the news that Cliff Marsland had relayed to The Shadow, through Burbank.

Lamont Cranston saw Ortega suddenly throw away his cigar with a nervous gesture. The hands of the clock pointed to nine. The swarthy Spaniard got his hat and coat and left the club. Cranston didn't follow him. He had already arranged for that detail. Harry Vincent was waiting outside.

Vincent was the oldest agent of The Shadow in point of service. He would do well on this delicate assignment.

Leaving the lounge room, Lamont Cranston went upstairs to his private suite. Twenty minutes later, his phone buzzed.

"Burbank speaking."

"Report."

"Vincent trailed Ortega, as ordered. Ortega drove aimlessly for ten minutes, to dodge pursuit; then went straight to home of Inspector Joe Cardona.

He is there now."

The Shadow's face looked startled. But no hint of his surprise came into the crisp words he uttered:

"Report received. Stand by."

The news from Burbank amazed The Shadow. Why should Ortega sneak so slyly to the home of Joe Cardona? Cardona was the ace detective of the New York police department. He was also a good friend of Lamont Cranston. Why should Ortega first contact a killer like Sam Baron, then coolly visit Joe Cardona? It

puzzled The Shadow. So did something else.

The Shadow had a queer feeling that he had seen Ortega somewhere else. Far

from New York. Yet he had been unable to remember where.

He waited in his room, eyes closed, sunk in deep thought. Then again his telephone rang.

This time, The Shadow had an even bigger surprise. The call was from Joe Cardona! Joe's request was startling. He wanted Lamont Cranston to come over to his apartment at once. A Spanish gentleman named Senor Ramon Ortega wanted to meet him!

The absolute gall of Ortega tightened The Shadow's lips. He gave a harsh, sibilant laugh.

Five minutes later, he was in his car, speeding toward Cardona's apartment.

JOE CARDONA'S face was expressionless as he ushered Cranston into his living room and introduced him to Ortega.

The Spaniard was blandness itself. He shook hands as though he had never before in his life seen this wealthy clubman.

He sank back in a leather chair and lighted another of his long foreign cigars. Cardona busied himself with drinks. Cranston watched the dark-skinned face of the Spaniard. It was clearly etched in the strong light of a bridge lamp tilted above the leather chair.

Suddenly, Cranston restrained a quick exclamation. The strong yellow light reminded him of hot tropical sunshine. His memory leaped backward in time for two years. His brain bridged a gap of more than five thousand miles. He remembered this dark-skinned man!

Cranston's eyes closed as if in boredom, while Cardona fizzed soda into tall glasses. He could see hot, blinding sunlight; streets packed with frenzied

Mohammedans. A white marble temple whose roof was solid gold. And on the altar within that temple, the sacred statue of a grim goddess - a statue that was carved from a single block of solid gold! The head was that of a snarling dog. But the rest of the body glowed with the exquisite loveliness of a nude, golden woman!

Cranston's eyes remained closed. His memory brought other pictures.

Outside that temple in India, a procession was approaching through a packed mob of frenzied worshipers of the Dog goddess. Elephants swayed in stately pride. On the foremost of those elephants, high above the worshipping crowd, a virgin rode, decked in the white robes of purity. Around her throat was a string of magnificent sapphires.

It was the feast of the Ten-year Vigil. The sapphires were being brought to the temple to renew their purity. The virgin on the elephant would place them reverently about the nude throat of the golden Dog goddess.

Cranston opened his eyes slowly. He smiled as he took the drink Cardona handed him. He nodded to Senor Ortega.

"That's a nice comfortable chair you picked," he said quietly. "The leather is a really excellent grade of pigskin."

Ortega gave a choked cry. He leaped from the chair as though he had been struck. His glass fell to the rug from his trembling fingers. His face was twisted with loathing.

Cardona gave a grunt of amazement. "What the devil -"

But Cranston's voice cut him short. He was talking softly to the terrified planter from Singapore:

"Your name is not really Ortega, is it? You are not a Spaniard. You are a

Mohammedan. That's why you couldn't bear the defiling touch of pigskin leather.
Your real name is Ali Singh, and you are the Maharajah of Rajkumana. Why are you
in New York incognito, your highness?"

ORTEGA gasped. He swung toward Cardona; his voice was like a whiplash.
"How much does this man know?"

"Nothing, as yet," Cranston interrupted. "I hope to be honored by your confidence. I presume that is why you sent for me."

"It was I who sent for you," Cardona admitted uneasily. "I wanted to ask your advice about some jewels. I know that you are a collector and an authority
on gems - particularly sapphires."

He explained to Ortega:

"Mr. Cranston has access to the homes of the wealthiest men in New York. He knows every collector of consequence. If the sapphires are hidden in New York, as you suspect, Mr. Cranston may have seen some of them."

Ortega was still glaring at his smiling visitor.

"I expect you to remain silent about what you may see or hear in this room," he rasped finally. "Have I your word?"

"Naturally."

Ortega took a small parcel from his pocket. He unwrapped it reverently and
handed something to Cranston that flamed with a deep, burning blue in the millionaire's palm. It was a huge sapphire.

Cranston held it to the light. In the center of the stone was a fleck of red like an imprisoned drop of blood.

"Have you ever seen a stone like this in New York?" Ortega asked.

"Never! I know what it is, of course. It's a sapphire from the Necklace of
Purity. Has the necklace been stolen?"

"Stolen!" Ortega's voice echoed grimly. "Snatched by a sacrilegious thief from the golden throat of the Dog goddess. The necklace broke when the thief snatched it. The sapphires spilled on the holy floor of the temple. I found this single gem under the body of a murdered priest."

"The thief escaped. The rest of the sacred sapphires vanished with him. He

came to America - to New York. Who the thief is, I do not know. But I know he has sold the stones separately to wealthy collectors."

"And you have come to America to find them?"

Ortega nodded.

"No one but the priests of the temple and my eldest son are aware of the theft. For my people to know would be to risk bloodshed, revolution. They would

think - and think rightly - that the gods have abandoned their maharajah. The Ten-year Vigil comes to an end this year. The scattered sapphires of that holy necklace must be found and returned to the Dog goddess before then."

"If not?" Cranston asked.

"If not, I shall have to atone by disemboweling myself on the altar of the
goddess. Ten years later, if the necklace is still missing, my eldest son will die by his own hand. Those red sapphires must be found!"

"Can't you get more of the stones?" Cardona asked. "You own the mine where
they come from."

"The mine," Ortega said harshly, "is no longer in existence. Out of the hundreds of sapphires taken from it, only twenty-one had the sacred drop of blood in the depths of the gems. There can never be more. For when the

twenty-first blood sapphire was blessed and borne to the temple, the Dog goddess stamped her golden foot and an earthquake destroyed all trace of the mine."

NEITHER Cardona nor Cranston smiled at the thought of a nude golden statue stamping its lifeless foot. There was a blaze of fanaticism in Ortega's eyes that deterred them.

"You're handing the police a tough job," Cardona said, dryly. "I can't go into millionaires' homes and search their jewel cabinets for stolen goods. Not without proof and a search warrant."

"Have you tried to get the help of the New York underworld to aid you in your search?" Cranston asked the maharajah.

"No"

That was a lie, Cranston thought; the first Ortega had uttered. Or was it the first? Cranston knew that Ortega was already in direct contact with Sam Baron's mob. Perhaps this tangle was a lot deeper than it appeared on the surface.

"If the police fail," Ortega said, "the goddess of the temple will aid me.

You may laugh, gentlemen, but I had a holy vision in my sleep last night. The Dog goddess appeared before my eyes - naked, golden, terrible. She promised success in my pilgrimage. She reminded me that the sapphires become evil the moment the string is broken. Death will come to every man or woman who tries to hide one of those holy blue stones!"

Cardona frowned.

"You better forget about that part of it, your highness. Remember, you're not in India now! If you try anything in that line -"

Ortega's smile was edged like a knife.

"The goddess will strike, not I. She will strike this very night! Where or at whom, I have no knowledge. But tonight, some guilty man will die because he holds one of those sacred blood sapphires! You don't believe me? Wait!"

The Shadow had a queer certainty that this zealous maharajah was not quite as fanatical as he wanted to seem. His suspicion grew that Ortega had lied about his contact with Sam Baron in order to cover himself from the consequence of murder.

Cranston left Cardona's apartment in company with the suave Ortega. They drove together to the Cobalt Club and went to their separate suites.

Calmly, Cranston drew a table close to his window. He opened a heavy book on his table and began to read.

The book was a volume of Indian philosophy. But Cranston's eyes kept moving from the pages to the flat surface of a mirror he had tilted near the book. The mirror gave him a view of another mirror - and that in turn outlined the window of Ortega's room.

Cranston expected Ortega to squirm stealthily to a broad ledge outside that window. A leap would carry him across a dark void to the roof of an adjoining building. If Ortega was planning to commit murder tonight, it was the only way to leave the club unseen. Employees on duty downstairs would see and remember him.

So Cranston sat and watched.

He stayed at his post until daylight streaked the darkness. But he saw nothing to justify his vigil. Ortega never left his room.

The Shadow had a queer feeling that, somehow, he had failed. Had murder actually been committed somewhere in the darkness of Manhattan while The

Shadow

waited impotently?

Did Ortega actually believe in the living vengeance of the golden Dog goddess? Or was he framing a cunning alibi to escape the consequences of murder?

The Shadow's sibilant laughter was grim.

CHAPTER III

THE GRAY MR. FRICK

THE town mansion of Peter Randolph was a big one. Situated on a side street not far from Riverside Drive, it stood in parklike grounds, surrounded by shrubbery and gardens. There was a walk in front, paved with ornamental Chinese brick. A board fence separated the grounds and house from the sidewalk.

The Randolph mansion was the last of its kind in the section. Millionaire neighbors of Randolph had sold their homes and had moved to Park Avenue. But not Randolph. He was a stubborn old man, massive like the house he lived in. Every winter he returned from his summer estate in Lakewood and brought Parker with him.

Parker was Peter Randolph's butler. The two lived alone in the old mansion. Randolph hated servants, particularly women servants. But he liked and trusted Parker.

On the same night that Lamont Cranston had been summoned to the home of Joe Cardona, Peter Randolph was seated alone in his library, reading the financial columns of the evening newspaper.

Suddenly, Randolph heard a peculiar sound. His face turned ashen with fear. The newspaper fluttered from his hands to the floor.

The sound that had startled him had come from Randolph's inner study. It was so low that he was not certain whether he had actually heard it or had merely imagined it. It was the muffled echo of a dog's bark!

Randolph stepped to a cabinet and snatched a pistol from a drawer. He was moving stealthily toward the door of his study when he halted abruptly. Footsteps were audible outside, in the hallway of the mansion.

Peter Randolph hid the gun in his pocket. A moment later Parker, his butler, appeared. Parker was out of breath. His face looked queer.

"Are - are you quite all right?"

"Of course! What the devil do you mean?"

"I - I thought I heard you cry out," Parker gasped. "I thought something was wrong!"

Randolph's eyes flicked briefly toward the closed study door.

"I don't need you. You may go."

As Parker turned obediently away, the millionaire halted him for an instant.

"Was it a cry you thought you heard - or a bark?"

"A - a bark, sir?"

"Don't look so stupid! The noise a dog makes."

"No, sir. I heard no dog."

"It doesn't matter," Randolph said, faintly. "Go back to your quarters and don't bother me for the rest of the evening. I've got some important business papers to look over."

Parker backed out of the library, his well-trained face wooden. Peter Randolph whipped his gun from his pocket. He tiptoed to the closed door of his study. He waited rigidly for almost two minutes, listening.

THERE was no further sound. Randolph threw open the door. His finger clicked on the lights. The study was empty.

Randolph drew a hissing breath of relief. He noted that the windows were all shut. The shades were neatly drawn, the same as he had left them. He advanced slowly toward a steel jewel vault that stood in a shadowy corner of the room.

Suddenly, he heard a cold chuckle of amusement.

He whirled. A man was standing in the center of the study, laughing at Peter Randolph. He was a tall, thin man, dressed entirely in gray. Gray suit and overcoat, gray spats, a trim gray derby. His gloved hands, also gray, were held peacefully outward in front of him. He had no weapon. Nor did he seem to be afraid of the gun in the trembling grip of the millionaire.

"Good evening, Mr. Randolph."

"Who are you?"

"David Frick is my name."

"How did you sneak in here?"

"That's my affair."

"If you make a single move, I'll kill you!" Randolph warned.

Frick laughed at the threat. He moved quietly toward a chair and sat down.

He took an expensive cigar from Randolph's ivory box and lighted it.

"I've come for the blood sapphire," he said, quietly. "Please let me have it."

Randolph uttered a choking sound.

"I - I don't know What you're talking about!"

"The stone I want is a large sapphire. It's not really a perfect sapphire,

because in its center is a fleck of crimson like a smear of blood. You bought the stone secretly, because you knew it was stolen property. You paid five thousand dollars for it."

"How do you know all this?" Peter Randolph asked, hoarsely.

"Perhaps I'm a detective," Frick sneered. "On the other hand, perhaps I'm a smart business man."

"Sorry. I'm not in the market, Mr. Frick. The sapphire is not for sale."

"I have no intention of buying it," Frick said smoothly. "I'm asking you to give it to me."

"And if I don't?"

Frick drew deeply on his cigar and exhaled a fragrant cloud of smoke.

"Perhaps I had better remind you of a few ugly facts. A little talk by me with Inspector Cardona will bring the police here with a search warrant. Or I might inform a certain Spanish gentleman named Senor Ortega. Does the name Ortega mean anything to you?"

Randolph's gun remained steady.

"Never heard of him."

"You should," Frick purred. "His real name is His Highness, Ali Singh. He is the Maharajah of Rajkumana."

FEAR leaped into the eyes of the millionaire.

"So you see," Frick continued evenly, "you'd be very foolish to keep this sapphire. You're in danger from the vengeance of the Dog goddess of Rajkumana, from whose nude golden body the Necklace of Purity was stolen."

"Did the Dog goddess hire you as a private detective?" Randolph sneered.

"Not at all! I hired myself. The stone I'm asking you to give me, plus others I shall obtain, will net me the pleasant profit of two million dollars. And save you from a death that might be most horrible. Yes or no, Mr. Randolph?"

"You're no detective. You're a crook - and you can go to hell! The fact that I want no publicity is the only reason why you are escaping a bullet or a cell in jail. Get out the same sly way you sneaked in!"

David Frick mashed out his cigar and rose to his feet.

"I'll leave by the front door, if you don't mind. And please don't ring for your butler."

There was a queer threat in the suave voice of the gray-clad David Frick. Randolph made no effort to summon Parker. He merely kept the muzzle of his gun pointed at his visitor. Frick backed noiselessly toward the study door. The door opened quietly, then closed.

Randolph's glance strayed toward his jewel safe in the corner of the room.

Something about it seemed to reassure him. He laughed grimly, and poured himself a drink.

Opening a compartment in his desk, he began to examine a sheet of paper with a list of names typewritten on it. The fiery warmth of the whisky he had gulped down drove the chill from his heart. He lit a match and burned the paper to thin ash.

MEANWHILE, David Frick was gliding like a gray shadow through the quiet front hall of the mansion. No one stopped him. Parker, the butler, was somewhere in the rear. Frick opened the massive front door and stepped to the darkness outside.

The moment he did so, he gasped with surprise. He flung himself flat on the stone threshold.

He had seen a parked automobile at the curb outside the low fence that closed off the property of the millionaire. A man was getting out of that car. A man whom David Frick instantly recognized.

Frick's quick action in dropping flat had saved him from discovery. He bellied swiftly down Randolph's front steps. Then he melted across the dark lawn and lost himself in the shrubbery.

A moment later, the locked gate in Randolph's fence opened. A man darted into view. He glided stealthily up the ornamental brick walk and climbed the stone stoop. The light from the entry mansion fell across his grim features.

The man was Sam Baron.

He held a knife beneath his coat. It was the same weapon that had stabbed to death the unfortunate servant of Rodney Mason. Baron's left hand coolly pressed the bell button.

There was a short wait, then the door opened. Parker stood on the threshold.

Sam Baron mumbled something in a low voice. Parker couldn't understand what was said, so he leaned forward.

Baron's left hand caught him by the throat. The savage grip choked off Parker's scream, and the next instant the victim was shoved backward into the vestibule. The knife plunged into Parker's chest.

The weapon was wielded by a killer who was a veteran with cold steel. Parker slumped - dead on his feet. But he didn't fall. Sam Baron's grip held him upright.

Slowly, the vestibule door opened. Baron whistled softly. His whistle was echoed from the dark sidewalk; then a man slid inward to the grounds. He raced noiselessly to where Baron was holding the dead butler, his foot keeping the vestibule door from closing.

"Everything O.K., Squint?" Baron whispered.

"Yeah. Turk is all set with the car. Nobody in sight."

"Swell! You know what to do with this dope?"

"Damned right!"

"Squint's" powerful hands grabbed the dead butler, dragged him along the path to the gate. Soon, the smooth murmur of a powerful automobile engine began to recede.

Sam Baron was back in the vestibule. Not a sound came from within the quiet mansion. Baron began to tiptoe down the hall toward the dimly lighted library. He knew that beyond the library was the study. Inside the study was Peter Randolph and a safe that contained a priceless blood sapphire.

And no witnesses!

But Sam Baron was mistaken. There was a witness. Not inside the mansion, but outside. A crouched figure had seen the swift murder of Parker.

Hidden behind a black clump of shrubbery, the suave David Frick was grinning in the darkness. His grin was, if anything, more coldly murderous than the leer on Sam Baron's face.

CHAPTER IV

THE MUTED BEAST

THE knife was no longer in Baron's hand. He had wiped it clean on the butler's coat and replaced it in a scabbard beneath his armpit. His fingers were all he needed now.

He threw the study door suddenly open.

His surprise attack produced exactly the effect he had planned. Peter Randolph whirled in his chair, his jaw sagging with terror. Before he could utter a cry or clutch for the gun that lay on the desk beside him, Baron had bounded forward.

Fingers closed on the throat of the millionaire. Two murderous hands were methodically choking Peter Randolph to death.

The millionaire slid to the floor. He lay in a ghastly, twitching huddle beneath his killer. His crimson face turned slowly purple. But not for a second did the pressure of those deadly fingers relax.

When they finally let go, Peter Randolph was dead.

Gloves on Baron's powerful hands were stripped off with a swift double gesture. He wasted not a second of time. The sapphire he was after was in the big safe in the corner. He hurried toward the safe.

But suddenly, Baron halted. A queer, frightened look came over his swarthy features. He had heard a sound. Or rather, he had sensed sound in his brain. He thought he had heard the dead man laugh!

Whirling, he stared at his victim. Randolph was stiff, motionless. Dead as a doornail! Chuckling uneasily, Baron again approached the safe in the corner.

Ordinarily, the crook would have knelt, pressed his ear to the metal, and manipulated the lock with the touch of bared, sensitive finger tips. But the uncanny feeling that he was in deadly peril persisted.

Baron examined every inch of the safe. Then he saw the holes.

There were six of them drilled in the top of the safe. They must have been drilled a long time ago. Their edges were as dusty and discolored as the metal itself. Baron sniffed like a suspicious animal.

The holes were too small to peer through. There was no sign of wires or any kind of electrical connection. It couldn't be a hookup with a photoelectric

eye. Baron was smart enough to be aware of every type of burglar alarm.

Satisfied, Sam Baron whispered grimly to, himself, "Let's go!"

It took him ten minutes to open the lock. It took him another sixty seconds to nerve himself to open the door. Before he did so, he jerked his knife from its scabbard. He didn't know why he did that. All he knew was that his forehead was beaded with cold sweat and the hand that held the knife

trembled.

The safe door swung wide. Baron peered eagerly into the black interior. The next instant, he gave a terrified scream and flung himself backward.

From the top compartment of the safe a crouched dog launched itself at the burglar!

THE dog uttered neither growl nor bark. Its jaws ripped silently at the throat of the recoiling crook.

Baron felt tearing pain, the warm gush of blood. But the agony was in his forearm, not his throat. The dog's fangs were ripping at the arm Baron had thrust with instinctive terror in front of his face.

Cloth ripped. Baron threw off the dog with a fierce jerk of his arm. The animal flew across the room. It flattened its haunches and prepared to spring again.

Baron squirmed out of his coat, and waited. He could see the wide, slavering mouth of the beast, the yellow fangs in the undershot jaw. The animal was an enormous bulldog.

But it wasn't the appearance of the beast that made the hair crawl on Baron's scalp. The dog uttered no sound!

Sam Baron's face was like chalk. He remembered the legend of the nude, golden Dog goddess of Rajkumana.

The dog sprang again in silent fury. Baron swung his bunched coat upward in the path of those wide jaws. The cloth ripped apart. Weight of the beast threw Baron to his knees. But he was able to duck his head backward and to hurl

coat and dog away from him.

Blood streamed down his gashed arm. He rolled over and over toward the dead body of Peter Randolph. As the dog rushed again, Baron's knife slashed a ragged crimson furrow across the beast's flank.

Sight of the blood restored Baron's courage. The beast was bleeding! It could be wounded - killed! It wasn't a ghost, but a living animal!

He grabbed at the corpse of Peter Randolph and jerked the dead millionaire upward into a sitting position. Shielded grotesquely, Baron waited.

His face was invisible behind the body of the dead man. The dog saw only the lifeless features of Peter Randolph. It hesitated. Baron moved his knife gently very gently to a defensive slant, the reddened blade jutting outward like a dagger.

Then his face showed deliberately beneath the armpit of Randolph. He uttered a low, hissing challenge.

The beast sprang!

But the crook's face was shielded behind the dead man's back. The animal's teeth sunk into flesh and closed like a vise. The bulldog jerked fiercely. Blood

drenched Sam Baron and splattered on the rug.

His knife swept downward. It buried itself in the dog's body. Again and again, Baron struck. He staggered backward.

The dog lay in a welter of blood alongside the body of Peter Randolph. Blood flowed from a half-dozen deep wounds. It tried to rise, but one of the knife thrusts had slashed through its haunches, hamstringing the dog. A shudder passed through the beast. It died without uttering a sound.

BARON'S eyes moved from the dog to its dead master. The dog's final attack

had ripped Randolph's dead throat into a red horror. The spot where he lay was a shambles.

Sam Baron swayed weakly to a low table, poured himself a drink from a bottle of Randolph's whisky. The bite of the fiery liquor steadied his nerves. He gulped another, then laughed harshly.

He was able to pry open the mouth of the dog and to stare down its ugly red gullet without flinching. He realized now why the beast had been unable to bark. An operation had been performed on its throat. Vocal cords had been cut.

Peter Randolph had relied on a silent beast to kill without warning, if anyone tried to rifle his jewel safe. The holes in the top of the safe had been

drilled there to provide air for the animal to breathe.

The last ounce of superstitious fear left Sam Baron.

He raced back to the open safe. Gloved hands explored its various compartments until he found what he was after. In the palm of his hand lay an enormous, gleaming sapphire. He held it to the light. In the depths of the gem was a reddish blur like the bright smear of blood.

Baron placed the stolen jewel carefully in his pocket. From another pocket, he drew a second sapphire. It was an exact duplicate of the first. Baron had stolen it along with eleven others from the chemical research laboratory of Rodney Mason.

He placed the fake stone in the dead fingers of Peter Randolph.

As he bent to do so, the shade on the tall window behind him moved slightly. Eyes were peering into the room. They saw the real sapphire go into Baron's pocket. They watched the fake one being jammed carefully into the stiffened grasp of the millionaire.

That man outside the window was David Frick. Seeing all that he wanted to, he withdrew.

Sam Baron was unaware that he had been under that momentary bit of surveillance. He was staring grimly at a dead bulldog and a corpse with a torn throat.

A sudden idea glowed like flame in the murderer's clever brain.

No one, except possibly Parker, the butler, could have known that a living dog had been kept in the safe to ward off burglars. And Parker was now dead. Squint and "Turk" had probably already disposed of his body. They'd be racing back in the car to pick up Baron.

All Baron had to do was to get rid of the dog, as he had gotten rid of Parker. The only signs of a burglar's presence were the open safe and the throttling fingerprints on Randolph's throat. The dog's teeth had ripped away those prints. Baron got rid of the other clue by closing the safe with gloved hands and spinning the dials.

He wrapped the bleeding body of the beast in his torn coat. With the dog missing, the whole scene would take on a horrible significance. Police might laugh at the wild theory that a Mohammedan goddess, in the form of a ghostly dog, had ripped out Randolph's throat. But the newspapers would leap on that angle with black headlines. The public was a sucker for that kind of stuff!

A wave of fear would spread over New York. That was exactly what Sam Baron's unknown boss wanted to happen. Peter Randolph was merely one victim. There would be others, as soon as Randolph's supernatural death scared other millionaire collectors into the open.

They'd either attempt to dispose of their sapphires through some underworld fence, or try to get police protection under some pretext. In either

case, Baron's gang would have leads to the rest of the scattered sapphires.

Ten of the stones were already in the gang's hands. Eleven were still missing. Of these eleven, only one had been definitely located. Murder would take care of that. And fear - the fear of a nude, golden woman with the head

of

a snarling dog would reveal the whereabouts of the sapphires still missing.

The gang could then do business with a certain Senor Ortega!

SAM BARON tiptoed through the quiet mansion, carrying with him the carcass

of the dead bulldog. He waited in the dark front vestibule, keeping the door open a slight crack. He was watching for a black automobile.

Presently, Baron saw it, over the enclosing fence. It rolled to the curb and a man got out. Then the door in the board fence opened. A faint whistle came to the ears of Sam Baron.

Clutching the wrapped dog tightly in his arms, Baron hurried to the sidewalk. An instant later, he was on the back seat of the car with the man called Squint. Turk, the driver, looked back from the wheel.

"What've you got there?" he growled. "A dead mutt?"

"Shut up!" Baron snarled savagely. "Get this heap moving in a hurry! Same place where you buried the butler. Step on it, Turk!"

The car slid away. It gathered speed and vanished into Riverside Drive.

As it did so, a man chuckled coldly. He was hanging to the top of the board fence. Now, he swung his legs over the fence and dropped to the deserted pavement outside.

He drew a small notebook from his pocket and wrote down the license number

of the vanished automobile. The man chuckled again as he walked leisurely toward

Riverside Drive. His bloodless gray face creased into crafty lines. He beckoned

to a passing bus and swung aboard.

He was the man who called himself David Frick.

CHAPTER V

THE MAN IN THE TUB

ON that same night, Harry Vincent, under orders from The Shadow, was watching the apartment house of Isabel Pyne.

The house rose twenty stories above the pavement of Park Avenue. Lights gleamed in some of the windows. Others were dark. The latter was true of four adjoining windows on the twelfth floor. These were the front windows of Isabel Pyne's apartment.

Harry Vincent was convinced that the girl was not at home. He didn't rely on sight alone. He had disposed of the possibility that Isabel might be asleep in her darkened apartment, by making a telephone call. There had been no answer

to that call. Obviously, the girl was out somewhere, and had not yet returned.

Harry's orders were grim. He had been told to make sure that Isabel Pyne suffered no harm. He knew that the girl was socially prominent, that she was a niece of Julius Hankey, Fifth Avenue's most famous jeweler. He knew, also, that

she was on very friendly terms with a young research chemist named Rodney Mason.

The house occupied a corner, running back a quarter block from the avenue along the side street. The service alley through which tradesmen delivered goods was located at that end. Harry had already assured himself that the gate of the alley was unlocked.

But the post where Harry finally stationed himself was on the opposite side of the avenue, from where he could see the canopied entrance of the apartment. Although many cars and taxis pulled up, there was no sign of Isabel

Pyne. Vincent had been furnished with an excellent description of her. He wondered what sort of a jam a pretty girl like that could get herself into.

ISABEL PYNE was wondering, too. She sat tensely in a speeding taxicab, and there was fear in her heart. Occasionally, she spoke in a nervous whisper to her driver. Isabel was convinced she was being trailed!

She had first noticed the sedan a mile or so uptown, had noted that the sedan's driver seemed to be a swarthy foreigner. And she had been puzzled by a queer ornament on the radiator cap. It looked like the nude figure of a golden girl, with a queer sort of head.

Isabel forgot about it - until she saw the sedan again. It was following her taxi. She spoke to her driver and changed her route. The sedan did the same.

The girl's hackman, however, was a clever driver - and his cleverness was increased by a twenty-dollar bill the frightened girl passed to him. He wove a swift, confused pattern through the city street. Somewhere on that dizzy flight, he lost the sedan completely.

Again, Isabel Pyne gave him the address of her Park Avenue home apartment.

But she added low-voiced instructions. The cab didn't stop at the canopied entrance. It proceeded around the block and halted outside the service alley.

The girl hurried down the dark alley and descended stone steps to the basement of the building. She crossed to the service elevator and her heart gave a thud of relief. The elevator was aloft somewhere in its high shaft. Isabel glided noiselessly up the stairway that boxed in the shaft.

She reached her own floor without being seen. Had she been questioned as to her twelve-story climb, it would have sounded silly to say that she had been

frightened by a dark-skinned foreigner in a sleek sedan.

And yet - she was frightened!

She felt quick relief as she unlocked her kitchen door and closed it behind her. She double-locked it on the inside.

Then the handsome face of Rodney Mason glowed in the girl's mind. She could depend on the calm young research chemist to give her advice. She scooped

up her telephone and called Mason's suburban home.

A moment later, Isabel was frowning with surprise. Rodney was not at home.

The bell continued to buzz monotonously. Isabel felt sudden anger at Rodney. He

had lied to her! He had stated he was going to be at home all evening working in his laboratory. Why had he told her a deliberate untruth like that?

Isabel felt suddenly tired. She decided to take a warm shower and go to bed. She drew her magnificent evening gown slowly over her head and hung it in a closet. She allowed her gauzy underthings to slide lazily to the floor. Staring at her slim smoothness in the bedroom mirror, she felt better.

No need to diet yet, she thought with drowsy pleasure. She kicked her bare

toes into flat-soled slippers and wrapped a blue satin robe about her body.

Padding softly into the tiled bathroom, she drew back the shower curtain. Then she uttered a choked scream; but the cry died instantly on her lips.

Isabel stood paralyzed, staring at the black muzzle of an automatic pistol.

The gun was in the hand of a tall, thin man who stood in the tub. His rasping command had silenced the girl's terrified cry. Grim eyes warned her that a second scream would bring flame jetting from the squat barrel of the gun.

The man was David Frick.

ISABEL cringed backward, pulling her satin robe tighter about the white sheen of her body.

"Don't kill me," she gasped. "Steal anything you want! I promise not to tell -"

"Nobody's gonna kill you, baby," Frick said, huskily. "All I want is information. Tell me everything you know about a guy named Rodney Mason."

Isabel's face was very pale. She didn't reply.

"Mason's a chemist, ain't he?" Frick growled. "Has he ever tried to make synthetic sapphires?"

"I don't know."

"You lie!"

"What's your interest in Rodney Mason?"

Frick's laughter was like the sifting of dry dust.

"Maybe David Frick wants to make some use of this smart Mr. Mason. I happen to know he's in love with you. I figure that with a little info, I'll be

able to kidnap him without too much fuss. If you don't talk, I'll kidnap you. Either way, Mason will have to play ball with me. Well?"

Staring at Isabel's compressed lips, Frick knew she was going to be stubborn. He wasn't worried about that. He had come prepared.

He sprang at the girl with a pantherish leap. His left hand vised on her throat. Pocketing his gun, he produced a small bottle. Holding the throttled girl rigid in spite of her struggles, he uncorked the bottle with his teeth. Then he jammed it into her panting mouth.

Isabel tried to spit out the liquid; but most of it disappeared down her throat, as she gulped convulsively. Frick held her with a grip of steel.

Suddenly, he saw her blue eyes film. Her body relaxed, and her face was like a pale mask. She stood perfectly quiet when Frick released her. He knew that she was under control of the subtle East Indian drug he had forced her to swallow. He tested her obedience with a low-toned murmur:

"You will not utter a sound. Do you understand?"

"I understand."

"You will obey whatever orders I give you."

"I will obey."

Her voice sounded drowsy, like a sleepwalker's. The drug she had swallowed

was a distilled derivative of Indian hemp. It had robbed her of every atom of her will. She stood like a wax dummy in a blue satin robe.

Frick raced to the bedroom and brought back the girl's discarded garments.

He tossed them into the bathtub behind the shower curtain. At his harsh command,

the girl stood facing the drawn curtain with her back to Frick.

"You are going to step behind that curtain and dress. You understand?"

"Yes."

Frick hesitated. He was still not wholly sure whether Isabel was completely under the influence of the drug, or whether she was cleverly faking.

Grimly, he tested her.

"You cannot dress until you remove your robe. Remove it!"

The girl's shoulder's moved sluggishly. The robe slid down her smooth back

to the floor. Then, without turning, she stepped behind the shower curtain. Frick could hear the faint rustle of garments as she dressed out of sight, obedient to his will.

"Tell me when you are ready," he whispered.

"I am ready."

There was no flush on her pale face. She was conscious of nothing save the dry voice of Frick. He brought her cloak from the bedroom and she donned it over her evening gown. He walked her quietly to the kitchen.

Frick chuckled when he saw that the service door was double-locked on the inside. He drew back the bolt and loosened the chain.

"We're going to walk downstairs, my dear."

Grinning, he threw the door open.

Harry Vincent was standing outside, a gun leveled in his steady right hand.

"Put them up," Vincent snapped, "or I'll drop you!"

FRICK had no time to draw his gun. But he leaped behind Isabel with a wolfish bound. Using her body as a shield, he yanked her backward into the kitchen. His gun muzzle appeared ominously above her lax shoulder.

"Drop your rod, wise guy - or I'll blast you!"

Harry Vincent laughed at the threat. He knew that Frick dared not risk the explosive roar of gunfire in that quiet apartment. The noise would bring alarmed

employees of the apartment house and cut off the kidnaper's escape.

Frick knew that, too. His voice rasped suddenly in Isabel's ear.

"Grab that guy! Choke him! Don't let him get away!"

The drugged girl obeyed the command. Her hands clutched at Vincent. She fought fiercely to keep him from following the fleeing Frick.

One look at Isabel's staring eyes and Vincent knew there was something dreadfully wrong with the girl. He tried not to hurt her, as he jerked at her clawing hands. By the time he had freed himself, Frick had vanished down the service staircase.

Vincent spun about to follow him. Then he halted. Isabel was on her feet, swaying. Her face was a horribly congested crimson. She clutched at her throat, moaning. Then she pitched to the floor.

Quickly, Vincent bent over her, sniffed at her parted lips. He could smell the strong reek of a powerful narcotic. His orders from The Shadow had been to protect Isabel Pyne, to save her life.

Vincent knew enough about drugs to recognize a powerful hashish derivative from the odor on the girl's stiffened lips. She had been forced to swallow a strong tincture of the dreaded East Indian bhang. The pupils of her eyes were like tiny pin points.

The Shadow's agent picked her up and raced with her to the bathroom. His eyes glanced over the shelves of the medicine cabinet. He selected a few things, ran back to the kitchen and got others. He made a whitish, flourlike mixture in a saucepan and thinned it with water. Then he made the girl swallow the stuff.

She didn't want to. She gasped, retched. That was exactly what Vincent had hoped for. He kept grimly at his work, until the girl lay sick and exhausted in his arms. But her stomach was now empty of the drug. Gradually, she was able to talk rationally.

Gently, Vincent questioned her. There wasn't much she could tell. She didn't remember anything that had happened after she had swallowed the drug. She recalled walking in her robe to the bathroom, seeing a gray-faced man with a drawn gun. Then, somehow, she was fully dressed again, resting weakly in the

arms of a man she had never seen before.

Harry Vincent shook his head gently at her puzzled questions. He didn't tell her who he was, or how he had happened to be on the service stairs outside

her apartment. Actually, he had seen the lights go on in her bedroom and bath and knew she had returned. He had raced up the service stairs, driven by a queer presentiment of evil.

Isabel's body relaxed wearily in her bedroom. Harry covered her with a blanket and laid a finger across her pale lips.

"Go to sleep," he said. "I'll wait outside in the living room until morning, to make sure nothing else happens."

He stood staring down at her until she was asleep. He wondered if the drug would leave any memory of him when she awoke in the morning.

IT did. Isabel Pyne lay a long time when her blue eyes finally opened in the morning sunlight. Then, suddenly, her face paled. She sprang from the bed and hurried to the living room.

The couch where Harry Vincent had slept was rumpled, but Harry was gone.

Mechanically, the girl walked to the front door and took in her newspaper.

She was still dazed, hardly aware of what she was doing. But one glance at the black headlines of the newspaper whipped all drowsiness from her brain. Murder!

A millionaire named Peter Randolph had been horribly and mysteriously slam

the night before. His throat had been torn out by a ghostly dog. He had been found with an ill-fated stone in his dead hand - a sapphire with a fleck of blood in its center. The newspaper called it a "blood sapphire."

Isabel Pyne read those black, frightening headlines. She read about a necklace stolen from India; of a temple goddess whose nude golden body was surmounted by the head of a dog. The newspaper had sent a cable to its representative in India. The return cable was startling. The golden statue of the vengeful Dog goddess was missing from the altar of her temple!

Horror came into Isabel's eyes. But she was not thinking of a dead millionaire collector, or a vengeful ghost from a land of mystery. She was thinking of a sapphire with a fleck of blood in its azure depths. And of a good-looking young chemist who had shown her a dozen of those queer stones. Rodney Mason!

He had not answered her telephone call last night. He had not been home. Where had he been? And what - what had he done?

CHAPTER VI

THE BLACK SEDAN

JOE CARDONA was a logical man. He solved crimes with the orderly speed of a man driving along a straight road to a definite goal. But on this particular morning, Joe's brain wasn't traveling anywhere. He was grimly puzzled.

"It's damned silly nonsense!" he snapped. "The next fool reporter who mentions 'ghost dog' to me is going to get the seat of his pants kicked! There never was a ghost yet that could rip out a man's throat! What do you think, Mr. Cranston?"

Lamont Cranston shrugged.

"I'm afraid my opinion isn't worth much," he said, gently. "I've had no experience in crime." He turned toward Senor Ortega. "Do you believe in ghosts?"

Ortega smiled. He said nothing.

All three men were gathered in Cardona's office. Morning newspapers lay scattered on his desk. The papers were playing up the supernatural horror that seemed to be involved in the death of Peter Randolph.

A sapphire clutched in the dead man's hand had been identified as one of the rarest jewels on earth. It was recognized as a blood sapphire. The only blood sapphires in the world were those on the Necklace of Purity. And the Necklace of Purity was supposed to be thousands of miles away on a sacred altar in India!

The whole story of the Dog goddess was played up in sensational style. The cabled news from India that the nude golden statue of the goddess was no longer on her altar, created a profound sensation.

Pictures of the statue - taken from the "Encyclopedia of Oriental Religions" - were on the front page of every sheet in town. The ghastly death of Peter Randolph was attributed to the vengeance of the goddess on a man who had had the temerity to purchase one of her stolen sapphires.

And the medical examiner's report sent a thrill of horror through New York. He stated definitely that Randolph's throat had been torn open by the fangs of a dog!

CARDONA's attempt to pin the murder on a burglar, was in vain. The sapphire had not been stolen. No fingerprints were found, except those of the dead man. And there was no trace whatever of the living presence of a dog.

"The job must have been done by Parker," Cardona said, harshly. "That butler is as guilty as hell, or he wouldn't have fled! He won't get far! I've got a general alarm out for him. When I nab Parker, I'll show you your murderer."

Cranston watched Ortega. The man's swarthy face looked politely skeptical.

His smile twisted to a sneer as he turned toward Cardona, asked:

"Have you tried to find out whether Peter Randolph ever actually owned a dog?"

Cardona shrugged helplessly

"I've had detectives question every family in that block. Not one of them ever saw a dog. The tradesmen who delivered groceries never heard the sound of a bark. That's what puzzles me. I thought, at first, the dog might have been kept in Randolph's jewel safe. There was a queer row of holes drilled in the top of the safe. There's no purpose to those holes, that I could see, except to admit air to the interior of the safe."

Ortega's sneering smile deepened.

"Assuming that there was a dog, and that it was a living, breathing animal, why didn't its attack on Randolph arouse the neighborhood? Why didn't people hear its snarls and barking? And if it escaped from the mansion with bloodstained jaws, why didn't someone see it?"

"Parker will answer that riddle, when I arrest him," Cardona promised, harshly.

Lamont Cranston's quiet voice changed the subject.

"I notice that there was no report in the newspapers concerning your incognito presence in New York, your highness," he told Ortega. "Are we still bound to secrecy?"

The eyes of the Maharajah of Rajkumana became suddenly cold.

"Both of you gentlemen have given me your pledged word to conceal my real identity. I ask you to respect that confidence."

Something in the rasp of Ortega's voice made Cardona study him sharply. Joe said:

"You predicted death last night for the people who possess those stolen sapphires. Did you have any special reason for that prediction?"

"None, except my belief in the power of the Dog goddess," Ortega smiled. "You see, I'm just a superstitious Oriental."

"Where were you last night?"

"In my room at the Cobalt Club."

"You didn't leave it any time during the night?"

"How could I?" Ortega purred. "The employees of the club would surely have seen me."

"Your room has a window," Cardona pointed out. "That window opens on a narrow court. There's a roof opposite, that could be easily reached by the leap of a bold and active man. I'm sorry if I seem suspicious, but you did make death threats."

Again Lamont Cranston intervened.

I can testify that. Senor Ortega did not leave his room last night," he said quietly. "As it happened, I sat up most of the night, reading. From where I sat, I could see Ortega's window. He did not leave his room."

"Thank you," Ortega said. His polite voice hardened. "May I see the sapphire that was found in the dead man's hand?"

Cardona took the dazzling blue gem from a drawer in his desk. But he ignored Ortega's outstretched palm. He handed the gem to Lamont Cranston.

"You're a collector of jewels, Mr. Cranston," Cardona said. "That's why I asked you to come here this morning. Is that stone genuine?"

Cranston held the stone to the light. After some moments, he gave his answer.

"It is," Cranston said.

Ortega snatched the jewel from him. His eyes were glittering with eagerness. He held the gem to the light and examined it. Then a savage change came over his face. He uttered an oath, hurled the sapphire to the floor.

"It's a fake!" he snarled.

"What?" Cranston's cry was one of utter surprise.

"That sapphire is a fake! I can't be fooled. Neither can the priests of the temple. You can have this stone, for all I care. Give it away! Throw it in the ash can!"

LAMONT CRANSTON studied Ortega sharply. The man's rage sounded real. Yet The Shadow was convinced that the sapphire the man had so viciously tossed to the floor was genuine. If it were a fake, who could possibly have made so exact an imitation? And why?

Cranston picked up the sapphire.

"Do you have any objection if I take this stone to a jewel expert for appraisal, Mr. Ortega?"

"Do anything you like with it!" Ortega cried.

Cranston glanced at Cardona. Joe nodded.

"Very well," Cranston said, mildly. "I'll return the sapphire later, as soon as I show it to someone whose judgment I know is infallible in matters of this kind. Good day, gentlemen."

The Shadow's goal was the celebrated Fifth Avenue shop of Julius Hankey, the most exclusive jeweler in New York.

As he drove toward Fifth Avenue, a change seemed to pass over Lamont Cranston's face. His glance had lifted to the rear-vision mirror of his car. A sibilant laugh sounded from his lips.

The Shadow was being trailed by another car!

He proved it by changing his route. The car in the rear hung on. It was a black sedan, but the car was too far back to tell much about the driver. Yet

the eyes of The Shadow were keen enough to make an interesting discovery.

The man trailing him was a foreigner. His dark, swarthy face, partly hidden by the visor of a low-drawn cap, proclaimed him to The Shadow as the same breed as Ortega. An Oriental!

His method of trailing The Shadow was peculiar. As soon as Cranston turned into Fifth Avenue, the pursuing sedan dropped farther and farther back. A press of traffic hid it. When The Shadow looked back again, the strange car was gone.

There was no sign of it when Lamont Cranston entered the ornate establishment of Julius Hankey.

CRANSTON was well known here. Clerks fawned on the smiling millionaire. In a few moments, he was conducted to the luxurious private office of Hankey. The two were old friends. Cranston explained the confidential nature of his visit and Hankey nodded.

Calmly, he gave his word to keep Cranston's business a secret.

But Hankey's calmness fled when he saw the sapphire. His eyes glowed with the delight of a connoisseur. He held it lovingly to the light. His voice was a purring whisper.

"Genuine! No doubt of it."

Cranston frowned.

"That's queer. Another expert has pronounced that gem to be a fake."

"Impossible!" Hankey cried. "There are no other jewels like it in the world. They come from a mine in India that is no longer in existence. No one could possibly manufacture a synthetic sapphire with that smear of blood in the heart of the stone. Chemists have tried vainly to do it for years."

His sigh was tremulous. He handed back the gem as if he hated to let go of it.

"YOU can assure Inspector Cardona that this gorgeous sapphire came from the Necklace of Purity in India. Whoever told you differently is a fool or a liar."

He glanced suddenly toward the closed door of his office. Fear came into his low-toned voice.

"If I were you, Mr. Cranston, I'd get rid of this in a hurry. I know too much about jewels to laugh at so-called pagan superstition. That sapphire is a deadly thing. It killed Peter Randolph. It will kill you, if you're not careful! Get rid of it to the police. And please don't tell anyone that you brought it here or that I handled it."

Cranston was amazed at the terror in Hankey's eyes. This civilized man of the world, sitting in his modern office in the heart of Manhattan, was afraid of the ghostly vengeance of a lifeless statue of gold in faraway India!

The eyes of The Shadow had a penetrating gleam as he stepped out into the sunshine of Fifth Avenue. He sensed impending peril - the chill odor of death!

CHAPTER VII

DOUBLE DOOM

THE SHADOW saw no trace of the dark-skinned Oriental who had attempted to trail him to the jewelry establishment of Julius Hankey. Nor was there any

sign
of the black sedan.

Satisfied, The Shadow climbed into Cranston's car. He had promised to return the blood sapphire to Joe Cardona as soon as possible. He drove down Fifth Avenue for the return trip to police headquarters.

The red glare of a traffic light halted Cranston's car. He waited at the intersection, his mind centered on the problem of the stone that had been found

in Peter Randolph's dead hand, whether or not it was genuine.

Suddenly, Cranston's body became rigidly alert. His gaze focused on the blur of cross traffic. One of those speeding vehicles was veering peculiarly.

It was an armored truck. As it crossed the avenue, the driver spun his wheel. The truck's speed increased. It roared straight toward the light car in which The Shadow was seated!

But Cranston had received a lightning warning of danger in the scant second that had preceded the spin of the armored truck's wheel. He had seen the face of the driver. It was the same dark-skinned rogue who had trailed him to Hankey's jewelry store!

With a grinding crash that was audible for blocks, the heavy armored truck

struck the light car with the force of a juggernaut.

Cranston's coupe was smashed between the armored truck and the metal electric-light pole on the corner. Its engine was driven backward, ripping the seat of the car to twisted chaos.

Quick thinking was all that saved The Shadow's life. He had wrenched open the far door and was poised above the running board when the armored truck struck. The crash hurled him headlong, like a projectile from a gun. He had landed on chest and stomach, sprawling on the glass-littered sidewalk with a force that drove the breath from his lungs.

As he rolled sideways, he saw the driver of the armored truck leap to the pavement and flee toward the curb of the side street. The dark-skinned killer had gambled on the heaviness of the armored truck to protect himself from serious injury. He had won his grim gamble.

But he was badly shaken by the concussion, for he limped as he ran.

A taxicab was waiting at the curb of the side street. It was evidently there by prearrangement. The dark-skinned man threw himself inside. The taxi driver stepped on his gas pedal and the cab raced up the street with a shriek of accelerating power.

The desperate getaway was made almost before the noise of the crash had ceased.

By the time Cranston had staggered to his feet, the cab was gone. A huge crowd gathered about Cranston's wrecked coupe; hands reached out to help him.

A policeman came running, his face a grim scowl. At sight of the dust-smeared victim, his face changed from a scowl to a respectful smile. He recognized this tall, aristocratic gentleman from the many times his picture had been in the papers.

"Mr. Cranston! Are you all right, sir? Are you hurt?"

"I think you had better have a look at that armored truck," Cranston murmured, evenly. "I have an idea that it was stolen."

The cop's eyes narrowed. He stared at the armored car's license plate, then he whipped a notebook from his pocket. He gasped as he scanned it.

"You're right! The truck was stolen a half hour ago. Did you get a look at the man who drove it?"

Cranston smiled. "No," he said.

He answered a few routine questions. When the policeman had finished, Cranston reached inside the crumpled wreck of his car and drew something outward through its shattered rear window. It was a small leather briefcase. Holding it tightly, The Shadow pushed his way through the crowd.

His calm eyes seemed to pay no attention to the staring faces. But one of them grimly interested him. He knew he was under observation by a criminal pal of the man who had tried to kill him! This second man had the same dark, swarthy features of the armored-truck driver.

Cranston hurried westward, walking at a quick stride, as though anxious to get away from the curious crowd. Not once did he look back. But as he turned the corner at Sixth Avenue, he made coolly certain that his precaution was justified. The dark-skinned loiterer was following him.

Cranston slowed his pace. A block southward, he turned again into a side street. His trailer didn't try to shorten the distance between them. Evidently, the fellow was waiting for a favorable opportunity to attack Cranston.

The Shadow knew why. The baleful gem in his pocket was still exercising its evil charm. Julius Hankey's fear was justified. The blood sapphire was a strange magnet of death!

THE SHADOW uttered a sibilant laugh. Deliberately, he acted to make an attack seem easier for his foe. He headed toward a neighborhood of mean tenements.

As he approached a tenement doorway, he glanced purposely backward. Then he broke into a brisk trot. He wanted the man behind him to think that he was at last aware of pursuit. He also wanted the mysterious trailer to think that he was desperately frightened.

He succeeded in both purposes. As he sped for the tenement doorway, his pursuer began to run. Cranston darted out of sight into the old hallway. Quickly, he zipped open the briefcase.

The face of the dark-skinned man glowed with triumph as he darted toward the tenement entrance. There were few people in the street. None had noticed the quick chase. A knife jerked from beneath the killer's coat, as he darted into the dimly lighted hallway.

One pantherish leap was all that he took. A cry came from his startled throat. He swayed backward on his heels in stark surprise.

He was facing a strange being in black. All he could see clearly was a long beaked nose, and eyes whose burn pierced through and through. A slouch hat dipped low over a broad forehead. A black cloak made the figure seem part of the darkness of the hallway.

Quiet laughter mocked the startled killer. Then, from his lips came a cry of recognition:

"The Shadow!"

With a sudden bound, he leaped murderously forward. His knife plunged toward The Shadow's heart.

It did not reach its goal. The Shadow had profited by the killer's moment of hesitation; he was ready. A sinewy hand closed over the wrist that held the knife.

The killer gurgled an oath. He redoubled his efforts to plunge the blade into The Shadow's straining body. The Shadow forced hand and knife in a slow but steady arc behind the killer's back.

Suddenly, the killer screamed. The shriek was followed by a sharp crack. His arm dropped uselessly. The Shadow had broken it.

Bending swiftly, The Shadow seized the knife while his opponent writhed in agony on the floor. He began to search the pockets of the dark-skinned thug.

But his search was cut suddenly short. The noise of the fight and the yell from the crook had brought attention to this tenement hallway.

A woman was screaming from a window of the ground-floor apartment. A man's face peered into the entrance way. At sight of the robed figure of The Shadow, he whirled, yelled in terror.

"Help! Police! Murder!"

As The Shadow straightened above his sprawled opponent, he heard the running echo of heavy brogans. A cop was racing along the sidewalk; he turned into the tenement.

The Shadow whirled on catlike feet. His retreat was noiseless. In a moment, he had glided down the dim hallway and was slipping through a door at the rear. The Shadow leaped down a short flight of wooden steps to a paved courtyard.

He raced to a board fence and swung himself upward. As he did so, the blue-clad figure of the panting cop showed at the head of the wooden steps. A gun glittered in his hand. He fired at the dark figure atop the fence.

The bullet splintered a board under The Shadow's hand. The next instant, he was over the fence and racing through another cellar. He sped through a side

door and into an alley. The alley led to a rear street.

Sixty seconds after The Shadow had reached the street, the cop came pounding into view. He saw no trace of a black-cloaked fugitive. Instead, he came face to face with a neatly dressed gentleman who looked as if he might be a prosperous lawyer. A leather briefcase was in his hand. Lamont Cranston's other hand rested casually on the door handle of a parked automobile. He gave an excellent imitation of surprise and bewilderment.

"What - what is wrong, officer? Who was that fellow in the black cloak?"

"Did you see him? Where did he go? Quick! He nearly killed a guy back there in a hallway!"

"He started to run from that alley," Lamont Cranston gasped. "Then he saw me. He ducked back. He disappeared into the cellar doorway on the left of the alley."

The breathless cop whirled. He dashed back the way he had come, dived out of sight through the doorway that Lamont Cranston had pointed out.

Cranston didn't linger to see more. He walked slowly away, increasing his pace gradually. Two blocks away, he hailed a taxicab. Halfway downtown, he left

it and took another. He smiled grimly as his glance dropped toward the briefcase

in his hand. For that flexible leather container held The Shadow's black cloak and slouch hat.

The Shadow was on his way to his sanctum.

DARKNESS filled the confines of an unknown room. Then a sibilant laugh echoed softly. A blue droplight glowed. It revealed a beaked nose and burning eyes above the sheen of a polished desk. Tapering fingers drew a sheet of paper

across the desk. A curious, quill-tipped pen began to move over the blank sheet of paper.

The Shadow realized the sinister purpose behind those two swift attacks on the life of Lamont Cranston. Someone with a shrewd, criminal mind was aware that

Lamont Cranston was carrying on his person a blood sapphire. A ruthless criminal

had wanted that ill-fated stone to be found on Cranston's dead body. It would have convinced an already hysterical public that to possess a blood sapphire was to meet a horrible death.

Who was the unknown master criminal behind this fake supernatural

campaign?

The Shadow's pen inscribed six names on the blank sheet of paper before him. They made a curious six-sided figure that looked oddly like a rough approximation of a cut sapphire.

Sam Baron - Cliff Marsland
David Frick - Harry Vincent
Ramon Ortega - Lamont Cranston

The geometric meaning of this strange name pattern was clear to The Shadow. Marsland, planted in Sam Baron's gang, was covering one angle of the mystery. Harry Vincent had already had a desperate brush with the gray-faced scoundrel who called himself David Frick. Lamont Cranston had personal contact with the suave Senor Ortega.

Slowly, the inked names on the paper faded. It left the sheet as blank as though nothing had ever been written on it.

Again, the slender quill pen moved in the sure, steady fingers of The Shadow. He wrote two more names:

Rodney Mason - Isabel Pyne

These latter two were the unwitting victims of an unknown supercriminal. Was it someone whose name was already inscribed in the geometric pattern that had faded from the paper?

The Shadow's grim laughter ceased as a tiny white dot of light glowed on the wall. Tapering fingers slid headphones over The Shadow's forehead. He listened to a calm, faraway voice on the wire.

"Burbank speaking."

"Report!"

"Message received from Cliff Marsland. Baron's gang planning to snatch Rodney Mason. Exact details later."

"Stand by!"

The white dot of light vanished. The headphones were replaced. The pale blur of The Shadow's face disappeared. No sound from the black reaches of the sanctum indicated what his purpose was.

He reappeared silently. There was a heavy leather-bound book in The Shadow's hand. As the light glowed stronger, the book was revealed as a 1938 copy of "Who's Who."

The Shadow turned to Section M. He read the brief paragraph allotted to Rodney Mason. It told him what he wanted to know. He learned that Mason was a young research chemist, well known for his studies of the molecular properties of precious stones.

Chemist - molecules - sapphires!

Soft laughter of The Shadow pierced the sanctum.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GRIM STOWAWAY

IT was past noon when Rodney Mason awoke. He swung his bare feet to the floor. He didn't have to stare at the clock to know that it was late in the day. He had not gone to bed until almost dawn. The starlit sky had been streaked with gray when Mason had silently let himself into his suburban home.

He was still worried about Drexel. The butler hadn't turned up since his disappearance, two nights ago.

Rodney frowned. He decided to shower and dress.

Fully clothed, he opened the front door of his house, picked up the morning newspaper that had been lying there for hours.

One glance at the headlines and his calmness deserted him. The whole

front

page of the paper was black with the story of the horrible murder of Peter Randolph.

Mason's attention was riveted to only one fact in that ghastly murder account: the blood sapphire. The gem that had been found clenched in the dead hand of the millionaire collector was a duplicate of the synthetic sapphires in

Rodney Mason's own laboratory!

Dropping the newspaper, Mason raced to his laboratory. He swung outward the shelf that concealed the tiny vault in the wall. His muscular hand explored

the interior. It was empty. His sapphires were gone.

THE discovery didn't seem to astonish Mason. It merely deepened the ugly look in his eyes. He read the entire murder story carefully.

He learned about the stolen Necklace of Purity; read of the legend of evil

connected with those sacred gems missing from a pagan altar in India. His laugh

was harsh as he read about the vengeance of a nude golden goddess with the head

of a snarling dog.

"Bunk!" he snarled under his breath.

The thing that interested him most was the fact that Randolph's butler was missing. The disappearance of Parker was an exact duplicate of the vanishing of Drexel.

Rodney Mason hesitated whether he should call the police or not. He didn't, however. Instead, his suave murmur voiced the number of Isabel Pyne.

Isabel's voice on the wire sounded shaky. She was frightened. Her terror increased when Mason told her that the imitation blood sapphires had been stolen from his laboratory. The girl gasped. She asked a swift question:

"Rodney, have you ever heard of a man named David Frick?"

Mason's eyes gleamed. He didn't reply for a moment. Then: "No. I never heard of him. Who is he?"

Isabel described the vicious attack that had been made on her the night before.

She told of the drug that had robbed her of her will. She explained how an

unknown rescuer had put her attacker to flight and had saved her from being kidnapped. She had no idea of the identity of her rescuer. He was gone at dawn,

she declared, before she awakened.

Mason was grimly interested in the man who had foiled the attack. He made Isabel describe Harry Vincent's appearance. He listened carefully.

Suddenly, he heard Isabel's voice change. It became colder; there was suspicion in it.

"Rodney, exactly where were you last night?"

"I was home," he said quickly. "I wish you had telephoned me. Why didn't you?"

"I did! There was no answer."

Mason's eyes blinked. He covered the mistake smoothly.

"That's funny! My bell didn't ring. Hold on - wait! I left my lab phone connected. I forgot to throw the bedroom switch. That's why I didn't hear the bell. The lab door was closed."

Isabel said: "Oh!"

"I don't think you had better call the police about this," Mason advised gently. "You don't want to be drawn into a sensational murder case. There is

no
need for anyone to know that you saw my synthetic sapphires. Suppose you let
me
handle the police."

"All - all right, Rodney."

"I'll come and see you soon. Keep quiet about everything. And don't
forget, darling - I love you!"

Mason hung up. His smile deepened. He murmured in a low tone to himself:
"And now for the cops."

But when he again lifted the phone, he was disagreeably surprised. There
was no hum on the wire. The line was dead.

A cold glint came into Mason's eyes. He bounded swiftly toward a window.
The shade was drawn. He peered around it to the grounds in the rear of his
house. The outside wire stretched on insulated brackets along the cottage wall
to a conduit box close to the cellar window.

A man was crouched close to the wall. He had just clipped the phone wire.
The broken ends were jerking loosely. The wire cutter was still gripped in the
man's hand.

Mason's breath hissed. He backed to a cabinet in the laboratory, where he
always kept a loaded pistol. He was reaching for the heavy butt of the weapon,
when a voice stiffened him.

"Drop that gat, stupid! Turn around!"

The voice was vicious. There was murder in its command. Rodney Mason
obeyed.

THREE men were staring at him. All three had guns leveled at the chemist.
Two of the thugs stood just inside the doorway. David Frick would have
recognized both of them. They were Squint and Turk, the thugs who had helped
Sam Baron to dispose of the body of Peter Randolph's butler.

The third member of the trio was Baron himself. He was grinning
murderously.

"Keep those hands up high!"

There was no fear in Mason's eyes, merely a cold watchfulness.

"Just what I suspected," he said, huskily. "Drexel didn't steal those
synthetic sapphires of mine. He was murdered. You killed him! You also killed
Peter Randolph and his servant, Parker!"

"So what?" Baron jeered.

"Who are you working for - Frick?"

Baron looked puzzled.

"This mug knows too damn much," Squint interrupted. "Let's croak him and
be done with it."

"Yeah!" Turk growled.

The two thugs advanced from the doorway. But Sam Baron halted them with
an
oath.

"The first guy who tries to croak Mason gets a slug from my gun! We ain't
killing this wise jasper. We need him in our business. A guy that can fake
jewels as neat as he can, is worth a hell of a lot more to us as a live
proposition. This is a snatch job!"

"Suppose that blond dame of his squeals?"

"What can she say? And she won't talk, anyhow. Didn't you hear this wise
guy tell her to button her lip till she heard from him? Take him, boys!"

At the cry, Mason tried to throw himself backward toward the window. He
had no chance. Turk put him out of action with a swift blow that dazed him.
Squint grabbed the wrists of the victim.

Both of Mason's hands were thrust limply into his coat pockets. A hole
was
slashed through the lining of each pocket. Cords were tightly drawn around the
wrists, and the cord was looped beneath the coat by thugs who knew their

business.

When they had finished, there was no outward evidence that Mason was a prisoner. The cords that were stretched tautly around his stomach and back were concealed by his buttoned coat. A gag was jammed into his mouth and his lips pulled down over the wad by strips of flesh-colored adhesive tape.

Sam Baron chuckled.

"Very nice! Squint, stay here. Turk, you beat it downstairs and out the back. Tell Pete everything is O.K. in here. Find out if we're ready for the walkout."

Turk left the room.

"Pete is probably asleep under a bush, the lazy punk," Squint grinned. "I never saw such a sleepy mug in all my life!"

BUT Pete wasn't asleep. Events unknown to the mobsmen had snapped Pete to a tense watchfulness.

He had barely clipped the outside wire of Rodney Mason's telephone, when he heard the hissing whisper:

"Marsland!"

And the sound of that name sent an icy chill through Pete's blood. Only one man in New York could have uttered that call.

The Shadow!

The Shadow alone knew that "Pete" and Cliff Marsland were the same personality. The Shadow had planted Marsland in Baron's gang as a spy. Now his voice was calling from the thick blur of bushes that surrounded the chemist's suburban home.

Marsland glided toward the shrubbery. The black-robed figure of The Shadow confronted him. Half turned so that he could watch the house, Marsland listened intently to the swift questions of The Shadow.

Some he was able to answer. Others he was not. The gang had not taken Pete fully into its confidence. He had no knowledge where the kidnap hideout was located. That was Sam Baron's secret. The car they were going to use for the snatch was parked in the rear lane.

Suddenly, The Shadow vanished. Cliff Marsland knew why, as his attention was jerked back toward the house. Feet were descending the rear stairs. The Shadow's keen ears had heard the sound a few seconds before it registered on Marsland's senses.

Cliff sprang away from the bush. He dropped in a drowsy pose to the grass, pretending to be half asleep. Turk swore as he emerged from the rear door and saw him.

"What a guy! You're supposed to be a lookout, dope!"

"Can't I watch layin' down?" Cliff whined in the sleepy drawl he always used in the role of Pete. "The car's O.K. Everything's set."

Turk melted back into the house. Cliff sprang to his feet.

He glanced anxious toward the parked car. It was placed in the rear lane, so that it was clearly visible from where Cliff stood. There was no sign of The Shadow. Cliff, however, sensed where he was.

The Shadow had already attained his objective. He was crouched in utter darkness. He had slipped inside the luggage compartment in the back of the car.

It was not a comfortable fit. A huge metal object made it difficult for The Shadow to find room for his doubled-up body. But the nature of that object made his eyes gleam with satisfaction. It gave him a direct clue to the place where the mob was planning to take Rodney Mason.

The thing was an outboard motor!

There was only one answer to the riddle. The gang was going to use a boat and not on a river! The Hudson was too far away. The hide-out must be on one of the many lakes that dotted this suburban section.

The Shadow was in a grim dilemma. He had to hide long enough to make sure where the lake was located. But if he stayed too long in his dangerous hiding place, he would be discovered when the thugs opened the back of the car to remove the outboard motor.

The Shadow accepted the risk. He remained where he was.

CHAPTER IX

THE STEEL HOOK

CLIFF MARSLAND'S uneasy thoughts remained on The Shadow, as the kidnap sedan hummed swiftly along.

He and Squint sat on the rear seat, with Rodney Mason between them. Turk drove the car. Sam Baron sat up front with Turk. No one but Baron knew exactly where the car was heading. He directed Turk which roads to take.

Mile after mile slid backward. Finally, at an order from Baron, the sedan turned onto an unpaved road. It wound through a thick growth of pine and hemlock, climbed higher and higher toward the brow of a hill.

Suddenly, the road turned sharply at the verge of a steep cliff. The ground fell away toward a secluded, cuplike valley. There was the blue shimmer of a lake far below. Baron's eyes gleamed at sight of the water.

"Take it easy down the hill," he told Turk. "When you reach the bottom, bear left. Keep your eyes open for a rowboat without oars."

The hill was steep. Turk took the left turn at the bottom and began to circle the lake. It was a large one, with a wooded island out in the center. There was no sign of life on the road, on the lake, or on the shaggy island.

Presently, Turk jammed on the brakes.

A rowboat was anchored about ten feet from the muddy edge of the water. There were no oars in the boat. It looked like a leaky old craft abandoned by some camper at the end of the summer season.

Sam Baron barked quick orders.

"Squint, you stick close to Mason. Turk, get out and drag the outboard motor from the back. Pete - wake up!" Marsland had been thinking desperately how to protect The Shadow without ruining his role of spy. His closed eyes opened.

"Wade out to that rowboat, Pete," Baron growled. "Maybe the cold water will help to wake you up!"

Marsland stepped to the road. He watched Turk walk around the car toward the closed compartment where The Shadow was hidden. Gently, his hand slid toward the gun in his hip pocket. He waited, ready to kill Turk the moment he yelled his discovery.

But Turk uttered no loud cry of alarm. He merely leaned forward and dragged the heavy outboard motor to the road. There was no sign of The Shadow!

THERE was cold sweat on Cliff Marsland's forehead. With a quiver of relief, he realized that The Shadow must have left the car while it had slowly descended the hill that led to the lake.

A command from Baron snapped Marsland out of his daze.

"Get out to that rowboat and pull it closer!"

Marsland obeyed. The slop of the cold water chilled his legs, but he didn't mind that. The Shadow was safe! And so was Marsland's dangerous role of spy. The Shadow had taken care of both.

Quickly, the outboard motor was attached to the rowboat. Rodney Mason was

forced aboard. Turk jerked the starting cord on the motor. It sputtered and broke into a noisy clamor. Then the rowboat chugged across the blue lake.

Baron

steered for the island. He headed the boat toward a wooded tip of land that thrust outward like a green finger. Behind it was a deep inlet.

The crooks splashed ashore, dragging Mason with them. There was no sign of

a path among the labyrinth of evergreens. But Baron seemed to know the way.

Presently, a clearing appeared among the trees. In the center of the clearing was a log cabin.

"Take Mason inside," Baron ordered.

There was no door on the cabin. Only rusted hinges showed where a door had

once been. The glass was broken in all the windows. Nothing was visible inside but the log walls, and a floor that was deep in drifted leaves.

Baron kicked away the leaves from a spot in the center of the stone floor.

Then he bent and jerked strongly at what looked like a metal ring. A square section of stone rose on oiled hinges and a dark opening was disclosed. When Baron snapped on his electric torch, its yellow beam showed a flight of stone steps leading to a cellar underneath the cabin.

Rodney Mason was dragged down the steps. The thugs stared about them with grunts of satisfaction. Baron grinned at their approval.

There was an oil stove in one corner. Shelves were filled with canned goods and groceries. There were two bunks alongside the wall. When a kerosene lamp was lit, the underground room looked like a comfortable club house. There was even a stack of magazines on a table.

But Baron's eyes were savage as he stared at the prisoner. He removed his gag, chuckling at Mason's feeble oaths.

He dragged a chair to the middle of the room. Over his head, imbedded in the stone ceiling, was a stout metal hook. He tested that hook, then stepped down.

BARON began to pile canned goods on the floor beneath the hook in the ceiling. He built up three or four tiers of the cans, making a shaky top layer of only one or two of the tin containers.

"Lift Mason's arms above his head," he ordered. "I want a stout cord tied tight around both his thumbs. Get me? Just his thumbs!"

Mason's face paled.

"You're a fool," the chemist told Baron, huskily. "You're making the biggest mistake you ever made in your life!"

"Yeah? How do you figure that?"

"None of your damned business, you stupid idiot!"

Squint and Turk leaped at him. Mason tried desperately to battle his captors. It was a futile hope. A pistol butt struck him on the temple.

Before he could recover, his thumbs were looped tightly together. He was forced to mount the shaky pile of canned goods. It was Baron who tied his thumbs to the overhead hook.

"Suit yourself," Baron chuckled. "If you try to escape, you're going to upset a couple of those cans under your feet. That will be kinda tough on your thumbs!"

He turned to Squint.

"Get the boat ready. I got to make a phone call to Manhattan before I go to work on this bird. Let him hang here till I get back."

Rodney Mason's suspended body reeled. One of the cans shifted beneath his feet and he only managed to hold his balance by a grim effort. Agony gleamed in

his staring eyes. For a moment, he seemed about to shout something at Baron; then, he clamped his lips tight.

"You and Pete stay here," Baron told Turk.

He ascended the cellar stairs, Squint with him. Their footsteps were audible overhead for a moment. Then there was silence. Marsland chuckled.

"Boy, what a break for me!" he said, With a wide yawn, he walked to one of the bunks and sprawled lengthwise in it. "Oh, boy! Comfort!"

"You lazy bum," Turk scowled.

But he followed Marsland's example. He lay back, watching the lengthened figure of Rodney Mason. The chemist stood on tiptoe, afraid to move for fear of upsetting his dizzy perch. His thumbs, tied to the hook in the ceiling, were white and bloodless.

Behind closed eyes, Cliff Marsland's brain was working fiercely. He had hoped that Baron would leave him behind to help guard the prisoner. Already, he had formulated a plan to help Mason escape.

It was a plan that would also protect Marsland's real identity. He wanted to continue in his role of the sleepy Pete. By throwing the blame of Mason's escape on a mythical enemy, he hoped to be able to do both of these things successfully.

MEANWHILE, Baron and Squint were crossing the lake. They grounded at the same spot where they had left the car. There was no one in sight along the lonely shore road.

Baron had taken no chances of anyone noticing the empty sedan. He had backed the car into a near-by thicket.

Pushing aside a tangled nest of branches, Baron squirmed inward to where the car waited in its dim covert.

He opened the door. As he did so, a black figure rose from the floor of the sedan. Gloved hands darted at the throat of the startled crook.

Baron recoiled with an attempted cry of terror. But his yell was never uttered. The sinewy hands of The Shadow choked the cry into nothingness.

Squint was still at the shore of the lake, busily unshipping the outboard motor from the rowboat. He crossed the road presently, carrying the heavy motor in both arms.

He was easy prey for The Shadow. His gagged-and-bound figure was shoved into the rear seat of the sedan alongside Sam Baron.

The black-clad figure of The Shadow emerged from the thicket. He carried with him the heavy outboard motor. Once more, the rowboat chugged away from the shore. It headed for the island.

But The Shadow did not steer for the same inlet where the crooks had landed. He bore around to the other side of the island, where the wind blew steadily and strongly from the shore. It carried away with it the sound of the motor.

The Shadow allowed the boat to drift silently inshore.

CHAPTER X

GUN BAIT

CLIFF MARSLAND, in his sleepy guise of Pete, lay full-length in one of the bunks of the cellar hide-out. He replied drowsily to Turk's attempts at conversation. After a while, Turk relapsed into sullen silence. This suited Cliff. It was essential to his scheme that there be absolute silence in the cellar.

His plan was simple. It was based entirely on psychology. All he had to do was to work on Turk's nerves.

Suddenly, Cliff's eyes flew wide open. He sprang from the bed.

"What's that?" he gasped.

Turk's gun flashed into his hand.

"What's the matter, dope? You crazy?"

"Didn't you hear it? Somebody's upstairs! I heard a twig snap under someone's foot."

Turk listened. The silence was profound.

"You dreamed it! G'wan back to sleep."

Marsland pretended to obey. But five minutes later, he again leaped from his bunk, listening rigidly.

"There! Did you hear that?" he exclaimed.

This time, Turk didn't even draw his gun.

"You going yellow, you punk?"

Marsland was trembling. He pointed toward the trapdoor.

"I tell you I heard it! Back me up. I'm gonna make sure."

He began to creep silently up the steps. Turk shot a quick glance toward the hanging Mason. Then he followed Pete.

The trapdoor lifted slowly. The leaf-littered floor of the cabin was empty. The only sound was the rustle of trees in the tug of the strong wind.

"Watch that guy downstairs," Marsland whispered. "I'm gonna sneak outside and have a look."

Before Turk could object, he moved cautiously through the open doorway. He

disappeared through the thick lacing of pine branches.

Behind him, he could hear contemptuous laughter. He selected a tree trunk that concealed him, yet gave him a clear view of the cabin. The trapdoor was still open. But Turk had descended to the cellar.

Instantly, Cliff Marsland hurried under the spreading trees, searching anxiously for the spot he needed. He found it twenty yards away - a declivity in the ground that was soft and muddy.

Marsland circled the spot, stepping on dry grass so as to leave no footprints. When he reached the opposite side, he advanced part way through the mud, making a line of smudged prints. He whirled suddenly, leaving a pattern exactly like that of a man who had turned with desperate speed, and raced back through the soft mud, making a second line of footprints.

He hurried across dry grass to the tree where he had originally stood. Stepping backward, he fired at the tree. The shot made a roaring echo. The bullet cut a shallow gouge across the bark.

Marsland gave a fake yell of terror. He flung the exploded cartridge away with all his strength. His aim was true. The shell landed in the muddy declivity where Marsland had made the two sets of footprints.

Then he flung himself flat on his face.

MARSLAND was barely in time. The next instant, he heard the racing feet of

Turk. Marsland's warning yell made Turk fling himself flat to the grass beside him.

"Watch out!" Marsland gasped. "There's a gunman somewhere among those trees! He nearly croaked me!"

Turk listened to a quick, breathless story. He eyed the bullet-creased trunk of the tree. His mouth hardened murderously. At his whisper, Marsland nodded. The two began to wriggle forward on their bellies toward the spot where

Marsland had pointed.

The footprints in the mud told a convincing story. A man had sneaked

treacherously forward to ambush Pete. He had fired one shot, had whirled and fled backward to the safety of dense underbrush.

Turk picked up the empty shell. He peered rigidly through the interlaced bushes. But there was no sound except the rustle and murmur of the pine branches.

"If we split and each of us covers half the island, we can nail the louse," Marsland breathed. "The island is small. If the guy swims or tries to row away in a boat, we can riddle him from the shore."

Turk hesitated. His glance moved back toward the unguarded cabin, with its trapdoor still open. Marsland's heart stopped beating for a second. If Turk refused

He didn't. With gleaming eyes, he nodded. After a moment's whispered consultation, the two separated, going in opposite directions.

But Marsland didn't go very far. He waited until he could no longer hear the faint rustling of bushes from Turk's cautious progress. Then he glided noiselessly back to the cabin. In an instant, he was squirming through the open trapdoor.

Rodney Mason was still hung in agonized helplessness atop the tottering pile of canned goods. His arms were no longer curved at the elbows to take the strain off whitened thumbs. Mason's strength was almost gone.

Swiftly, Marsland had seized a chair and was freeing the tortured man. A quick slash from a knife blade released the cord from the hook. Mason's body pitched sideways.

Marsland caught Mason before he fell to the floor. Lowering him gently, he laid the exhausted prisoner on the floor of the cellar.

The chemist tried to gasp out words. But Marsland laid a quick palm across the quivering lips.

"Quiet!" he breathed in Mason's ear. "You're safe, if we work fast and don't make any sound. I kidded Turk into searching the north end of the island.

You can escape from the south end. Can you swim? Are you strong enough?"

Mason nodded. His thickened voice became clearer. "Who - who are you? What mob are you with?"

"Never mind about that. You can take my word that I'm not a crook. I'm a lawman. I'm here to save you."

He leaned forward. He raised his knife to sever the short length of cord that was still knotted around both of Mason's swollen thumbs.

"You dirty, double-crossing rat!" a voice screamed.

IT was Turk. He was standing halfway down the trapdoor steps. There was a leveled gun in his hand. The gun pointed toward Marsland's heart as he whirled.

"You rat!" Turk snarled. "I knew there was something phony about that shot

outside. You were too anxious to get rid of me! So I played dumb and pretended to fall for your bluff. I gave you a chance to show your hand. And now -"

Marsland's hands were lifted, empty, above his head. Rodney Mason lay helpless, unable to interfere. Turk leaped grimly downward to the cellar floor.

His blazing eyes remained watchfully on Marsland as he jumped. Because of that, he miscalculated the distance from the step to the floor. He stumbled slightly as he landed. That was all the break Marsland needed.

His diving attack brought him head-down toward Turk. A bullet flamed above

his hunched shoulder. Then Marsland was clutching for the gun. His fingers caught at the barrel. But with a furious swerve of his arm, Turk brought the jerking weapon around in a quick arc. The barrel struck across Cliff Marsland's temple with a slicing motion. It laid open the skin and sent blood pouring down his cheek.

Cliff sagged weakly to his knees. He tried to throw himself sideways. But again the bloody gun smashed at his skull. Cliff's body was like soft glue. He was unable to move a muscle to defend himself.

He slid into merciful blackness

THE thing that roused him finally was a steady and repeated agony in his ribs. He opened pain-glazed eyes. Turk was kicking him viciously with the blunt toe of his heavy shoe.

"Wake up, you damned spy! I wanna talk to you!"

Cliff Marsland rolled over with a groan. Furious hands jerked him to his feet. He was thrust into a chair. His arms were bound tightly in a webbing of cord. The cords fettered him at shoulder elbow and wrist.

"You dirty stool pigeon! How d'yuh like it, huh?"

Turk's laughter was like the rasping sound of a hyena. He whirled toward Rodney Mason. But Mason was still helpless. Turk had sneaked back too swiftly to allow Marsland time to free the chemist's tied thumbs.

"Who is this guy?" Turk growled at Mason. "A pal of yours? What's his real name?"

"I - I don't know," Mason gasped. "I swear that's the truth!"

Turk's fist brought blood pouring from Marsland's nose.

"Who planted you in Baron's gang, you damned stoolie? Who are you working for?"

Marsland didn't reply. Turk uttered a crow of ugly laughter.

"A tough guy, eh? You won't talk? That's swell! I like tough guys. They're fun to work on!"

He got to work at once. The "persuader" he used was Cliff's own knife. The keen point of the blade brought crimson welling from beneath Marsland's fingernails. He gritted his teeth to choke off a groan.

"Feel like talking, pal?" Turk leered.

"Go to hell!"

The knife point slashed open Marsland's shirt. The ridged muscles of his bared stomach were tense with pain. Cliff closed his eyes tightly, as the torturer straddled his body and leaned closer.

There was a brief silence. Then Marsland screamed!

The convulsive leap of his body almost toppled the crouched figure of his foe. But Turk hung on like a leech. Again, his knife moved deftly.

Marsland's teeth grated in his clenched jaws. His eyes had a glazed look. He began to shout thickly.

Cliff could stand no more - and Turk knew it. He withdrew the knife point from the bared flesh beneath him.

"Wanna talk now, pal?"

"Yes - yes!"

"Start with your real name. It ain't Pete. What is it?"

Marsland hesitated. The knife began to descend again. Its touch against Cliff's blood-spotted skin made him cringe. He whispered two agonized words.

"Cliff - Marsland."

But the name did not register on the listening ears of Turk. For one thing, slurred with pain, it was barely audible. For another, it was blanketed

by an unexpected sound echoing from the stairs that led down from the trapdoor:

A whisper of icy, sibilant laughter!

Turk whirled on his knees. A startled glance brought him leaping to his feet. He was staring at a black-robed figure who confronted him with sardonic mirth.

All he could see were burning eyes, a strong beaked nose, a grimly slitted mouth. A slouch hat covered the intruder's forehead and slanted low over his gleaming eyes. A black cloak hid the outline of that figure. The hands were gloved.

But Turk knew who it was. Fear bubbled in his shrill cry:
"The Shadow!"

CHAPTER XI

THE SHADOW'S EXPERIMENT

TERROR in the cry that burst from the lips of Turk was cunning camouflage. He cringed backward, pretending to trip over the prone body of Marsland. As his figure swerved, his arm swung wildly as though to preserve his balance. But the fingers of his right hand brushed close to his hip. His gun jerked into his hand.

Flame streaked toward the spot where The Shadow stood. But that spot was no longer occupied. The slug from Turk's smoking gun tunneled into bare wood.

The Shadow's mocking laughter sounded from the other side of the cellar. He had glided like a black-wraith from the spot where Turk had first seen him. His swift, noiseless movement had taken place in the time it took Turk to draw and fire his gun.

The Shadow had a logical purpose in delaying his attack. He did not want to kill Turk. He wished to capture him alive, to make him talk. For The Shadow was aware that behind the theft of Mason's synthetic sapphires, and the murder of Peter Randolph, was an unknown super-criminal working in the dark for gigantic profits.

The Shadow's mocking laughter was intended to trick Turk, to make him vulnerable to an attack less fatal than gunfire. It succeeded. At the sound, Turk whirled. His profile exposed the hollow of his left temple. The Shadow had

snatched up one of the heavy tins of canned goods from the floor.

He flung the missile in a straight, whizzing line as Turk's gun spat flame. The heavy can struck Turk in the temple, sent him staggering backward. His accurate squeeze on the trigger was offset by the convulsive jerk of his arm as the missile struck him. The gun muzzle slanted upward.

Turk's bullet clanged against the stone ceiling of the hidden cellar.

Instantly, The Shadow was leaping forward like a thunderbolt. His fingers darted for Turk's throat.

At the moment he had seen The Shadow's back-flung arm, Turk had sensed that he could not dodge the missile. His head rolled sideways as the heavy can struck him. His collapse to the floor was a fake.

As he rolled headlong in a seeming daze, the gun fell from his grasp. But the moment The Shadow dived to choke him into easy insensibility, Turk's hand darted into view from beneath his coat.

Again, he was holding the knife with which he had tortured Cliff Marsland!

THE blade slashed across The Shadow's fingers, leaving a bloody furrow. His grip loosened from Turk's gasping throat. But The Shadow was no longer underestimating the strength and fury of his foe.

Now began a grim struggle for possession of the knife. Rodney Mason was helpless to interfere. So was Cliff Marsland. Cliff tried to rise to his knees, and fell back dizzily with a groan.

The Shadow had a death grip on Turk's knife hand. He tried to reach backward for the butt of his own gun. It was nearly a fatal mistake. Turk's strength was prodigious. The Shadow missed the plunging whiz of the knife into his chest by a miraculous contortion of his body.

One hand on the knife was not enough to hold the powerful Turk. The Shadow gave up any thought of ending the fight with a blow of his pistol butt. He had to use both hands to keep himself from being ripped to bloody tatters.

Neither man uttered a sound except the panting grunts that came from his parted lips.

The Shadow was conserving his strength. Turk, on the contrary, was expending his efforts recklessly. He sensed it almost immediately. A cunning glint came into his eyes. He stopped his fierce efforts to rip The Shadow. The two men lay chest to chest in a breathless, gasping truce, while Turk gathered his strength for a final effort.

Both knew it. The knife remained taut in their double grip. The Shadow was glad of the respite. Staring through sweat-dimmed eyes at the wrist and forearms of Turk, he knew he was at grips with a man who was a veteran of many rough-and-tumble brawls.

It was Turk who laughed now - a deep, husky rumble in his corded throat. The Shadow waited silently for the final attack.

Suddenly, he felt the signal: a faint twitch of the nerves and muscles! He could feel Turk's chest move slightly as the killer drew a slow breath into his lungs.

The Shadow's own chest inflated. Swiftly, he was rolled on his back by a powerful heave of the killer. The knife jerked wildly in a double grip; it plunged crookedly at The Shadow's heart. But as it did, The Shadow twisted with every atom of the power he had saved for this final death flurry.

He used Turk's own strength to defeat him. He didn't try to hold back the whizzing blade. He deflected its path! The point ripped sideways through the cloth of The Shadow's robe, tearing it into tatters. The next instant, the steel buried itself in flesh.

Turk's flesh!

The Shadow had tried to hold that plunging knife. But Turk's pent-up fury was irresistible. Unable to restrain the power of his expanding muscles, he drove the knife hilt-deep into his own chest as The Shadow twisted the blade.

The recoil from that fatal blow pulled the dripping knife from the wound. Turk gave a shuddering cry as the steel left him; then he collapsed.

Blood gushed upward from the deep wound in his chest. One glance at the bright arterial blood, and The Shadow knew Turk was finished. He had pierced one of the ventricles of the man's heart.

The Shadow staggered to his feet. He was desperately tired. His fingers and hands felt as if they had been crushed in a clothes wringer.

Cliff Marsland was swaying on his knees. He pushed himself upright, staring at the expressionless face of The Shadow.

"Dead?" he voiced.

A nod from The Shadow. He had tried to avoid killing Turk. Now, the hope that Turk might betray the identity of the unknown master criminal who ruled

Sam Baron's gang - that hope was gone forever!

The usefulness of Cliff Marsland as a spy in the gang was gone, too.

THE SHADOW wasted no further time. He released Rodney Mason from the cord that held his thumbs. He rubbed those white and paralyzed thumbs until blood flowed back into them and Mason was able to move his stiffened fingers and wrists.

Mason picked up the fallen gun that Turk had dropped. Cliff Marsland listened to the swift orders of The Shadow.

There was no time to delay their escape. Turk's dead body could be left where it was until the police were notified. In the meantime, there were living rogues waiting to be attended to.

The thug known as Squint, and Sam Baron himself, were lying bound and gagged on the mainland, inside their own parked sedan. The Shadow had conquered them before he had stolen their boat and crossed the lake to the island.

Rodney Mason gave a shrill cry of delight at this welcome news. Cliff Marsland's eyes glowed. The men followed The Shadow up the stairs and through the trapdoor. The Shadow led them a zigzag trail to the tiny indentation on the shore where he had left the boat.

Rodney Mason grinned as he saw the boat over Marsland's shoulder. He tried to struggle from the thicket to the open shore. A branch slapped backward across his face.

"Hold that branch away!" he cried, excitedly.

Marsland drew the branch aside.

The next moment, Rodney Mason leaped! He had slyly jerked a gun from his pocket - the same weapon he had picked up so casually from the cellar floor. The butt of it struck Marsland a heavy blow on the side of his skull. Cliff had anticipated no treachery. Reeling, he dropped senseless to the mud.

Mason didn't wait to see the result of his treacherous attack. In one bound, he reached The Shadow. Again the gun butt swung murderously.

The Shadow went down in a limp huddle beside the sprawled body of Marsland.

Mason uttered a croaking gasp of satisfaction. He hurdled the two forms and sprang toward the rowboat. A quick shove sent it sliding into deep water.

As it floated away, Mason vaulted over the bow. He darted along the perilously rocking boat and fumbled for the engine cord. A quick jerk and the outboard motor sputtered into life. The boat shot away in a creamy froth, circled out of sight around the shaggy tip of the island.

THE moment the boat vanished, The Shadow was on his feet. He had not been knocked unconscious by the wily Mason. He merely wanted Mason to think so. He had seen the attack on Marsland and had allowed Mason to hit him a glancing blow.

His reason was coldly logical: He had not trusted Mason. He had seen cunning in the chemist's eyes when he had picked up Turk's gun in the cellar hideout.

The Shadow intended to know just what was behind the chemist's treachery! That was why he had allowed himself to fall so easy a victim to the attack of a exhausted man.

His quick efforts revived Marsland. Grim words spurted into Cliff's ear. The cold bite of the water roused Cliff still further, as he followed The

Shadow into the lake. The Shadow swam in a different direction from the one that the fleeing Mason had taken. The mainland at this point was quite close.

Marsland kept grimly behind the bobbing head of The Shadow. A soaked arm drew him safely to shore. The two stepped through slippery mud to the rutted road that circled the lake. They could hear from the other side of the island the faint echo of the outboard motor.

Marsland followed the flying heels of The Shadow. They raced along the lake road, hidden by the screen of trees.

But Rodney Mason beat them. When they rounded the last curve in the wooded road and could see again the level waters of the lake, the boat in which Mason had fled was jammed nose-deep into the bank.

Footprints led into the thicket where The Shadow had left the sedan containing Sam Baron and Squint. Baron's car was gone!

The Shadow did not echo Cliff Marsland's gasp of dismay. His eyes were ablaze with a grim flame. He had expected something like this. He had tested Mason as a man tests an unknown element in a chemical experiment. Mason had reacted positively.

The answer seemed incredulous. Why should Rodney Mason attack the rescuers who had saved him from torture at the hands of Baron's gang? And why should he flee with his kidnapers?

There were two possible answers to the riddle. Either might be true. Perhaps Mason trusted no one; perhaps he suspected that The Shadow and Marsland

were members of a rival underworld gang, as much to be feared by him as Sam Baron's mob.

But the second theory was a more sinister one. Not for an instant had The Shadow allowed himself to forget that behind Baron's gang was an unknown master

criminal who pulled the strings. Not even Baron himself knew who that chief was.

By an overzealous mistake, Baron might have kidnapped his own chief!

The Shadow was by no means sure of this. But there was grim laughter in his throat, as he stared at the empty thicket where Baron's sedan had stood.

CHAPTER XII

WHO IS OTTO MULLER?

WHEN Rodney Mason's stolen beat rammed its nose upward on the muddy edge of the mainland, his eyes gleamed shrewdly. He knew that the blows that had dropped Marsland and The Shadow had been hurriedly dealt. Mason had been almost

exhausted when he had swung his treacherous gun butt. He was aware that pursuit

would not be long delayed.

Mason dived through the concealing branches, to where he remembered the sedan had been parked. Its front wheels pointed toward the road.

With Turk's gun steady in his grasp, Mason flung open the rear door. He studied the unconscious faces of Baron and Squint. Both were tied securely; both were gagged.

Mason chuckled with the air of a man contemplating a very pleasant joke. He slammed the rear door. Circling the car, he slid coolly behind the wheel and

started the motor. He had worked so swiftly that barely a minute had elapsed since he had leaped ashore from the boat.

Nosing out of the thicket, Mason sent the sedan speeding along the road. As he neared the foot of the steep hill, he increased the speed recklessly.

But

the fleeing chemist was an excellent driver. He reached the top of the hill without accident. He took the winding lane back to the main highway.

When he felt the smoothness of concrete under his humming tires, Rodney Mason laughed with high-pitched delight at his escape.

The highway led straight southward to New York. Presently, Mason reached a

busy Westchester County intersection. He turned, approached the New York City limits through Yonkers. The chemist's goal was the subway line that ends at Van

Cortlandt Park. He wanted to get rid of Baron's car, for the subway was a safer

bet for a smart man.

Driving into the park, Mason took one of the broad, winding roads. His speed slackened. Presently, he saw what he wanted - a narrow lane that branched

off toward a more secluded section of the huge park. He followed the lane to a spot that was utterly deserted except for the gray, flitting shapes of a couple

of squirrels.

The frightened squirrels vanished. So did Rodney Mason.

THE moment he had the sedan parked out of sight, Mason yanked open the rear door. A quick tug of his hand lifted the lap robe from the unconscious crooks.

He searched them with swift efficiency. He found nothing on Squint but a gun, a box of cartridges, and a thick wad of currency.

But the eager chemist made a more interesting discovery on the crumpled figure of Sam Baron. He drew a folded scrap of paper from an inner compartment of Baron's wallet. The paper was dirty and creased, but the typewritten words on it were clearly legible.

It was a note signed by a man whose name made Mason's eyebrows lift with quick interest. He read:

The ice business is picking up. Get the ice wagon ready. But no smoke wagon unless you have to! Same split as usual.

OTTO MULLER

Mason shoved the note into his pocket. His eyes were pin points of cold flame. He knew that in the underworld argot, "ice" meant jewelry. A "smoke-wagon" was a gun. The note was an obvious order to Sam Baron to pull a jewelry robbery without gunplay or noise.

But the name signed to that strange message was not so obvious. Who was Otto Muller? Mason made note of the license number of the sedan. There was a chance that the car was registered in Baron's name; but Mason had a queer hunch

that it wasn't. He intended to make sure.

He didn't return to the lane along which he had driven in the sedan. He pushed across the park on foot, taking a short-cut through the shrubbery, till he emerged on a pedestrian path.

Five minutes later, Mason was out of the park, hurrying to the steps of the subway station.

He took an express downtown, went straight to the Motor Vehicle Bureau. After a little trouble, Mason had the information he wanted. The sedan was registered in the name of Otto Muller. His address was listed as a business number on the upper west side of the city in Washington Heights.

Rodney Mason's tight smile deepened as he left the building. He decided to

investigate the Washington Heights address at once. But another thought stayed

him.

He thought of a girl. A gorgeous, slim-figured blonde on Park Avenue, who might make trouble for a smart man unless she was properly handled. Rodney Mason whistled for a taxicab. He gave the driver the address of Isabel Pyne.

ISABEL flushed when she saw Mason. She was wearing a silken house coat that emphasized the curved perfection of her figure. She swayed eagerly toward Mason. He slid an arm about her soft, ungirdled waist.

Then Isabel caught her breath and recoiled. She noticed that the maid whom

she had hired to help her pack her belongings, was still in the room.

Mason glanced keenly at the maid and the half-packed suitcases on the floor. He masked his quick frown with a smile.

"What in the world is going on Isabel? You're not moving, are you?"

"Yes. I - I decided I wanted to get away for a while. I telephoned for maid service to help me pack. That's all there is to it, Rodney."

"I see." His smiling lips brushed her ear, whispered, "Get rid of the maid!"

Isabel looked puzzled, but she obeyed. When they were alone, Mason caught Isabel to him. He crushed her in a quick embrace.

"Do you love me?" he whispered in her ear.

Her body relaxed in his arms. Mason bent and kissed the ivory gleam of her

tilted throat. When he released her, Isabel laughed shakily. Her tremulous hand

tightened the loose house coat across her bosom.

"Why are you moving?" Mason asked her.

"I'm frightened! You - you know what happened to me last night."

"That's why I came here to see you," Mason replied in a low voice. "I've got a place picked out where you can live in perfect safety."

Isabel shook her head.

"It won't be necessary. I'm planning to stay at the home of my uncle, Julius Hankey. He's been begging me to visit him for a long time."

Mason tried to dissuade Isabel from her purpose. He was so stubborn and insistent that at last the girl began to grow angry. There was a queer look in Mason's smiling eyes, that revived Isabel's suspicion of his behavior on the preceding night. She reminded him of his peculiar absence from home. She asked him flatly where he had been.

Rodney dodged a reply. Isabel was unable to pin him down. Smilingly, he agreed that the home of Julius Hankey was probably the safest place for her to stay. To stop further talk about his own activities, he told her of his discovery that a man named Otto Muller was leagued with the crooks who had stolen his sapphires.

Fright returned to Isabel's eyes. She begged Rodney to notify the police. Either that, or to drop the whole thing and mind his own business.

Mason drew her closer to him. Isabel's heart began to pound dizzily. She was conscious of his warmth and his strength. Then sanity returned to her. Gently, she pushed him away, her bosom heaving under the thin silk of the house coat.

"Rodney, you must go! This - this is madness!"

She laid a timid hand on his arm.

"Promise me that you won't - won't mix yourself up any further with this man Muller! You're risking death!"

"I promise," Rodney Mason told her.

BUT Mason was lying. He had no intention of dropping the trail his shrewdness had already uncovered. The moment he left the Park Avenue apartment

of Isabel Pyne, he called a taxicab and drove swiftly northward to Washington Heights.

He didn't give the driver the address of Otto Muller. He had already consulted a city directory. He knew the street corner that was nearest to the number he was seeking. When he left the cab, his eyes peered eagerly down the avenue.

Dusk was falling. The sidewalk was a blaze of lighted shop windows and electric signs. There was one sign, midway down the block, that made Rodney Mason's heart leap. It was a neon sign in bright red letters. The sign threw a reflection on the sidewalk like a crimson smear of blood. It read:

OTTO MULLER
Delicatessen and Table Luxuries

Mason was so interested in the sign that he saw nothing else. He was unaware of the casual glance he received from a man who was lounging under a cigar store awning at the corner. The man held a folded tabloid newspaper in his hand. He kept idly tapping his thigh with the paper.

He had seen Mason alight from the taxicab. He had watched his quick glance toward the delicatessen. He waited, tapping his leg with the paper.

But as Mason started to walk slowly along the sidewalk, the man who was watching him changed his position. He stepped out toward the curb. The rolled newspaper lifted toward the brim of his hat. He gave the hat a quick upward shove, as though it had settled too low on his forehead. Having done this, he vanished around the corner.

A workman in stained yellow dungarees saw that innocent-looking signal. He was standing near another workman, close to the curb. A manhole cover had been lifted, and the two laborers seemed to be busy with pails, ladder and rope gear. But there was no metal guard railing about the open manhole in the pavement.

As Rodney Mason approached the spot, one of the workmen blundered into his path. He apologized as Mason bumped into him. Then, suddenly, he thrust out his foot and shoved.

The broad back of the second workman shielded the first. Mason fell staggering forward, his arms outflung to save himself. His feet skidded on the greasy rim of the open manhole.

He plunged straight downward with a shrill cry.

His yell drew instant attention to the accident. People turned, just in time to see the unfortunate chemist vanish into the open manhole. Women screamed. Men shouted and ran forward.

The two workmen handled the confusion deftly. One of them seized the ladder and slid it downward through the manhole. The other drove back the crowd with a grim shout.

"Take it easy, folks! Get back! The guy'll be all right! We'll have him out in a jiffy!"

His companion vanished nimbly down the ladder. He had picked up a small wrench, but nobody in the crowd noticed that minor detail. Nor could they see him after his head dipped below the surface of the pavement.

MASON, floundering on hands and knees at the slimy bottom of the pit, heard a panting breath. Looking over his shoulder, he saw his assailant swing the wrench with silent fury. It cracked against Mason's skull. He dropped in a sodden, unconscious heap.

He was instantly picked up by the man who had slugged him. Hanging like a

limp sack over the workman's shoulder, he was carried up the ladder to the street.

"Better call an ambulance," the man with the wrench said to his partner. "The poor guy hit his head when he fell. He's hurt!"

"I did call an ambulance - Hey, get back, everybody! Here it comes now!"

It was extraordinary that an ambulance could respond to an accident call with such speed. But nobody in the excited crowd thought of that. The clanging of the bell made the crowd squeeze forward. A white-coated intern shoved through the throng and made a quick examination.

"The man's skull is fractured," he said, and motioned toward the ambulance.

The driver brought a stretcher. Mason was slid swiftly into the ambulance.

The chauffeur ran to his seat, and the white-coated intern squatted jauntily in the rear.

The ambulance sped away. It was marked "HOSPITAL" in large neat letters. The paint looked exceedingly fresh.

The two workmen closed the manhole with a bang of the metal cover. They gathered up rope, ladder and pails. Turning the corner where the man with the folded newspaper had vanished, they hurried to a small truck at the curb. The chauffeur of the truck was the man with the newspaper.

Both workmen sprang aboard. The truck sped down the dark side street.

"See any cops?" the driver growled in a hard, metallic voice

One of the men in dungarees chuckled.

"Not a one! Boy, when we work, we work fast!"

Onlookers on the avenue began to scatter. The only spectator who knew anything about the truth was a quiet man who stood on the outskirts of the crowd, panting a little. He had arrived a moment or two before the ambulance. He had recognized the faces of the driver and the intern. Smart guys, both of them! A neat snatch job!

He was Sam Baron. His report, phoned in from a telephone pay station just outside Van Cordlandt Park, was responsible for the whole kidnap scheme.

Baron had been faking unconsciousness when Rodney Mason had searched him. He had seen Mason write down the car's license number. As soon as Mason had left, Baron had loosened his bonds. The rest was easy for a well-organized gang.

Smiling broadly, Sam Baron sauntered along the sidewalk. He entered the delicatessen run by Otto Muller.

CHAPTER XIII

BEHIND THE BROWN BEARD

MULLER'S delicatessen was crowded. Two clerks behind a long counter were having their hands full serving customers. They paid no particular attention to Sam Baron.

Sam seemed to be in no hurry. He lighted a cigarette and his gaze drifted leisurely about the store.

None of the other customers noticed Sam. If they had, it would have been impossible to guess the real direction of Baron's interest. His eyes remained dull as he stared briefly at the two things that had brought him into this busy store.

One was a dingy door at the back of the shop. The other was a mechanical piano that stood near the lunch tables along the side wall.

Baron sauntered over to the piano. It was a nickel-in-the-slot variety. Behind a glass panel was a card with a printed list of the selections that the

piano played. A lever at the side moved a pointer to the various popular tunes to which a person might listen.

Baron grinned faintly when he saw that No. 9 on the list had been covered by a slip of paper. On the pasted paper was a typewritten line in smudged capital letters: "OUT OF ORDER."

It was to this particular line that Sam Baron moved the selection lever. He dropped a nickel into the slot. Evidently the sign meant nothing, for the piano immediately began to play.

Baron was not surprised. He knew that the printed warning was merely a ruse to keep ordinary customers from playing a tune that was a password to a criminal fence.

The tune was a popular one:

"There's ice in my heart,
Since you said we must part;
You thought it was nice, when you handed me ice,
You laughed when I said I was blue!
But now I am glad,
It is you who is sad,
For I'm handing the ice back to yo-o-ou!"

When the tune was finished, Baron moved the pointer away from the selection. He glanced toward the door in the rear of the shop. It opened almost instantly. A man in a white apron entered from a rear room.

He was a cheerful, bustling man who looked pleased at the number of customers in the store. He had friendly, wrinkled eyes and a brown-bearded face.

Baron nodded to him. "Good evening, Mr. Muller."

"Goot evening, sir. Haff you been waited on?"

"I want a can of imported sardines."

"Certainly."

He selected a can from the shelf, began to wrap it in paper.

"Make sure that sardine can has a key with it," Baron said. "The last one didn't."

Otto Muller chuckled genially. "This one you will haff no trouble with."

Baron paid for his purchase and left the shop. Another customer approached

Muller, but Muller avoided him deftly. He nodded briefly at one of his clerks to

wait on the man; then bustled away with the air of one who has forgotten something.

He hurried into the rear of the store, closing the door softly behind him.

MEANWHILE, Sam Baron was walking swiftly toward the corner. He had already ripped the wrapping away from his can of sardines. The usual tiny key was glued to the top of the tin, but Baron paid no attention to it. He was grinning at a second key that had been deftly wrapped with the purchase by the wily Otto Muller. This was a large brass one.

Baron slipped it into his pocket. He tossed the sardines into a trash barrel and continued leisurely to the head of a dark, narrow alley. The alley led to a concrete courtyard in the rear of the delicatessen shop.

There was no back door leading from the store. But there was a slanting cellar door set in the concrete. It looked like painted gray wood. When Baron touched it, he felt the cold surface of steel.

Glancing cautiously around, he made sure that he was unobserved. Then he

opened the cellar door with his brass key. A moment later, he had descended from sight, locking the cellar door above his head.

The glow of his flashlight disclosed an empty room. Baron played his torch on the bare inner wall. He waited.

In a moment, a section of the wall moved aside. A cheerful glow from within disclosed the smiling face of brown-bearded Otto Muller.

Baron walked through the opening. He found himself in a luxuriously furnished chamber. There were rugs on the floor, shaded lamps, every evidence of wealth and comfort. Sam grinned as he accepted an expensive cigar from Muller. It wasn't the first time he had been here.

Otto Muller was Baron's superior in an efficient criminal organization for the theft and disposal of precious stones.

Muller's delicatessen was merely a blind to deceive the police. His real business was crooked. He was the fence for the gang. He was also contact man for the unknown leader who directed the mob. Criminal orders, sent secretly to Muller, were carried out by Sam Baron and his picked gunmen.

Both men were delighted with the easy capture of Rodney Mason.

"I knew Mason would head here right off the reel," Baron said, with a grin. "I was wide awake when he stole your note and took the license number of the sedan. He thought Squint and I were unconscious. But the minute he scrambled, we got loose in a hurry. You certainly worked fast, after I phoned."

Sam poured himself a drink of whisky from a bottle of Muller's. "So what now?"

"Another job," Muller said, grimly. "Tonight."

"Murder job?"

"Yes."

They used the word murder as casually as men discussing a haircut. Muller reached into a drawer and removed something wrapped in tissue paper. It was a gorgeous sapphire.

Muller held it to the light. He chuckled as he saw the crimson blur, like blood, imprisoned in the depths of the stone. It was one of the synthetic blood

sapphires that Baron had stolen from the laboratory of Rodney Mason.

"The name of the next victim is Andrew Shafter," Muller said. "He's the last millionaire collector that we absolutely know has one of the original blood, sapphires. Your job is to steal the real gem and leave this fake one clutched in Shafter's dead hand."

"It'll be a sweet job," Baron promised. "No gunplay to attract cops. I'll either use a knife or I'll strangle the guy."

Muller shook his head. There was a cold glint in his pitiless eyes.

"You're wrong, Sam. There will be no knife. And no strangulation. Andrew Shafter is going to have his throat torn out by a ghostly dog. A dog that no one will ever see!"

Baron shivered slightly. "Nix on that dog stuff! I haven't forgotten yet the battle I had with that damned mutt of Peter Randolph's. I'm not crowding my luck with any more dogs!"

Otto Muller uttered a croaking laugh.

"This time, my friend, you will not have to worry about a living animal. The dog you will use to rip out Andrew Shafter's throat - will be a mechanical one!"

"Huh?"

"Take a look at this!" Muller said.

MULLER walked to a tall steel cabinet and unlocked it. He took out something that looked like an orchestra leader's baton. But the shaft of that strange implement was thick and solid. It was tipped at one end by five claws,

like, those commonly used in a Chinese back scratcher.

Sam Baron's breath gulped at sight of those shining claws. They were tempered steel, ground to sharp, ugly edges at the broad points. Sam picked up the implement and hefted it in his muscular hand. He was not an imaginative man, but he could guess what would happen to a man's throat if those steel claws were hooked into soft flesh and ripped loose with a powerful jerk.

"You like it?" Muller whispered. "Can you see what the police will think when they find Shafter's body? Can you see what the newspapers will print? Every man, woman and child in the city will be convinced that Andrew Shafter died from the same ghostly attack that killed Randolph!

"The criminal will be the nude, golden statue of a pagan goddess - a woman

with the head of a snarling dog! The newspapers will say she was avenging the sacrilegious theft of the Necklace of Purity from her temple in India!"

With a shudder, Sam Baron eyed the deadly device in his hand.

"Where the devil did you get it?" he grated.

"A little idea of the boss's," Muller said huskily. "It came by messenger this afternoon. You've got to hand it to the big-shot. Whoever he is, the man is a genius! He never misses a trick."

Baron nodded. He felt the same way. He grinned and returned to the subject

of the blood sapphires.

"We've got ten of the real ones now," he muttered. "Right?"

"Right!" Muller said.

"That makes eleven, after I croak Shafter tonight. There were twenty-one jewels in the original Necklace of Purity. Have you been able to locate the ten stones that are still missing?"

"No," Muller admitted, and there was anger in his grunt. "Shafter's is the last I have any line on. That's why the boss wants us to play up the supernatural stuff. We're depending on that to scare the guts out of those ten unknown collectors who still hold sapphires.

"Some of 'em will surely try to get rid of their dangerous stones. They'll

be afraid to go to the police, because the law would know they purchased stolen

property. So they'll try to dispose of their sapphires in the underworld market."

"And?" Baron suggested.

"Any underworld contact they make will lead them to my door. I'm the only fence in the city who handles big-time stuff. The minute I get a proposition, I'll play cagey.

"I'll pretend I'm afraid to do business for fear of getting a visit from the Dog goddess. But I'll take good care to find out who the owners are - and you'll have some more murder jobs to do. You see how the thing works? We'll use

fear! Not to buy the sapphires, but to find out where they are!"

Otto Muller rose to his feet. His voice became crisp.

"O.K., Sam. Scram! You haven't got much time to line up the Shafter job."

Baron took another drink of Muller's whisky, while the rascally delicatessen dealer wrapped up the steel-clawed implement of death.

FIVE minutes later, Sam was outside the panel of Muller's ornate hiding place. He was in the bare chamber that gave access to the slanting cellar door.

He opened the door, went out into the courtyard. A quick sneak took him through the dark alley to the street. He hailed a cab and drove quietly away.

Otto Muller waited a while before he left his luxuriously furnished

office. He seemed in no hurry. Finally, he turned out the lights and opened another secret panel - one that gave on to the storeroom-cellar of the delicatessen. Muller's clerks knew nothing of his secret chamber in the basement.

A flight of wooden steps led aloft. Muller climbed to the rear room from which he had first appeared to sell Baron a can of sardines, and entered the store. He spoke in a slow, kindly voice to the clerks behind the counter.

"I'm leaving now. I may be back a little later in the evening. Goot night."

"Good night, Mr. Muller."

The fence grinned faintly as he walked past a manhole cover near the curb.

He entered a taxicab and was driven downtown. But Muller didn't drive straight to his destination. At Seventy-second Street, he alighted and walked a block or

two. A second taxi carried him the rest of his journey.

His goal was a sedate second-class hotel on the lower West Side.

Muller went straight to a room on the seventh floor. A quick stride brought him to the bathroom, where he turned on the hot water. Chuckling, he began to peel off his clothes.

The splash of the water drowned the thin whisper of Muller's laugh, as he stood naked in front of the mirror eyeing his benevolent, brown-bearded face. His hand reached into the medicine cabinet and came out with a bottle and a small spirit lamp.

Working with unhurried patience, Muller removed his brown beard.

The change was startling. The real, clean-shaven face under that beard altered Otto Muller's whole appearance. The eyes were keener, the face stamped with aristocratic pride. This was a man of wealth and social distinction.

He was Julius Hankey, owner of the most famous jewelry shop on Fifth Avenue!

HANKEY bathed and dressed leisurely. The shabby clothing of Otto Muller was hung neatly away in a closet. From the same closet came the expensive, well-chosen garments of the jeweler.

Smiling as he dressed, Julius Hankey watched the clock on his bureau. When

the minute hand touched the half hour, his gaze swung expectantly toward his room telephone.

The phone bell rang.

The voice on the wire to which Julius Hankey listened with such eager attention was a disguised one. It sounded metallic, unhuman. It was evidently filtered through a mechanical device that robbed it of tone and quality.

"Identify yourself," the voice rasped.

"O.M.," Hankey whispered.

"Very well, O.M. Give your report."

"Sick man safe in hospital," Hankey said. "No trouble. Your pet dog has been given to proper party. Expect delivery of ice tonight."

"Good! That is all. Hang up."

Hankey did not descend to the street in the same elevator in which he had ascended. He walked through the corridor to another wing of the building. He left the hotel by a side entrance, unseen by anyone except a sleepy clerk back of a small cigar counter.

He drove straight to his swanky home, and was surprised to find a very lovely girl waiting for him in the living room. She sat on a sofa, with a pile of luggage at her feet.

"Isabel!" Hankey cried. "This is indeed a pleasant surprise! I - what's the matter?"

Isabel Pyne's face was pale. She threw nervous arms around her uncle. He saw that his pretty niece was frightened.

"May I stay with you a few days?" she asked, hurriedly. "I'm terribly worried! I'm afraid of something that - that -"

Julius Hankey laid a quick finger on her lips. He had noticed his butler was watching the girl curiously.

"You're tired, my dear," he told Isabel. "I think you had better lie down and rest. Bascom will show you to your room."

The butler bowed. Isabel followed him up the broad staircase. Hankey smiled as he watched Bascom and his niece go upstairs. When the two had vanished, Hankey's smile spilled into cautious sound.

It became a grimly sardonic chuckle.

CHAPTER XIV

THE FIVE MEN

THE next morning brought a thrill of horror and fear to every newspaper reader in New York. Again, the police were faced with a gruesome murder that seemed to point to a supernatural power. Another millionaire jewel collector had been found lying in a bloody huddle, with his throat hideously torn! The medical examiner reported that death had come from the fangs of a dog!

Andrew Shafter's death was an exact duplicate of Peter Randolph's. In the stark clutch of the dead man's hand was found a blood sapphire. And no trace of

the mysterious animal that had slain him!

The morning newspapers were black with the headlines:

DOG GODDESS CLAIMS SECOND VICTIM

Andrew Shafter, Throat Torn, Dies Holding Ill-omened Sapphire.

Police Discount Supernatural Attack; Promise Early Arrest.

The news produced a terrific sensation. People shuddered at their breakfast tables, talked about it in the subways on their way to work.

Newsboys

reaped a harvest. Seven million people wanted to read every scrap of information

concerning this baffling mystery.

But out of those seven million New Yorkers, there were only five men who had special reason to read that account of a mysterious Oriental doom in the heart of a civilized metropolis.

JULIUS HANKEY was the first of the five.

He read every line about the case with grim amusement. When he had finished, he rose quietly and made sure that the door of his study was locked. It was a huge, high-ceilinged room, furnished with exquisite taste. The walls had been soundproofed by a competent architect. Hankey remembered that with a chuckle, as he picked up his telephone.

The phone was a private one, unconnected with the many other phones inside

the house. It was impossible for Bascom, the butler, to listen in even if he were suspicious - which Hankey doubted.

The jeweler called Senor Ramon Ortega. His voice was not that of the dapper Julius Hankey when he spoke to Ortega. It was low-pitched, muffled, heavily Teutonic. It was, in fact, the voice of Otto Muller.

He pretended to be calling from the uptown delicatessen.

"The ice has arrived O.K.," he reported.

Ortega's distant voice trembled with eagerness. "How many does that make?"

"Eleven. There should be twenty-one. Therefore, ten are still missing."

"Can you - find those others?"

"Of course! As soon as things quiet down, I expect to be contacted by people who will be eager to sell. Only, I don't plan to buy. What I need - I will take!"

Ortega gasped.

"Don't do any - any more of that! Listen; I've got to see you. I'll come over to the delicatessen."

"No," Muller said. "I won't be there. I'm leaving right now. Wait until you hear from me. Good-by."

He hung up, grinning as he saw the reflection of his aristocratic face in the mirror over his desk. The role of Otto Muller amused him. He flattered himself that he was an excellent actor.

But it was as Julius Hankey that he left his palatial home. He was so intent on his thoughts that he did not realize he was being followed. Conceit had robbed him of his customary caution.

The person who followed Julius Hankey was a woman. A slim, lovely blonde of striking beauty. It was Isabel Pyne - Hankey's own niece! She trailed him from the other side of the street. There was anger and determination in her blue eyes.

THE second of those five men who were especially interested in the account of Andrew Shafter's strange death, was a tall man with bright, feverish eyes and a face the color of gray clay: David Frick.

Frick had his own ideas on the subject of the Dog goddess from India. Like

Hankey, he was grimly amused. And, like Hankey, his amusement vented itself in immediate action. But he didn't call anyone on the telephone. He merely opened a safe, using a long and intricate combination that took nearly five minutes to release the steel bolts of his strong box.

He took a small chamois bag from the safe and spilled its contents on the table before him. The smooth table seemed suddenly to glow with blue flame. Sapphires! Ten of them! Each with a spot of crimson, tucked away like a spill of blood in the heart of the stone.

Had Joe Cardona stared at those flashing gems, he would have been unable to tell whether they were the ones that had been stolen from the chemist, Rodney Mason, or whether they were actually blood sapphires from the sacred Necklace of Purity, snatched from the throat of a golden image in a temple of India.

But David Frick knew the truth. He knew that these ten stones were genuine. They were the ten for which Otto Muller and his gang of killers were still searching. Not scattered, as Muller thought, but concentrated in the gray-skinned hands of a shrewd and ruthless scoundrel.

Frick was wise to the purpose of the unknown chief who headed Muller's mob. Frick wasn't frightened. He was out for big stakes. It would take more than a ghostly, golden statue with a dog's head to scare David Frick!

He placed the glittering sapphires back in his safe and locked it securely. He was awaiting a visitor. The doorbell rang presently, and he admitted a breathless man.

His caller was Ramon Ortega.

ORTEGA was twitching with repressed excitement. His low-toned voice was urgent. He told Frick that he had just had a telephone call from Otto Muller. The gang had recovered the eleventh sapphire from the unfortunate Andrew Shafter. They had promised to find the other ten without much further delay. What was Frick's advice?

"You're a detective," Ortega whispered, huskily. "Don't you think it's time to notify the police that -"

"I think you had better leave the case to me," Frick cut in, smoothly. "As

you say, I'm a private detective. I'm used to dangerous matters of this kind. You remember what I promised you?"

"You told me you could outwit Muller's mob and recover the entire twenty-one sapphires without publicity or scandal."

"Correct. And I also promised you that the price for the returned necklace

would be not the two million that Muller asks - but exactly half that. One million dollars! In other words, you save a million, and I earn the same amount.

"But -"

"You can take my word," Frick said grimly, "that I have a pretty accurate idea where those last ten sapphires are hidden. I've uncovered a lead that will

wind up this case with a speed that may surprise you. Forget about Otto Muller and Sam Baron and the rest of those fools!"

"I'm afraid of Muller's unknown chief," Ortega admitted, uneasily. "No one

knows who he is - not even Muller. Who is he?"

"I'll tell you that, too, before long," Frick chuckled. "I must ask you to

excuse me now. I have an important lead to investigate."

When Ortega was gone, Frick forced his thin lips into a smile.

"Private detective," he murmured. "That's a laugh! Before I finish with that dumb rajah from dear old India, he'll pay me a hell of a lot more than a million bucks for his twenty-one blood sapphires!"

His smile faded. He began to wonder grimly about the identity of the unknown leader who was behind Baron and Muller. What guy could be smart enough to play up that superstitious hocus-pocus about a golden statue that could rip out people's throats with the fangs of a dog?

David Frick found himself suddenly shuddering. He cursed at himself for his weakness. It was hard to fight down the presentiment of evil that chilled his blood.

"O.K., Dog goddess!" he spat through twisted lips. "Let's see you pull your stuff on me!"

He put on his hat and walked out.

SAM BARON reached lazily downward and scratched one of his bare toes. He was the third man who was interested in the black headlines of the newspaper. He was sitting in peppermint-striped pajamas in a comfortable bedroom armchair.

Sunlight came in through the discreet slant of Venetian blinds. It was late afternoon. Sam had been out most of the preceding night. He had retired shortly after dawn.

He glanced across toward the bed where his wife sat lazily smiling at him.

Flo had a late job herself. She danced in the floor show at the Club Fandango. Sam had wanted her to quit dancing, after he had married her. But Flo was the kind of blonde who loved the bright lights, marriage or no marriage.

Sam saw the frown on Flo's lovely forehead and knew that, for once, the kid was worried. He was certain of it when his wife stretched, and coquettishly

allowed the coverlet to slip away from her shoulders. She was going to try to vamp Sam into telling her where he'd been last night. The murder headlines in the newspaper had frightened Flo.

"Where were you, Sam? Out with a beautiful brunette, I'll bet."

She said it jokingly. Her arms, stretching lazily, were smoothly rounded and white as milk. The only garment she wore was an exquisite black net nightgown.

"I think you're mean, Sam," she pouted. "Why don't you tell your sweet little wife where you've been?" She padded across the rug and slid into her husband's lap. Her lashes lowered demurely. "I don't keep secrets from you."

For an instant, Baron caressed her. His arms tightened. Then he scowled. "Marry a cute wife, and tell her nothing!" was Sam's motto.

He gave her a playful slap and stood her on her feet.

"Don't bother me," he growled. "I gotta get shaved and get out of this dump!"

He walked to his bureau and picked up his shaving kit. After a while, his wife could hear the spurt of hot water in the bathroom, the scrape of a razor over her husband's stubbled cheeks. She followed him and stood in the doorway.

"Sam!"

"Whatcha want?"

His lathered face watched Flo coldly in the mirror. His eyes were stubborn.

"I'm worried about that outfit you're working for," Flo said, faintly.

"Forget it!"

"You don't even know who the real boss is. How do you know he's not using you for a sap? How do you know he won't double-cross you and toss you to the cops?"

"I know plenty, baby!" Baron told his wife with a grim chuckle. "I could do a little squealing about Otto Muller. I don't have to know who the boss is. I'm sitting pretty!"

"Sam, why don't you quit?"

"Quit?" He laughed as he turned to face Flo. He pointed to the exquisite nightgown that shadowed the gorgeous figure of his dancer wife. "The job pays too well, dope! That cute little Paris number you're wearing right now, cost me a hundred and fifty bucks. We don't have to live on rye bread, kid, and that's the answer!"

He was beginning to get angry under her questioning. Flo didn't say any more.

Sam Baron finished shaving. He dressed hurriedly, not telling his wife the real reason for his haste. He had an appointment with Otto Muller. An important one!

He restored Flo to good humor with a kiss and a hug that almost cracked her ribs. Then he left the apartment.

Uneasiness returned to Flo, after he had gone. She had a strange feeling of impending disaster. She shivered as she stepped carefully out of the fragile black net of her expensive garment. Even the hot splash of the shower failed to

warm the nervous chill in Flo's blood. Her hand shook as she dusted herself from head to foot with powder that cost a dollar an ounce.

Her face in the mirror was paler than the sheen of her body. She began to sob.

THE fourth man who was so vitally interested in the death of Andrew Shafter, saw no newspaper headlines.

In fact, he could see nothing!

He was in utter darkness. He lay on a hard wooden bunk inside a sealed room. He sat up with a groan, and there was a faint metallic rattle in the dark. There were more rattling clanks as he dragged himself painfully to his feet.

The man was chained.

But the chain that fettered him was long enough for him to move a few feet inside his black chamber. His feet dragged across a stone floor. He stared upward at a tiny window.

He knew the window was there because he could see dimly a faint grayish square in the wall, protected by four iron bars set close together. A heavy shutter outside the window kept out all light.

To squeeze through those narrow bars was an impossible task. Only a child or a dwarf could have done so. And what good if he had? The shutter outside was heavy steel!

But the man stretched instinctively on tiptoe. He tried to lift his chained hands to the sill above his head. Hopeless!

As he turned away, he whispered harshly: "Damn them!"

Isabel Pyne would have recognized the voice of that chained prisoner. He was Rodney Mason!

He began to feel his way back to the hard surface of the wooden bunk in the wall. Suddenly, he stopped. He had heard a low, rumbling sound that seemed to penetrate the soles of his feet as well as his eardrums. The sound died away. It was followed by a coughing grunt.

Rodney Mason sniffed. He could smell faintly the fetid odor of an animal. A wild beast!

He shivered in the earthly darkness of his prison. The sound he had just heard was the coughing snarl of a tiger!

FIVE men, all of them moving under the steady tug of the strings of fate. Moving, all of them, to a strange and bloody climax of crime.

The last of these five men was The Shadow!

He was in his sanctum. Light from a single spot of electricity cast a pool of clear brilliance on the polished surface of the desk at which The Shadow sat. His hands lay in that small circle of light like disembodied objects. On one of the tapering fingers, a glitter of changing color sent stabs of brilliance outward as the hands moved.

The gleams came from The Shadow's girasol, the priceless fire opal that he always wore. It changed rapidly from deep crimson to a cold yellow. The yellow became icy blue, then green, and back with startling suddenness to crimson again.

There was a small pile of documents, papers, reports and neat clippings from a dozen newspapers under the restless hands of The Shadow. He had read and digested all these papers. Some of them he examined again; but he had no real need to do so.

The Shadow had learned much from Cliff Marsland. Harry Vincent's reports had told him more. Studied separately, there were gaps in the information that made judgment difficult. But coordinated by the brain of The Shadow, those ill-sorted pieces of knowledge began to suggest a completed whole.

It was like a jigsaw puzzle arranged by many hands separately, and then handed to an expert for the final assemblage.

The Shadow was ready to strike.

Through his mind passed the figures of five men and two women: Ortega - Frick - Sam Baron - Rodney Mason - Otto Muller. The two women he considered so carefully were both blondes, both dazzlingly beautiful: Isabel Pyne and Flo Baron, wife of the mob's chief trigger-man.

The Shadow was aware of a grim rendezvous of this gang headed by Otto

Muller. He knew when and where the rendezvous would be. He suspected the identity of the most unusual criminal he had fought against in his entire career. Tonight would prove the answer.

The Shadow had issued orders through Burbank, his contact man. Harry Vincent knew exactly what was expected of him. Inspector Joe Cardona was also aware of things to be done. He was puzzled, but he would cooperate with Vincent. Cardona always did.

The Shadow's sibilant laugh filled the darkness of his sanctum. He was content. Cardona and Vincent would begin the attack this very night.

The rest was up to The Shadow!

CHAPTER XV

THE SHADOW'S STONE

Two men crouched alertly in the thick foliage that lined one side of a country road. The road was dark, the gloom only broken at intervals by arc lights along the road. There was a high stone wall on the other side, a light visible from behind a steel-barred gate that cut the wall at a spot almost directly opposite where the two men watched.

One of these observers was Inspector Joe Cardona. The other was Harry Vincent. The spot that drew their watchful gaze was the lower hinge at the left side of that steel gate.

Harry Vincent was wearing rubber gloves. He knew that the gate was electrified. So were the sharp spikes of a metal fence that topped the stone wall. A single touch would bring a jagged spurt of electricity ripping through the body of an unfortunate trespasser.

Cardona tested that unseen flow of death with a tire tool which he obtained from his automobile, parked deep in the bushes. He hurled the tool so that it fell against the lower edge of the gate. As it struck, one end touched the metal gate, the other was grounded against the earth. Instantly -
craaaaaak!

- a writhing jet of purple leaped from the electrified barrier.

Flame danced along the tire tool as it fell to the ground.

"Ready?" Cardona growled under his breath.

"Wait!" Harry Vincent said.

He was staring alertly at the radium-painted dial of his watch. It was still too early to move toward the hinge of the gate. The Shadow had specified the exact time in the message that had come to Vincent through the unseen lips of Burbank.

The spot where Vincent and Cardona stood was a considerable distance from New York. They were in the central portion of Long Island, in the midst of what

was commonly known as the "scrub oak country". To the north and south were smooth motor roads. On the south, the highways led toward Southampton and Montauk Point; on the north, to Greenport and the populous spots along Peconic Bay.

But the central portion was wooded and poorly developed. The sandy roads were narrow and unpaved. Traffic was almost nonexistent.

The walled estate had been built in this desolate part of Long Island for a necessary business reason. Up to within a year ago, it had been owned by the

combined McMurtrie-Bagley Big Show - the "Greatest Circus on Earth!" It had been

built as one of several winter quarters for the famous circus.

Deep inside these guarded walls were cages and dens where wild beasts spent the winter, awaiting the annual spring trek across country in the gaily painted motor caravan of the McMurtrie-Bagley Big Show.

A year ago, however, the land had been sold. The circus had moved its wild

animals to Bridgeport, Connecticut, where its main headquarters was located.

At least, such had been Cardona's belief. Now, he wasn't sure. For, from the deep blackness within the walled grounds, he had heard a sinister echo.

The throbbing roar of a wild beast!

VINCENT'S face was pale as he stared at Joe.

"I thought you said the circus sold this place last year?"

"They did."

"Who was the purchaser?"

"I don't know," Joe whispered. "I did my best to find out and failed. The transaction was handled by a dummy real-estate corporation. Whoever bought the land had plenty of money - and plenty of shrewdness."

For a moment, both men were silent. Then Cardona whispered again.

"What time is it now? I think we can -"

He was cut short by Vincent's warning hiss. Harry's hand drew Cardona downward. Hidden by the overhang of shrubbery, they watched the road. Someone was cautiously approaching the lighted area outside the steel gate in the wall!

The faint squeak of shoe leather was the only clue to that unseen figure. Whoever he was, he had evidently parked his car at the lonely crossroad a mile or so up the dirt lane. He was advancing slowly on foot.

Suddenly, a figure became visible. Cardona's hand tightened on Vincent's arm. He restrained an amazed cry with difficulty. He had recognized the face of the stealthy visitor.

It was Julius Hankey!

Thunderstruck, Cardona stared at the aristocratic face of Fifth Avenue's most swanky jeweler. What was the socially correct Julius Hankey doing in so wild and remote a spot on Long Island? Why was he sneaking so furtively to what

had once been the walled headquarters of a circus?

Cardona received an answer almost immediately. It was a strange and utterly unexpected one. Hankey had moved past the lighted gate into the shadow of the stone wall. He hunched his shoulders for a moment or two. Then -

He became another man!

The glimmer of light that streamed through the steel bars of the gate fell

on a totally different face. It was covered by a clipped brown beard. Crafty eyes gleamed. Julius Hankey had changed to - Otto Muller!

CARDONA's heart began to pound excitedly against his ribs. He had suspected Muller for a long time of being a criminal fence for the biggest mob of jewel thieves in New York. But Joe had been unable to prove his suspicions. He had refrained from raiding the delicatessen in Washington Heights, because he didn't want to tip his hand to the gang by a premature move.

Now he had startling proof that Otto Muller and the suave Julius Hankey were the same man!

He watched Muller peer backward along the dark road. The man's whole attitude was one of watchful caution. He was waiting for someone.

Presently, a faint whistle sounded up the road. The whistle was repeated by Muller. From the darkness, a second figure emerged.

Senor Ramon Ortega! The dark-skinned visitor to New York, who was concealing under a Spanish incognito the fact that he was His Highness Ali Singh, Maharajah of Rajkumana!

The two men conferred in whispers that were inaudible to Vincent and Cardona in their leafy covert across the road.

"Excellent!" Muller chuckled.

He leaned cautiously toward the deadly steel bars of the electrified gate.

He seemed about to pass a signal to someone within the walled grounds. But the signal was interrupted. Ortega was responsible for the delay.

He had whirled suddenly, and was staring up the road, dark at this point. His sharp ears had caught a faint sound in the silence. Cardona had heard it, too: the crackle of a snapped twig.

Ortega darted away. His ears and his sense of direction must have been as keen as an animal's. He went plunging into an unseen clump of bushes. There was

a quick, desperate struggle, a shrill cry that was throttled into silence the instant it was uttered, then Ortega came slowly back along the road, dragging a

prisoner with him.

Ortega's palm was crushed over the mouth of his captive. Cardona and Vincent could see the sheen of blond hair, the bulging fright in lovely blue eyes.

It was a girl! Hankey's own niece: Isabel Pyne!

She fought furiously, but she was no match for the strength of her two captors. In a twinkling, Isabel's hands were twisted behind her back. A gun muzzle pressed itself against her spine.

"One scream and you'll die!" Muller snarled in a hoarse, disguised voice.

Isabel gave no sign of horror that would indicate if she knew Muller and her uncle were the same man. Ortega's palm lifted from her mouth.

"How did you find this place?"

Isabel didn't answer.

"What are you doing here? How much do you know?"

Again the girl was silent.

Ortega began to twist savagely at the girl's pinioned arms. Muller stopped him.

"Not here, fool! Inside!"

He jerked a flashlight from his pocket. The quick pressures of his thumb on the button of the flash signaled a code message through the barred gate. An answering glow was faintly visible in the darkness of the grounds.

A man approached the inside of the barrier. It was Squint, the narrow-eyed

henchman of Sam Baron. Squint approached a small metal box inside the wall, threw a lever. Evidently, he had cut off the deadly current that pulsed through

the metal of the gate, for a moment later Squint had no hesitancy in opening the

gate with his bare hands.

Muller and Ortega dragged Isabel Pyne inside. She fought fiercely, but her

efforts were vain. The gate slammed. Squint darted to the metal box.

Once more, thousands of volts of high-tension current began to leap invisibly through the charged metal.

VINCENT and Cardona had made no effort to rescue the girl. The mysterious orders of The Shadow had warned them to keep their presence a secret until they

were inside the grounds. The lower left hinge of the gate was to be their password and key to this mysterious estate.

Gritting their teeth, they remained invisible in their hiding place. They watched Isabel Pyne being dragged along a pebbled driveway into blackness.

Five minutes later, the two investigators approached the deadly gate. Vincent was wearing rubber gloves, the sort used by professional linesmen in

handling heavy current.

He examined the gate's lower hinge, then drew something out that was tucked flat in a groove of the metal. It was a tiny scrap of folded paper. Unfolding it with nervous fingers, Harry Vincent saw that there were two brief sentences typed, on the paper. It was unsigned, and read:

Proceed 210 feet south along outside wall.
Enter grounds through The Shadow's Stone.

"The Shadow's Stone!" Cardona ejaculated. "What the devil does that mean?"

Vincent didn't know any more than Joe did. But he took something from his pocket, that showed he had been prepared for just such an emergency. It was a disk of steel that contained a rolled tape measure.

"The tape is exactly one hundred feet long," he whispered to Cardona. "I'll unreel it until it's taut. Then bring your end south to wherever I'm standing, and we'll repeat. Two lengths of the tape and ten feet more will give us our exact measurement."

He started to back up with the end of the tape, when he halted suddenly. "What's that?" he cried.

He was peering upward at the black night sky. Ragged clouds covered the moon. But Vincent stared rigidly, trying to see something in that black void overhead.

"Listen! Can you hear it?"

There was a faint echo, like the distant twang of a rubber band - silence - then again that twanging sound high in the sky.

"An airplane!" Cardona cried.

He was right. But there was more than an invisible airplane in the sky tonight. Drifting slowly down, was a queer, whitish blur in the darkness. It looked like a pale mushroom as it floated toward the quiet earth.

A parachute! The tight-drawn cords from the spread edges of silk were attached to the dangling dot of a man. He was too tiny and too far away for Cardona or Vincent to be able to tell his identity.

They had a quick, startled glimpse of his swinging body. Then he dropped out of sight among the trees inside the walled grounds.

The moon was again visible, as the racing clouds overhead parted for an instant. But vision was of no use now to Vincent or Cardona. Whoever the strange visitor from the sky was, he was out of sight.

WAS it The Shadow himself? The question occurred simultaneously to both observers. Cardona shrugged. Vincent shook his head. Both had a hunch that it was not The Shadow. A parachute jump didn't seem to tie up with the message in the gate hinge concerning "The Shadow's Stone".

Then who was it? The mysterious head of the crime syndicate? Was he arriving from the sky to appear masked and unknown before his assembled henchmen?

Uncertainty spurred Vincent and Cardona to nervous speed.

Harry disappeared with the end of the measuring tape. It stretched taut in the blackness of the road outside the Wall. It tugged sharply three times. Then it went limp. Cardona pressed the button on the metal container in his hand and the tape rolled backward under the pull of a powerful spring.

Joe hurried to where Vincent waited. Again the tape was stretched. Then ten more feet brought the eager men to the two-hundred-and-ten-foot mark described in the message of The Shadow. At this point, there was one of the high arc lights beyond the wall, along the road.

But where - and what - was The Shadow's Stone?

It was impossible to tell. The wall itself offered no clue. It was exactly the same as at any other point. The ominous steel points of electrified spikes at the top precluded any possibility of scaling it at this spot.

Vincent and Cardona examined the wall more carefully. It was formed of cemented stones. One seemed no different from another, yet one of these stones must be an entrance to the grounds. The Shadow had promised it - and The Shadow's word was infallible!

Light from the single lamp at this spot of the road dappled the faces of Cardona and Vincent as they stared hopelessly at the barrier. There was a break in the bushes on the side of the road. The slanting light stained part of the wall with whiteness.

The rest of the wall remained in darkness. Was this the clue? Vincent racked his brain for a solution to the puzzle.

He backed across the road as a painter backs away from an easel to get a more distant view of the composition of a troublesome picture.

Suddenly, Harry gave a quick cry of delight. He had the answer! He had missed it hitherto, because he was too close to the wall.

He saw now that one of those light-bathed stones was splashed with shade.

The leafy top of a tree across the road cast a black, irregular blotch over one of the stones. It made a tiny, yet grimly familiar, silhouette. A line

like the jut of a strong beaked nose; a suggestion of a firm mouth and chin half

hidden by the folds of a lifted cloak

The Shadow's Stone!

CHAPTER XVI

THE GOLDEN SPECTER

A MAN hung swinging in mid-air at the end of a tangle of twisted ropes. Above his head was the dark blur of spreading branches. Below him was the vague blackness of the ground. The man hung like a jerking spider.

He was the mysterious parachute jumper who had floated downward from an unseen plane in the night sky. His chute had dropped him like a plummet through

the foliage of a tall pine. Branches had whizzed past his head like clubs. But he was a man of skill and nerve. His upraised arms had protected his face and eyes just before he struck the tree.

Lifting his head, he could see the torn wreckage of the parachute. It had fouled itself on the spiked branches at the top of the pine. Draped in grotesque folds, it could fall no farther. The man at the end of the shrouds hung taut.

Moonlight flicked his upturned face for an instant. It was a grim countenance. The eyes blazed with strength and cunning. A trickle of blood ran down the man's cheek from a gash on his forehead; but the splash of crimson was

the only spot of color in a face that was as gray as clay.

The parachute jumper was David Frick.

He didn't waste a moment of time. Coolly, he measured the distance below his dangling legs to the ground. His quick estimate told him that the fall could not be more than twenty feet. He fumbled in a pocket of his clothing. It was hard to reach what he was after because of his rope harness. His exertions made his body circle dizzily.

But he finally jerked out a clasp knife. His teeth helped get the blade

open. Holding on grimly with one hand he used the other to sever the nest of cord's that bound him to the wreckage of the parachute.

His left hand clutched the last cord about the spot where the keen blade of his knife cut through. Dropping the knife, he hung on for an instant with both hands. It saved him from an uncontrolled plunge to the ground.

His hands began to slip. But his body was stiffening like an acrobat's, his pointed toes held close together. Coolly, he glanced downward - and let go his grip.

Straight as an arrow, he dropped. His lungs were expanded, knees slightly bent, arms folded over his chest. The impact was terrific. But as he rolled head over heels, he allowed himself to fall with the boneless ease of a rubber doll.

His neck hinged his face close to his chest; his arms remained folded to avoid a fracture. Like an enormous ball, he rolled down a slight declivity in the ground. Then he lay relaxed and panting.

When he straightened out his arms and legs and tested them, he found he had escaped serious injury. Except for a stone bruise on the back of his skull, and a dull ache in one of his thighs, Frick was unhurt.

Instantly, he was on his feet. He slipped silently through the interlaced leaves of the underbrush beyond the tall pine.

He came presently to a gravel-covered path, stood watching it from concealment. He saw that the path wound inward from the gate in the electrified

wall. David Frick expected visitors to come along that path. He expected to see the furtive figures of Ramon Ortega and Otto Muller.

He was disappointed in that hope. He was unaware that Muller and Ortega had entered the grounds before he had leaped from an airplane high in the black sky. After a while, however, he guessed the truth. Silently he stepped from concealment to the path.

Am instant later, with a gasp, he was back out of sight. He had seen the staccato beams of a flashlight through the steel bars of the gate in the wall. A signal!

THE signal was answered by someone farther back in the grounds. A man hurried past Frick's covert at a quick trot. Frick recognized him as he passed.

It was Squint, one of Sam Baron's gun-slingers.

Squint turned off the electric current and opened the gate. He came back with a companion whose ugly voice rumbled deep in his throat. Frick recognized the voice before he saw the face.

Sam Baron!

Baron and Squint hurried along the gravel path. Their goal was evidently some spot deep within the guarded grounds. David Frick followed them like a gray wraith. His body merged with the blackness of shrubbery, his feet made no sound on the turf. He paralleled his two figures, never losing sight of them for an instant.

Presently, he saw where they were heading. A large frame building with a high peaked roof, loomed in the darkness.

Baron hurried to the front door and opened it. He and Squint vanished inside the building. But before the door closed behind them, a queer sound was audible from within. A shrill medley of chattering and screaming. It rose to a high pitch as the door opened, then died into silence in the faint slam the closing door made.

David Frick moved stealthily forward to investigate the interior of that frame building. But a more ominous sound baited him. From the darkness behind him came a coughing roar. To Frick's tense nerves, the snarling echo seemed to

vibrate almost behind his back. He whirled.

David Frick knew enough of tigers to recognize the roar of one when he heard it!

But the sound was not very close. Frick's shiver changed to a grin of relief. Turning on his heel, he abandoned further thoughts of the distant jungle beast.

He followed the closer trail of Squint and Sam Baron. He darted like a gray streak toward the frame building from whose opened door had issued that jangled outcry of chattering and shrieks.

Stealthily, Frick opened the door -

HARRY VINCENT had a mind as quick as a steel trap. He had no sooner discovered the meaning of The Shadow's Stone, than he was racing eagerly toward it to discover the mechanism of how it worked.

He found there was no mechanism at all. The stone and the one next to it were loose in the wall. Harry didn't hesitate to tug at it. His hands were still encased in rubber gloves. He took no chances on the fact that the steel-spiked fence atop the stone wall was probably insulated from the masonry beneath to avoid leakage of electricity. Insulated or not, Harry kept on his linesman's rubber gloves.

The cement between The Shadow's Stone and the one next to it was a binding agent that was easily removed. It was putty. Harry dug it out in a few moments.

Cardona helped him remove the two stones from the wall.

The rectangular hole thus disclosed was large enough for both men to squeeze through. Inside, they advanced cautiously through the thick planting of shrubbery within the wall.

They came presently to the pine from which David Frick had dropped after slashing himself loose from his dangling parachute harness. The marks of his fall were clearly evident in the soft earth beneath the pine. Staring upward, Cardona saw the wreckage of the silken chute entangled in the upper branches of the tree.

His grim exclamation was echoed by Vincent. They still had no idea of the identity of the mysterious 'chute jumper but his present whereabouts were hinted at by the marks in the earth and the bent branches of shrubbery where Frick had glided out of sight.

Following the faint trail, Cardona and Vincent emerged from the interlacing leaves at the point where Frick had halted beside the gravel road.

Here all trace of Frick was lost. But Cardona was not easily discouraged. Motioning to Vincent, he followed the road as it wound deeper and deeper into the grounds. The two men kept close to the shrubbery that lined its border, ready to duck out of sight at the slightest hint of danger.

They heard and saw nothing until they reached the frame building into which Frick had vanished when he had followed Sam Baron and Squint.

There were no windows in the building, through which Cardona could peer. Apparently, light was admitted through a glassed skylight arrangement on the roof.

Drawing his Police Positive, Joe Cardona motioned meaningfully to Vincent. The two stationed themselves on either side of the closed door. As Joe threw it open, both men flattened themselves against the entry, their guns pointing inward.

They could see nothing. It was pitch-dark in the building. But a terrific jangle of shrieks, yelps and chattering issued from the warm darkness. With it came a fetid, unpleasant smell. Animal smell!

Vincent closed the door softly behind them. His tiny electric torch sent a stab of yellow into the blackness. Then his tense body relaxed. He began to laugh with nervous relief. Cardona, too, was chuckling.

The place was a monkey house! Dozens of apes were darting wildly about their cages, grimacing, leaping from trapezes, making a shrill and hideous uproar.

THE fact that the apes were so wildly excited, meant something to Cardona. He sensed that the recent presence of other humans had aroused the monkeys to so excited a pitch. The glow of his torch proved the accuracy of his deduction. In the center of the floor, in the open area between the cages, was a square black opening.

Someone had raised a trapdoor and had left it open behind him. Someone who might have been afraid to close off his line of retreat!

Cardona's torch showed that a flight of steep wooden steps led downward to what looked like a cement cellar beneath the floor of the monkey house.

But Joe didn't descend. At that exact instant, he and Harry Vincent heard from somewhere outside the building the same vibrating echo that had made David Frick flinch.

It was the coughing roar of a man-eating tiger!

Going outside, they waited until the noise was repeated; then they were able to trace it. It came from a section of the grounds sharply off to the left. A narrow footpath led upward through the darkness, to the summit of what seemed to be a natural rock knoll. At the brow of the hill, the path turned sharply and descended into a rocky hollow.

Vincent pointed with a shaking forefinger. His voice was like the clink of ice.

"Good heavens, can you see him? Look at that striped devil! He's enormous!"

They could see below them the barred outlines of a large, open-air pit. Inside the pit, chained to the rock wall behind him that formed part of his prison, was an enormous tiger. It lay full length, with its huge head couched on its extended paws. Every once in a while, the striped head lifted lazily. The coughing mutter of its roar made the ground vibrate.

Vincent and Cardona descended the dark slope, approached the bars of the open-air den. On the door of the cage, a faded placard had been tacked to a slab of wood, evidently by the former circus owners of the jungle beast. The sign read:

BENGAL TIGER

Habitat: India, Province of Rajkumana.

Cardona gasped as he read that faded placard. Rajkumana! It was the name of the native principality ruled over by the Maharajah Ali Singh! Was that the reason why the suave Senor Ortega was here tonight? Was Ortega himself the unknown master criminal behind the theft of his own sapphires?

Cardona felt that he was sliding into deeper and deeper mystery.

Suddenly, he felt the swift tug of Vincent's hand. He was pulled flat to the ground. Lying there, he saw Vincent's shadowy face close to his, contorted with warning.

"Crawl!" Harry whispered. "Quick!"

He bellied swiftly out of sight, keeping close to the black earth.

Cardona

followed him. They dropped flat behind a small outcrop of rock. Then the startled Cardona realized what had caused Harry's sudden retreat.

A tiny sound was audible somewhere in the darkness on the other side of the tiger's rock den. A loose pebble rolled down a slight incline with a faint clatter. Another one sounded a moment later, a little closer to the cage.

Someone was creeping stealthily across the ground toward the den of the Bengal tiger!

IT was impossible to see the person or thing that was so furtively creeping through the blackness. The moon was invisible behind the ragged sweep of clouds overhead. But as Cardona stared, one of the clouds broke into gray, ragged tatters. For a second or two, the moon shone downward with eerie brilliance.

And Cardona saw the Thing!

It was crouched flat on the ground outside the tiger's den. It lifted its head slowly, to glare between the bars at the chained tiger. Fangs were clearly

visible in the red, wide-open jaws. It uttered no sound. The tiger inside the bars whimpered faintly and stirred his striped body. He began to shrink backward.

The Thing facing him in the moonlight was a golden dog!

Abruptly, the dog vanished. The moon above had dipped behind another cloud. Cardona could see nothing. Yet he had a queer, shuddering feeling that the ghostly dog was gliding like golden mist, straight through the solid steel bars of the tiger's cage!

Vincent's teeth were chattering.

"Joe! What in the name of Heaven is -"

His whisper cracked. In the light of the reappearing moon, Harry could see

once more the golden head of the dog. It was crouched close to the ground. The pit door was closed. But the dog was now inside the tiger's den!

Its golden head began to lift from the ground. It rose slowly. Higher, higher - Cold sweat broke out on Vincent's forehead. The beast was towering upright on its hind legs, swaying slowly from side to side. And - and it wasn't a dog!

Except for the bestial, snarling head - it was a woman!

A nude, golden girl! The Thing began to sway with curiously stiff steps toward the wide-open jaws of the tiger. It moved like a lifeless statue. The tiger growled menacingly in his throat. But he was retreating! Backward he slunk, his tail nervously swishing the ground. Without a sound, the golden statue advanced.

The Dog goddess! Vincent thought wildly. His throat was dry; his tongue stuck to the roof of his mouth; he stared like a man in a trance at the metallic gleam of that pagan statue from a temple in Rajkumana.

Darkness blotted vision from his eyes. When he could see again, the moonlight showed him the tawny shape of the tiger as it sprang forward. But the claws of the great striped beast struck empty air. The tiger was alone in its den.

The Dog goddess had vanished!

FOR a long time, Cardona and Vincent remained rigid, clutching mechanically at the ground where they had stiffened themselves. It took courage

to rise. It took guts to approach the bars of that den. But they did it - walking close together to feel the solid, comforting touch of their own flesh-and-blood bodies.

It was Cardona who made the first discovery. Joe's hand lifted to the barred gate. It swung noiselessly ajar at his tremulous touch. It was unlocked.

He looked mutely at Vincent. Vincent's face was white and strained. He nodded. Both men passed cautiously inside the den.

The tiger leaped at them. But it couldn't reach its victims. The long chain jerked taut and held it helpless by the scruff of its tawny neck. Cardona

saw that the beast's chain was anchored to one of the rocks in the, rear of the den. It seemed to disappear into a metal slot in a huge boulder.

Vincent whirled. He pointed to the earth with a faint cry. In the soft ground, a faintly indented trail was visible: the naked prints of a woman's feet.

The prints led to a rock at the left of the growling tiger. It was too far

away for the beast to reach. Cardona, bending over the rock, saw that there was

a deep hollow in the back, where the rear of the stone had been chipped away. In the hollow was the black metal handle of a lever.

Vincent held the muzzle of his gun toward the tiger. Cardona jerked the lever.

Instantly, the two men knew that the vision they had seen was not a golden

wraith, but a woman of flesh and blood. The long chain that held the tiger began

to pull steadily. It dragged the fettered beast backward on its striped haunches. As the chain slid inch by inch into the slot in the rear of the den, its shortening length pulled the tiger away from the spot where it had lain crouched.

A square of solid earth began to rise at that spot. It tilted soundlessly upward, disclosing itself as a cunningly camouflaged trapdoor. A steel-runged ladder led straight downward into darkness. The strange retreat of the tiger was explained. So was the magic disappearance of the golden goddess.

For an instant, Cardona and Vincent stared at the yawning hole in the floor of the den. Then they roused from their frozen inaction.

The chain that held the tiger was again lengthening. It was coming out from the slot in the boulder. At the same time, the trapdoor began to close.

Both evidently worked in unison. They were controlled by a mechanism that had been started by the lever in the rear of the hollowed boulder.

Cardona glanced grimly at Vincent. Harry cried: "Yes!"

The two sprang toward the opening in the earth. Cardona wriggled down the rungs of the vertical ladder. Vincent followed him.

He was just in time. The tiger was barely a foot away as Harry threw himself into the closing trap. The door struck the back of Harry's head as he jerked it downward.

Clang! - Thump!

The metallic sound was the echo of the falling trap. The duller thump was the impact of the tiger's body. He had struck the spot where Harry Vincent had stood barely a second or two earlier. The beast was crouched directly over Harry's hidden head.

There was no way out of this black shaft in which two white-faced men clung to a steel ladder. The only exit they knew of was by using the lever in the tiger's den.

But neither Cardona nor Vincent had any idea of retreating down that mysterious shaft the gleaming, golden body of the Dog goddess had vanished.

Cardona and Vincent gripped hands for an instant. Their quiet whispers

floated in the darkness. Then they began to descend.

Cautiously. Testing each metal rung of the ladder. Downward into utter blackness.

CHAPTER XVII

THE SAPPHIRE STAIN

CARDONA led the descent. He was the first to reach the bottom of the ladder. He knew he was standing on the last rung, because his probing foot encountered nothing below that rung but empty air.

His whisper acquainted Vincent with the situation. The two men hung quietly, listening. But the silence was as profound as the darkness. It was like being entombed in the shaft of an ancient mine, one that had been abandoned for centuries.

Cardona, however, was not a man to give way to superstitious fancy. He knew that the Dog goddess had preceded him down this ladder. He no longer believed her to be a wraith. He had seen the prints of her naked toes in the soft earth above. Beneath the stark gleam of her golden body was living, human flesh. Wherever this strange woman could flee, a living man could follow.

Cardona's whisper brought Vincent's gun jutting. Hanging tensely to the ladder by one hand, Harry slanted the muzzle of his pistol over Joe's head. He was ready to spurt flaming lead into the unseen tunnel.

Cardona snapped on his flash, pointed the tiny cone of its light downward.

Then he grunted a low-toned relief. The floor of the tunnel was barely three feet below the last rung of the ladder. Joe's probing foot had missed it only an inch or two in the darkness.

He raised his light horizontally. The gallery was a short one. It ran twenty feet or so to a blank wall, and then turned at a right angle. Joe snapped off his light.

The fake Dog goddess was unaware of pursuit. Cardona's quick glance had seen the prints of her bare feet in the earthen floor of the tunnel. Joe had been a detective too long to be misled as to the significance of a footprint trail. The size and shape - or the lack of shape - of toemarks could tell a smart detective whether the fugitive who left them had been walking, or tiptoeing, or racing at top speed.

The woman with the dog's head had been walking at a calm, unhurried pace.

Harry Vincent dropped from the ladder and stood crouched in the dark tunnel alongside the bulkier Cardona. Joe explained his plan of attack. He was going to follow the trail in darkness - for two logical reasons.

The first was, that the girl ahead had obviously used no light. Had she carried a flash, its betraying gleam would have been visible from above when Joe had made his quick leap through the trapdoor overhead. Therefore, there were no pitfalls ahead. The girl, who knew this underground route, was not afraid to walk in utter blackness.

The second reason was the formation of the tunnel itself. It was quite narrow. By stretching out his arms, Joe was able to touch both walls. Guided by his finger tips and the slow advance of cautious feet, Cardona was ready to go forward.

No sound came from the darkness as the two men turned the sharp angle at the end of the corridor. The width remained narrow. The earth floor gave no betraying echoes.

The bend of the walls told Joe whenever the tunnel curved - and it curved often after they had covered fifty yards or so.

Unconsciously, Cardona increased his pace. He was pressing forward, when out of the quiet blackness, he heard a grim command:

"Stop!"

INSTANTLY, Cardona stiffened. His gun pointed toward his unseen foe. He bent swiftly to one side to allow Vincent, also, to point his gun.

For ten nerve-racking seconds, the two men waited, fingers taut against triggers. Then the silence was broken by a hissing murmur - the whisper of a sibilant laugh.

Vincent knew that laugh. He had heard it countless times, when the pursuit of criminals had led Harry to a spot of urgent peril.

"The Shadow!" Vincent gasped.

At his clipped cry, the blackness ahead seemed to swirl and grow solid. A figure appeared from utter emptiness. Only the piercing flame in the depths of deep-socketed eyes showed that the figure had a face. The Shadow's cloak was drawn high over his throat and chin.

Cardona dropped his gun muzzle. Vincent listened alertly; he heard only a single word:

"Look!"

A beam of light sprang from The Shadow's hand. It slanted straight downward. Shuddering, Cardona recoiled a step. He had been standing at the very brink of a horrible and unclean death.

Directly in front of him was a pit whose walls and bottom seemed to be made of smooth black glass. The pit was about ten feet deep. It spanned the entire width of the tunnel from wall to wall.

The whole bottom of that glass pit seemed to be moving, twisting. Cardona could see flat, ugly heads, speckled with brown lidless eyes; the darting fury of forked tongues -

Snakes! A tangled, writhing nest of them - poisonous brown adders! One of them tried to glide up the vertical glass wall of the pit. It slipped back on the writhing mass below.

The glass was greased. That was the only thing that kept those speckled adders from crawling out of the pit. But if Cardona had taken one more step, had fallen -

He cringed, in spite of his iron nerve. Vincent was watching The Shadow. Harry realized that the woman they were pursuing had crossed that death pit harmlessly; so had The Shadow. He was wondering how?

The answer came from the lifting torch of The Shadow. His finger pointed. On the roof of the tunnel, supported by metal brackets, was a black, horizontal

cable. A wheeled device was attached to the cable. Hanging downward from it was a circular ring somewhat like the ordinary support used in the subway by tired strap-hangers.

The Shadow showed how the overhead table worked, by reaching up and grabbing the smooth metal ring. A kick of his feet sent the tiny car rating along the table. The Shadow's body whizzed across the unclean horror of the adders' pit.

At the other side, he depressed a tiny handle at the end of the queer suspension bridge. The wheeled ring returned across the pit to where Cardona and Vincent waited.

In a few moments, they had joined The Shadow. They knew now how the golden goddess had bridged that death gap.

The Shadow proved it. His tiny torch swept the floor of the tunnel. just beyond the far edge of the pit was a smear of white powder, scattered on the tunnel floor. There were marks in that powder. The bare footprints of a woman! They led onward into the tunnel.

A sibilant laugh sounded as The Shadow's hand dipped beneath his cloak. It

came out holding a bottle. The bottle was half filled with pulverized powder. It looked like finely divided chalk. It was this powder that had enabled The Shadow to verify certain grim suspicions.

Replacing the bottle beneath his cloak, he led the way onward. The tunnel dipped and turned in a bewildering maze through the bowels of the earth. Occasionally, The Shadow flicked on his torch. There was no sign of life ahead.

But, suddenly, The Shadow beckoned. A glimmer of light became abruptly visible as Cardona and Vincent followed their guide around a sharp turn in the passage. The light came from the wall itself. Beyond that wall was a room. Its door was open.

The whisper of The Shadow conveyed the information that he had never seen the door or room before, although he had passed this point in his preliminary survey.

Gliding forward, he peered warily. The light came from a single frosted bulb in the ceiling. The room was as bare as a monk's cell - except for two things in the farthest corner. A metal bench was fastened to the wall. And on the bench, bound and gagged, lay the helpless body of a man!

His face was livid. His eyes bulged toward the figures in the doorway. It was Rodney Mason!

THE SHADOW suspected a trap. But it suited his purpose to ignore the trap.

He was still not quite certain about the position of Rodney Mason in the well-organized murder syndicate that was headed by an unknown master criminal.

So The Shadow entered the room. Vincent and Cardona followed. Harry rushed toward Mason and began to fumble at his bonds. But the voice of The Shadow halted him. Words came from those calm lips. The order was strange, but Harry obeyed at once.

He removed Rodney Mason's left shoe. He also removed his sock. Then he loosened the gag from the chemist's stiffened jaws.

For a second, Mason tried to talk, and failed. Then terror loosened his tongue. He began to talk wildly. None of his disjointed words made sense.

"Don't kill - You - don't - know who I am - Beware of the - sapphire death -"

Mason was glaring toward the doorway. Cardona saw, and leaped. His hand darted outward. But he was too late. The open doorway leading to the tunnel was gone. The closing barrier had slid shut without sound. It was locked, immovable.

The next instant the frosted bulb in the ceiling went out. The room was plunged into pitch blackness.

In the darkness came a sharp, tinkling sound - the shattering crash of glass. The next instant The Shadow felt a curious numbness stealing over his brain. His eyelids dropped. His hearing began to fade.

He threw himself flat against the floor. His voice cried out a warning as he stuffed a handkerchief over his nose and mouth. He could hear Vincent and Cardona throw themselves flat in the darkness, obedient to his order. He hoped fiercely that they, too, were protecting their throats and noses.

Then - with startling abruptness - the frosted light bulb in the ceiling was again lit.

The Shadow stared toward the bench where Rodney Mason had been lying. His left shoe and his sock were there. But Mason was gone. He was no longer inside the sealed room!

There was a deep bluish haze in the air. It was like a stain of some

incredibly blue dye. The sapphire death!

Its color was fading rapidly. But its effects remained. Cardona and Vincent were semiconscious. Only the fact that they had hurled themselves flat beneath the rising puff of blue vapor, had kept them from losing their senses completely.

THE SHADOW began to crawl swiftly toward the wall of the death chamber.

On

the floor was a scatter of white powder. The Shadow had spread it with a desperate sweep of his hand at the instant the light had gone out.

He saw at once what he had hoped to see - the prints of a man's feet. One of those feet had been shod, but the other was bare! Rodney Mason!

The prints pointed directly toward the smooth surface of the side wall. There was no indication of panel or mechanism in that unmarred surface. But The

Shadow spent little time on the wall itself. His eyes dropped to the juncture of wall and floor.

Again his white powder provided him with a clue.

Close to the last footprints was a smudged set of marks at the base of the

wall. A tiny crack showed between wall and floor. A man - either a guilty Rodney

Mason, or the clever abductor of an innocent chemist - had hooked his fingers in that crack.

The Shadow did the same. He jerked fiercely. His eyes were dim and his head was reeling. But he managed to move something.

Not the wall, but the floor. A section of the flooring slid backward from the wall. The tiny crack became a square opening. Mason had fled, not outward but downward!

An instant later, The Shadow's torch explored the depths below him. He lowered himself with a quick twist of his body. As his head vanished, there was

a faint thump. The sound indicated that his drop was not a very deep one.

Almost immediately, The Shadow's head reappeared. His hands hooked at the floor edge. He vaulted upward into the death chamber. His long legs carried him

swiftly to the dazed figures of Vincent and Cardona.

He dragged them to the trapdoor and dropped them through. The fall was not

more than five feet. The Shadow's torch glimmered faintly behind the shield of his black robe as he worked over his two agents.

Both recovered swiftly in the fresher air in which they now found themselves. They rose shakily to their feet.

It was another tunnel, they discovered, as they stared alternately to left

and right - a deeper corridor whose existence not even The Shadow had suspected.

But where had Rodney Mason vanished? To the left or to the right along that empty gallery?

THE SHADOW pointed to the left. His action did not depend on a hasty guess. It was the result of accurate observation and keen logic. He had seen a tiny smear, of crimson on the floor of the tunnel in the faint glimmer of his half-hidden torch. A drop of fresh blood!

Another drop was visible farther on. And another -

The Shadow remembered the brittle tinkle of shattered glass in the room

above, at the instant the light had gone out. One of Mason's feet was bare. He had cut his foot on a fragment of glass before he had vanished through the secret opening between floor and wall. His own blood was a guide to his present whereabouts.

The Shadow began to glide cautiously forward. Deeper and deeper he penetrated along the dark gallery that cut like a mole's highway through the soundless earth.

Suddenly, The Shadow halted. He waited rigidly, one hand lifted.

"Listen!"

Vincent could hear nothing. Nor could Cardona.

Then, suddenly, the sound that had been too faint to hear, was repeated. It rose shudderingly, like the wait of a disembodied ghost.

As it deepened, it became more human. It was the shriek of a man - a man in mortal terror!

Cardona and Vincent began to race forward. The Shadow was already in motion. With his gun a bright glint behind the glow of his torch, The Shadow was running swiftly toward unknown, horror at the end of the black tunnel.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE GRAY WALL

WHEN David Frick followed Sam Baron's trail inside the frame building with the high-peaked roof, he was prepared for instant gunplay. He had figured that the building might be the headquarters for Sam's trigger-men.

The moment he stepped into the warm darkness, he smelled the fetid odor of captive animals. His ears were assailed by the shrieks and jabberings of dozens of monkeys. He waited, allowing his eyes to become accustomed to the gloom. He could see no sign of Sam Baron or of any other human.

Convinced that Baron had already left the building by some other exit, Frick showed a cautious light. He passed between the cages where apes gibbered and leaped frantically up and down their narrow steel bars. He paid no attention to the animals. His gaze was directed to a spot in the center of the worn wooden floor.

A hinged section of the flooring had been lifted. Wooden steps led below to the cellar. It was obvious that this was the route taken by Baron.

Frick had no hesitancy in descending. He knew that Baron was unaware of his surveillance. Baron's carelessness in leaving the trap tilted upward proved

that. Frick didn't close the trap, either. He wanted to leave an open line of retreat in case he ran into a desperate situation below.

But he found nothing in the cellar to alarm him. Quite the reverse! A door

was slightly ajar at the end of the dim, white-washed basement. Again Baron had

been careless. Or perhaps, like Frick, he was leaving open a route for hasty retreat.

Peering through the crack of the partly open door, Frick saw that he was at the entrance to a long corridor. The corridor was lighted. Every ten feet or

so in the ceiling, an electric bulb glowed dimly. Frick counted three of them. Beyond the last, the corridor turned, giving him no hint of what lay ahead.

But Frick was a bold man. The gun in his hand was a heavy-calibered weapon

that could shoot straight and hard. He began to tiptoe down the quiet passage.

He guessed that it led to some spot deeper underground, for there was a perceptible slant to the floor.

Turning the angle in the wall beyond the glow of the third light, he could see others ahead of him in the empty tunnel. How far it led onward, he had no way of knowing.

He kept his pace slow and noiseless. His eyes watched the walls, the ceiling and the floor. But there was something that entirely escaped his scrutiny. It was so tiny that Frick passed it without notice.

IT was a small peephole. It pierced the wall of the passage at shoulder level. The moment that Frick had passed it, something jetted without sound from that tiny hole.

It was a single puff of bright-blue vapor. It scattered thinly in the air, directly behind Frick's head. The blueness faded so fast that had Frick turned, he would have been unable to see it.

But he didn't turn. He was staggering. The faint haze of that poisonous vapor had already been sucked unconsciously into Frick's nose and mouth by his tense breathing. He fell forward on his hands and knees. Then he rolled stiffly on his side. He was completely unconscious.

A second or two of silence passed. Then a small section of the wall nearest the fallen man moved slightly aside. From a narrow opening, a gloved hand emerged. It reached swiftly toward the gun that lay in Frick's loosened grip. The gun vanished through the small opening in the wall.

For a minute or so, it remained out of sight. Then once more it reappeared. The same gun! Apparently nothing had been done to it. It was replaced within the slack fingers of David Frick.

The panel closed. The corridor lapsed into silence. For five minutes longer, Frick remained crumpled where he had fallen.

Suddenly, his eyes opened. He gave a quick exclamation. It was a sound of annoyance and anger, rather than fear. He scrambled quickly to his feet, like a man who has been silly enough to stumble and fall in the midst of an important undertaking.

That was exactly what David Frick thought! So swift was the power of that blue vapor, so potent its results, that Frick imagined only a split-second of time had passed since he had staggered to the floor. He was unaware that five minutes had elapsed.

He was still holding his gun. It looked and felt the same. Cursing himself silently for his apparent awkwardness, he continued his slow progress down the winding tunnel.

He came at last to the spot where the tunnel ended. He advanced cautiously on tiptoe, because the faint diffusion of blue light warned him of a hidden chamber beyond a doorway.

The door was open, but Frick was still unable to see. A heavy curtain of thick blue velvet screened the opening. Through that curtain came the growling mutter of men's voices. Listening intently, Frick was able to separate the sounds. Three men were conferring in the room beyond his vision.

Frick grinned coldly as he recognized the voices. One was Otto Muller. Another was the cultured Senor Ortega. The third was the harsh, rasping snarl of Sam Baron.

DRAWING a small knife from his pocket, Frick took hold of one of the folds of the velvet curtain. He held it rigidly, so as not to move the fabric. The point of his knife dug a tiny hole in the material. By pressing his eye to the hole, Frick was able to see into the room beyond.

It seemed to be a large one. It was depressed a few feet below Frick's line of vision. He guessed that steps led downward to it from his curtained doorway. Directly opposite him was a flat wall painted a peculiar gray. There were no decorations or pictures on that wall. Nothing to mar its sleek gray surface except the outline of a door.

Frick liked the looks of that second door. Two exits from a room were better than one for a desperate hijacker.

Otto Muller was sitting at a desk. Ortega and Baron were hunched forward in their chairs, talking grimly with him. The queer light in the room came from an enormous blue-shaded lamp. It gave the faces of the three men an unnatural grave-like pallor.

They were talking about Isabel Pyne, the girl whom they had captured outside the gate of the estate. Ortega wanted to question her. Baron wanted to kill her. Otto Muller was trying to pacify both men.

He shrugged suddenly. Behind him was the door of a closet. Rising, he twisted the knob and threw open the door.

Isabel Pyne fell helplessly forward in his arms.

She was bound hand and foot. Her face was pale with terror. Sam Baron sprang with an oath to seize her by the throat. But Ortega and Muller stopped his grim rush.

"Let me talk to her," Ortega snarled.

He spat eager questions at the girl. Isabel refused to answer. Her lovely lips were compressed in a stubborn line.

A knife appeared in Ortega's slim, womanish hand. He leaned closer, madness on his swarthy Oriental face. But again Otto Muller avoided bloodshed.

"Wait!" he snapped. "Don't be fools! Torture can come later. In the meantime, I have excellent news about the thing we are all chiefly interested in. I mean - blood sapphires!"

He seized Isabel Pyne with a brutal clutch. He forced her helpless body backward into the closet. The door slammed on her despairing face. Muller's voice became smoother than silk, as he said:

"We now possess eleven of the sapphires. Ten are still missing. I have discovered something new about those missing gems. They are not scattered all over New York, as we thought. They are in the possession of one man!"

"What!"

"The hell you say!"

Ortega's quick cry and Baron's ugly oath each came like the pop of a machine gun. Muller nodded. He was grinning like a wolf.

"One man has those ten sapphires! And, by God, we're going to have a of them back. Tonight!"

"Who has them?" Ortega gasped. "What's his name?"

DAVID FRICK'S gun jutted in his right hand. With a sudden gesture of his left, he tore aside the draped velvet that covered the doorway. He sprang down a short flight of wooden steps and bounded murderously into the blue-tinged room.

"Maybe I can answer that last question," he sneered. "Maybe the name of the guy is - Frick!"

His gun spat flame as Sam Baron went for his weapon. There was a yell of pain from Sam. The pistol leaped from his paralyzed grip and skidded halfway across the floor.

"One more stunt like that and I'll shoot to kill!" Frick warned through gray, pinched lips.

Ortega and Muller sat staring at the hijacker with rage on their twisted faces. But neither of them made a threatening motion. Staring past them, Frick made another discovery that brought a hard chuckle from him. There was one more man in the room. The angle of the doorway had hidden him from Frick's gaze when he had spied through the doorway drape. But he knew he had nothing to fear from his fourth enemy.

The man was gagged. Cords bound his hands and feet securely in a torturing harness. One of his feet was bare. It was Rodney Mason.

Ortega's voice broke the ugly silence. In his excitement, the Maharajah of Rajkumana forgot his precise English. His voice slurred.

"But, Meestaire Frick! How ee's thees? I do not understand! I 'ave hire you. You are private detective. You promise me that -"

"Private detective, hell! I've been foxing you, you damned fool! I've got ten blood sapphires right now. Muller has the other eleven - he just said so! I'm gonna take those eleven gems, and I'm going out of here with them. When I do, the price for the Necklace of Purity is going sky-high!"

He jeered at Ortega.

"You were willing to pay two million bucks to Muller's lousy outfit to get back the necklace. By God, I'm the guy who took all the risks! You'll pay me four million - and like it!"

THE maharajah gave a shrill, despairing cry. Muller's question cut through it like the snap of a whiplash:

"Where did you get hold of that blue ice, Frick?"

Frick's laughter was vicious, jeering.

"I'm the guy who stole the necklace from the temple in India! Tell that to your blasted Dog goddess!"

He took a step closer. His eyes blazed at Muller.

"Lay those eleven hunks of ice on the top of your desk!"

"Don't do it!" Ortega screamed.

"If you don't, you'll get a slug - right smack through your forehead!"

Muller cringed.

"Where are they?" Frick spat at him.

"Top drawer."

"Take 'em out with your left hand. And if you make a single funny move, I'll blast all three of you!"

Muller's eyes flicked toward Ortega and Sam Baron. There was a peculiar stare in them, a definite message of warning. He was telling his companions wordlessly not to interfere. But Frick didn't catch that quick by-play.

Muller's left hand slowly opened the top drawer of his desk. He opened it far enough so that Frick could see there was no gun in the drawer. All that was

visible was a small chamois bag, which Muller withdrew with tremulous fingers.

"Spill the gems out, so I can see 'em," Frick rasped.

Muller obeyed. On the polished top of the desk, there slid a bewildering array of flashing blue flame. Eleven sapphires! Leaning cautiously closer, his gun ready for instant death, Frick caught a glimpse of a crimson smear in the depths of the nearest stone. He laughed hoarsely.

At his order, Muller's left hand replaced the sapphires in the chamois bag. His right was lifted helplessly above his head. The hands of Ortega and Baron were also elevated.

But there was no longer fear in their eyes. It was Frick who was now jittery. He suspected treachery. A queer, ominous doom seemed to hang in the air of the silent chamber.

Frick backed away with his loot, turning slightly, so that he had a partial view of the curtained doorway behind him. He began to sidle toward the curtain.

BUT he had taken only three shuffling step when there was a sudden, unexpected sound. A metallic clang! It shook the room. Frick guessed what it meant. It was the slam of a steel barrier. The door behind the velvet curtain was now closed and locked. His retreat through the dimly lighted corridor that led back to the cellar of the monkey house was now cut off!

There was no expression on the faces of the three men who sat stiffly under the menace of Frick's gun.

The hijacker circled past them toward the opposite side of the blue chamber. He passed between Baron and the helplessly bound figure of Rodney Mason, who lay prone on the floor. His eyes darted toward the gray wall on the opposite side of the room.

There was a door cut in that blank wall. Frick edged toward it, ready to pour flaming slugs from his muzzle at the slightest move of his enemies.

He turned the knob. The door was not locked!

Frick whispered through dry, twisted lips:

"So long, suckers!"

He vanished behind the closing door.

As he did so, there was a faint click near where Rodney Mason lay. Three figures glided into the room. They had pinched, watchful eyes and cunning faces. All three were gunmen, part of Sam Baron's mob. But they made no effort to rush after the thief.

Their eyes stared at the gray wall behind which Frick had just vanished.

Suddenly, an amazing transformation took place in that blank surface. It glowed with light. The whole wall became transparent! Behind it, the figure of David Frick was disclosed, standing motionless on tiptoe. From head to foot, he

was bathed in a bright, unearthly brilliance.

He uttered a cry of terror.

But the cry that burst from his lips was not because of the men he saw staring at him through a transparent wall. Frick had heard a sinister sound behind him. The growling bark of a dog!

Whirling, he saw a dreadful sight.

A figure was gliding slowly toward him - a woman whose bare feet moved across the floor without noise. Her nude body was gold from head to foot. She moved with the curiously stiff steps of a lifeless thing - an inanimate statue.

Atop the sleek, golden glitter of her body was a horrible sight - the head of a snarling beast.

The Dog goddess of Rajkumana!

FRICK fired. Again and again flame spat from the stuttering muzzle of his gun. His aim was true. The flame darted straight toward the body of that moving

Thing. But the stiffly advancing steps never halted. The golden statue came closer and closer to the rooted figure of the thief.

She sprang!

As she did, the lighted wall went suddenly gray. It was no longer aglow with eerie light; darkness hid everything.

Muller and Sam Baron remained staring at the wall. Ortega, however, had slumped from his chair. Pale with superstitious awe, the Maharajah of

Rajkumana, was down on his knees, with his face bent to the floor in worship. He had seen the power and majesty of the Dog goddess from the sacred temple of his ancestors. He was praying in a shrill, unnatural whisper.

He did not see that the wall was again ablaze with light. He was unaware that it had become transparent.

But Muller and Baron saw. With tight, expressionless faces, they gazed at the figure of David Frick. Frick was in the same spot where the golden apparition had sprung at him. But he was no longer erect. He lay flat on his back in a ghastly pool of blood.

The blood was pouring from a gaping red void where his throat had been. The Dog goddess had vanished!

In the dreadful silence, a faint vibration seemed to hang in the air. It was the echo of the shriek Frick had uttered as the fangs of doom ripped through his throat!

CHAPTER XIX

THE AMAZING TRUTH

THE SHADOW heard that terrible shriek as it resounded far down the blackness of a tunnel in the earth. He knew it came from the lips of a dying man.

He began to race at top speed through the passage. The beam of his electric torch danced like a will-o'-the-wisp ahead of him. It threw a weird, distorted likeness of The Shadow on the flickering walls of the tunnel.

Vincent and Cardona followed.

Their steps were faltering. They were still partly under the influence of the vapor they had breathed in the sealed chamber from which the skill of The Shadow had rescued them.

Far in front, they saw the electric torch of The Shadow halt suddenly. Then it began to rise. It vanished upward out of sight.

The Shadow had come to the end of the earth tunnel. In front of him was a steep flight of stone steps. Without a second's pause, The Shadow flung himself

up those steps. He could see above him the outline of a closed door.

The door did not fit flush and tight into its framework. There was a crack

between the bottom of the door and the stone sill of the staircase. Light streamed outward - a vivid white brilliance that suggested the presence of powerful incandescent globes.

The Shadow's torch snapped out. It vanished under his black robe. It was replaced by the ominous glitter of a .45.

The knob of the door began to revolve slowly under the pressure of The Shadow's palm. Its metal catch slipped from its grooved slot. The door opened a hairbreadth. The gap widened to an inch.

Then The Shadow gasped.

A lifetime in the pursuit of crime had not prepared him for the stark horror that met his peering eyes. Vivid white light beat down pitilessly on the

upturned face of David Frick. His face was almost unrecognizable under the deluge of blood from his torn throat.

Directly in front of Frick's body was the strangest wall The Shadow had ever seen. It offered no obstacle to the human eye. The entire wall was transparent!

Through it, The Shadow could see into a room beyond. The room was veiled in deep-blue light. Murderous faces glared at The Shadow. He could see the ugly

brown-bearded Otto Muller. Sam Baron was crouched close to the fake

delicatessen

dealer. Three other thugs were visible in the blue-lit headquarters of the gang.

Two of them were guarding a pair of victims in a far corner. The Shadow could see the pale, frightened face of Ramon Ortega, his hands upraised under the menace of guns. At Ortega's feet, lay the helpless figure of Rodney Mason.

All this The Shadow observed in an instant.

OTHER things merged in that swift mental picture. Over his hunched shoulder, The Shadow had seen the white brilliance of powerful spotlights. The lights were trained on the gray wall.

The wall seemed to ripple faintly. It wasn't a wall of mortar and plaster,

but a cunningly camouflaged curtain - a transparent, gray fabric!

Bullets dotted it with holes as The Shadow sprang forward. A slug whistled

past his cheek. Another one slashed open the sleeve of his upraised arm. He felt

his slouch hat give a quick jerk as lead pierced its black crown. But The Shadow

did not stop.

Somewhere behind him, Harry Vincent and Joe Cardona were racing up the stone steps from the tunnel in the earth.

The upraised hand of The Shadow glittered as he leaped toward the transparent wall. He had whipped a knife from beneath his robe. The sharp point

slashed a ragged hole in the gray material. Through that hole the flying body of

The Shadow plunged like a black meteor.

He landed crouched on hands and knees. Muller's gun belched. Pain crossed The Shadow's throat like the touch of a red-hot wire. But he was up and whirling away before Sam Baron could pump a more accurate shot from the other side of the room.

The knife clattered to the floor as The Shadow leaped. Twin guns replaced it in his black-gloved hands. Those guns could shoot fast and straight. They dropped Sam Baron into a dead huddle as he tried to end The Shadow's life.

Muller's gun roared again. The Shadow had no time to dodge. Only the quick

action of Harry Vincent saved him. Harry fired at Muller through the transparent

wall. His slug missed. But the explosive roar of the shot and Cardona's yell behind Harry disconcerted the snarling Muller and ruined his aim.

The next instant, Vincent leaped headlong through the ripped gray fabric. Cardona followed him.

Joe's slug cut down one of the thugs to the left of Muller. Vincent fired and missed. Muller hurdled the dead thug's body. He jammed the muzzle of his pistol against Vincent's temple.

The Shadow hadn't wanted to kill Muller. He had hoped to take him alive, to force certain facts from his cunning lips. But now he had no choice. As Muller's gun muzzle jammed against Vincent's skull, The Shadow fired. The heavy

slug from the .45 flung Muller. backward like the kick from a mule. He rolled in

a quivering heap. The motion of his limbs, however, was purely spasmodic. He was

stone dead.

VINCENT recovered from his daze just as the remaining thug rushed at Joe

Cardona. The face of the killer was a mask of twisted fury. There was madness in his eyes. The knowledge that he was trapped broke the last cord of reason in his warped brain. He was running amuck!

Vincent ducked bravely into the killer's path. His hunched shoulder sent the man sprawling. But Vincent tripped and fell over the thug's extended foot. He tried to grapple, but missed his desperate hold. The thug's gun pointed downward.

The Shadow's aim was blocked by Vincent's own body. Unable to fire, he sprang forward. But he had no chance to stop the bullet that had Vincent's name written on it.

Joe Cardona did that!

The thug screamed. He collapsed in a dying huddle. With somber eyes, Joe carefully blew a thin waver of smoke away from his hot muzzle.

"Thanks, Joe!" Vincent gasped.

Cardona grinned. "Lord, that's the fastest shooting I've ever done in my life - and I've been a cop a long time."

The air reeked with the stench of burned cordite. Smoke drifted lazily in thin sheets. There was sweat on Cardona's forehead, a sick horror in the eyes of Vincent.

The Shadow stood very quietly, staring at Ramon Ortega and at Rodney Mason.

They were the only ones left alive after that swift burst of gunfire. Ortega's trembling legs had dropped him in a frightened huddle against the wall. Mason lay gagged and bound.

Cardona paid no attention to either of them. With a face like flint, Joe walked grimly to where Otto Muller lay and ripped the brown beard away. The dead face of Julius Hankey stared up at him from sightless eyes.

"The dirty rat!" Cardona breathed. "A social leader - Fifth Avenue's most swanky jeweler - and all along this damn Julius Hankey was the secret head of a murder syndicate!"

"No!"

The calm voice of The Shadow uttered that single word.

Cardona looked startled. So did Vincent. They turned with a single motion toward the cowering figure of Ramon Ortega.

Again The Shadow uttered that cool monosyllable.

"No!"

The Shadow's finger pointed toward Rodney Mason. He ordered that the gag be removed from the lips of the good-looking young chemist.

As the gag came away, Mason gulped and strangled in his terrified eagerness to talk.

"I'm innocent!" he gasped. "Otto Muller ran the gang. He was the leader. He kidnapped me twice - He captured Isabel -"

Terror glazed his eyes, as he remembered the captive girl in the closet. He wobbled forward on unsteady legs.

Cardona beat him to it. Joe jerked open the closet door. The body of Isabel Pyne pitched stiffly forward into Joe's arms. Her blue eyes were closed.

Her face was deathly white.

The cords that bound her were slashed away. Mason gave a cry of delight as her eyes fluttered open. He took her in his arms, kissing her pale eyelids, murmuring hoarse words of endearment.

The Shadow was smiling queerly.

He laid a steady hand on Mason's shoulder and drew him backward. At the touch of that hand, Mason shivered. He recoiled, glaring at The Shadow.

Then The Shadow did a strange, brutal thing. His fingers closed on the neck of Isabel's gown. With one powerful jerk, The Shadow ripped the gown from

the girl's body.

Isabel Pyne screamed. Then she stood very still.

THE gown that lay in tatters at her feet was the only garment she had been

wearing! From the white line of her throat to the edge of her low-rolled stockings, her body was a dull glitter of metallic gold. Her arms, too, were gold - except her hands. From wrists to finger tips, those hands were white.

Seen at close range, it was obvious that she was wearing silken fleshings.

The gold paint had been daubed over that. Isabel Pyne began to laugh harshly. The loveliness in her face seemed to grow pinched and haggard. Rodney Mason recoiled from the evil glitter in her blue eyes.

But Isabel ignored the man she had fooled so long in her role of an innocent Park Avenue deb. She sneered at the watchful face of The Shadow.

"You are very clever. How long have you known that I was the brains of the gang? How long have you suspected that I was playing the amusing role of the Dog goddess of Rajku -"

Her hand moved with the swiftness of light. The glitter of a ring on her finger streaked to her mouth. Cardona tried to stop her. He was too late.

Isabel Pyne swallowed convulsively. Then she swayed.

"No electric chair for me, thank you!" she jeered from pale lips.

Her legs gave way. Her body thumped against the floor. There was no need to bend over her; the subtle poison she had swallowed had locked her in rigid death.

The Shadow uttered no sound. He had expected her to do this thing. He had not interfered. Bending, he picked up the torn gown of the dead girl. He dropped it across her body, hiding the golden gleam of the most dangerous woman criminal he had ever encountered in his career.

He showed Cardona and Vincent something he had taken from a pocket sewed in the lining of Isabel's gown. It was a chamois bag - the same one that David Frick had stolen from Muller. Opening it, he disclosed a handful of shimmering sapphires.

"But how -" Cardona was stuttering in his excitement. "How was she able to -"

"Wait!"

The Shadow turned. He strode toward the closet. Squeezing inside, his deft

fingers moved. Vincent, peering over Cardona's shoulder, uttered a cry of enlightenment. The rear of the closet was swinging open on a pivot! It had a false back! Beyond it was a dark passage into which The Shadow disappeared.

WHEN he returned, he was carrying some rather sinister objects.

The first was the counterfeit head of a dog. The thing was made of light papier-mache. It was daubed with the same gold paint that had covered the silken fleshings Isabel Pyne had worn. It was curved slightly at the bottom, so that it could fit snugly against the girl's shoulders when she slipped the ugly thing over her head.

The Shadow also carried a pair of golden gloves.

Cardona understood. Having donned helmet and gloves, and removed her slippers and stockings, Isabel Pyne could become swiftly, murderously - the Dog

goddess of Rajkumana!

The final proof produced by The Shadow were the ugly mechanical claws that had been delivered to Muller's delicatessen by special messenger. Isabel Pyne had sent them to her disguised uncle. And she had known how to use them herself! The claws were still crimson with the blood of David Frick.

The Shadow's voice was calm. Cardona listened intently. So did Harry Vincent. Slumped weakly near the bullet-scarred desk of Muller, Rodney Mason and the Maharajah of Rajkumana sat in dulled horror. Their faces looked sick and frightened. Both had played with fire; both had been treated as fools by an unscrupulous woman with a genius for crime.

The Shadow explained.

Frick had stolen the blood sapphires and escaped with them from India. He had sold eleven of them to wealthy collectors in New York. The rest he kept. Otto Muller found out what was afoot when a member of the underworld brought "Ramon Ortega" to him for a secret conference. Out of that conference, a pact was born. Otto Muller promised to recover the missing jewels for the sum of two million dollars.

Muller and Julius Hankey were, of course, the same man. The Fifth Avenue jeweler had been acting as a criminal fence. Isabel Pyne had given him the idea. Hers was the brain that directed Hankey. Trying murder for a thrill, Isabel soon discovered she had flair for it.

Rodney Mason was an innocent tool. Isabel deliberately sought his friendship the moment she learned that Mason was a chemist who had succeeded in manufacturing synthetic sapphires. Mason's attack on The Shadow and Marsland was because he thought they were crooks in another gang opposed to Baron's.

THE SHADOW pointed to the cords that had seemingly been twisted tight around Isabel Pyne when she had been shoved in the closet by her confederate, Hankey. The cords were cunningly fitted with elastic, so that Isabel was able to slip them off at will. While she was supposed to be a helpless prisoner in the closet, she was actually working her horrible murder game in gold-painted tights.

Her perfect alibi had fooled everyone - except The Shadow!

Joe Cardona nodded grimly as the amazing truth became clear to him. He turned, glaring angrily at the East Indian maharajah, who called himself Ortega.

"I wish I could send you to jail for a long time!" he snapped. "It was you who started this whole conspiracy of death. You lied to me! You tried to play both with the police and with the underworld!"

Ortega was frightened. He kept prudently silent.

"Unfortunately, I can't send you to jail," Joe Cardona continued, harshly.

"Your rank as an Indian prince would cause international complications with Great Britain. But I can do one thing, by the Lord! I'm giving you twenty-four hours to get out of this country. If you don't - I'll have you deported!"

"I'll leave," Ortega promised in a shaking voice. "Don't - don't expose me!"

Cardona turned toward The Shadow. He gave a quick cry. So did the others. The Shadow was gone!

Unnoticed, he had vanished from that sinister room. His work was done. He had smashed a powerful group of organized criminals and exposed its real leader. When he had ripped the gown from Isabel's gold-smeared body and watched

her die by her own hand, The Shadow had ended forever the menace of the Blood Sapphires. The criminals were dead. Cardona had all the facts. The credit for solving the mystery would go to Joe.

The Shadow wanted no credit. That was why he had so silently vanished. He would remain invisible and unknown until a new challenge to the law brought him again out of shrouding darkness.

Like a black symbol of justice, The Shadow would be waiting - ready for the endless war on crime!

THE END