

VOODOO TRAIL
by Maxwell Grant

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Twice has the evil Doctor Mocquino, the Voodoo Master, matched his vile wits against The Shadow; now he comes back again, to risk all in one bold stroke!

CHAPTER I

THE MASTER SPEAKS

THE two men by the fireplace were speaking in low tones, the subdued roll of their voices tuned to the crackle of the flames. They were alone in the living room of a sumptuous apartment, where heavy draperies muffled the night roar of Manhattan's streets.

They had the look of conspirators, this pair; a fact that would not have surprised certain police officials, for both men were notorious in criminal affairs.

One man, with high, bald forehead and shrewd, pointed nose, was James Quinrick, an attorney who specialized in defending crooks. He was a "mouthpiece" well liked in the underworld, and his courtroom activities had proven lucrative, as this apartment testified.

The place was Quinrick's home. The furnishings of the living room, alone, had cost fifty thousand dollars.

Quinrick was clever, when it came to muddling the law. His visitor, "Beak" Hyler, was equally cute at evading it. Beak's nickname came from the hooked nose that poked from the middle of his face; but the moniker was hardly sufficient.

It didn't include other features that were equally prominent: those gimlet eyes, the blunt chin that looked rugged enough to take a heavyweight's punch without damage.

Meeting here was a safe bet, presumably, for both Quinrick and Hyler. This apartment was as immune from intrusion as the lawyer's office. Quinrick was Hyler's lawyer.

The fact that Beak was the big-shot who controlled a ring of racketeers, was another matter. It was something that the law had not yet proven. It chanced, though, that Beak was not here seeking legal advice.

Quinrick spoke, in response to a question.

"Yes, I read the letter," he asserted, "and I destroyed it, as you requested. I wouldn't have wanted other persons to see it. They would have doubted your sanity."

"It sounded screwy, huh?" quizzed Beak. "All right, counselor. If you don't want to go through with the deal I suggested -"

"On the contrary, I do," interposed Quinrick, "provided that you can prove the statements that you made."

Quinrick's smooth tone brought a flash to Beak's gimlet eyes. Triumphantly,

Beak brought a thin sheaf of folded papers from his pocket. He drew one loose and handed it to Quinrick. The lawyer's face became avid, when he read a list

of
names.

"These people!" he exclaimed. "You mean that they have actually disappeared? That the heirs who received their wealth are nonexistent, like the supposed institutions to which some of them donated huge sums?"

Beak nodded. Quinrick had another query.

"You are sure," he asked, sharply, "that one man - one alone - has profited from all this -"

"That's right," growled Beak. " Alongside of him, all the big-shots you ever heard of look like a troupe of midgets! I ought to know. I've met the guy."

QUINRICK'S lips pursed, as if he intended to whistle. He paused, when Beak handed him another sheet of paper.

"I supplied the guy with some mobbies," Beak told Quinrick. "They don't know much, but it's enough to count. So I typed out what they learned, and made

each gorilla stick his John Hancock at the bottom. There they are, counselor."

The proof impressed Quinrick. He eyed the other papers that Beak held; but the racketeer retained them.

"This guy's a brain," declared Beak. "He's snapped up millions, in real dough, from the boobs that fell for his racket! Some of them are supposed to be

dead; others have just gone away. But he's got them stowed away, helpless.

"And he isn't through with the racket. He's still gathering the coin. D'you

know why? Because he thinks he's going to be an emperor of crime, with every crook in New York working for him. He's got plenty on his pay roll already; and

when he wants the rest, they'll join up - or else!"

Quinrick sat with folded hands, weighing all that he had heard. Then:

"What do you propose?"

"To put the skids under him," confided Beak. "So's we can stage a clean-up

of our own. You're the mouthpiece, see? You go to friends of these people; to their own counselors, if they've got them. Offer them the whole dope, but ask for plenty. They'll fork it over."

"What about witnesses?" inquired Quinrick. He crinkled the paper that bore

the signatures of mobsmen. "These won't do."

"What about these, then?"

Beak passed over the final paper. On it, Quinrick read the names of more persons who were both socially prominent and wealthy. He caught the gist of it.

"More dupes?" he asked. "The ones that the 'brain' hasn't brought completely under his control?"

"That's it," replied Beak. "But we've got to get busy before he puts the clamps on tight."

"Suppose these people are already under his influence, to such degree that they will not testify against him?"

"That won't matter. You can drag them into court. If they won't talk, it will show that something's phony. If the 'brain' tries to crack down, he'll give himself away."

Beak's logic brought a shrewd smile to Quinrick's lips. The lawyer saw double profit from this deal. Not only did it promise huge sums from grateful relatives of the dupes; it also would mark Quinrick as a public benefactor.

Lately, Quinrick had been on the ragged edge. His use of perjured witnesses had placed him under threat of disbarment. More than any other man in New York, he was willing to participate in Beak's double-crossing scheme.

QUINRICK thrust his hand toward Beak, to signify that the deal was made.

At that instant, a crackling sound occurred. It wasn't from the fireplace; it was more sustained than the snap of the burning wood.

Beak sprang about in alarm. He saw the source of the noise. It came from a radio cabinet against the opposite wall.

"Turn that thing off," gulped Beak. "It gives me the jitters!"

Quinrick stepped across the room; he snapped a switch one direction, then the other. He looked puzzled; gave a shrug.

"Something's wrong with the switch," he remarked. "The radio must have started accidentally, and it won't turn off. Forget it, Beak" - Quinrick drew close - "and tell me the name of this 'brain' you speak about."

Beak licked his thick lips. His stabbing eyes still gazing suspiciously at the radio. At last, gruffly:

"Maybe it isn't his right moniker," said Beak, "but he calls himself -"

Beak's whole face went rigid. From the mysterious crackle of the radio, emerged a voice - musical, yet with the metallic twang of a stringed instrument.

Its words came as a bitter melody.

"Hear me, Beak Hyler!" spoke that voice. "You have meddled with my plans. You know the reward for traitors!"

"It's him!" panted Beak. "He's listened in - the 'brain' - he's wise -"

Quinrick was at the radio again, snarling something about the phony hook-up. He yanked a cord from the wall; the action didn't stop the voice. But its tone was a discordant jangle, more insidious than before.

"And you, James Quinrick" - the accusation riveted the lawyer - "have willingly agreed to conspire against me. You will share the fate of Beak Hyler!"

THE voice chopped off. A few seconds later, the crackle faded. Quinrick had

recoiled to the fireplace, his face as blanched as Beak's. Only the ruddy glow from the flames gave semblance of color to those frozen countenances.

Beak tried to rally. He was on his feet, looking from one curtained doorway

to another, unable to decide which way to go. He felt the trembling grip of Quinrick's hand upon his arm. Papers crinkled, as the lawyer said hoarsely:

"Chuck them! We can't get caught with those!"

Beak snatched the documents in terror, flung them into the fireplace.

Flames consumed the papers. The flare brought temporary courage to Beak.

He

had gotten rid of evidence, at least. Quinrick, too, was looking toward the fireplace, hoping that something had been gained.

The dying flame wavered, then writhed, as though puffed by an intruding breeze. The conspirators stared frantically about the room. They were too late to see the stir of heavy draperies that hid the window.

There, in a cramped space, a black-cloaked figure had blocked the draft

that came with his silent opening of the window. From behind those curtains, he watched through a narrow slit, with eyes that peered intently from beneath the brim of a slouch hat.

Neither Beak Hyler nor James Quinrick suspected that they were under the observation of a being called The Shadow.

Though The Shadow opposed all ways of crime, those two conspirators should have welcomed his arrival, for he alone, could oppose, with any possibility of success, the evil master who threatened them.

At this moment, The Shadow could not analyze the terror that the firelight showed on the faces of Beak and Quinrick. He had expected to find them as they were a short while before, when they hatched their crafty scheme.

That was why The Shadow had scaled the outside wall: to look in upon the conference, for he had learned of Beak's visit to Quinrick.

Too late to hear either the conversation or the voice that had spoken from

the tricked radio, The Shadow had uncovered a scene that promised strange unheralded developments. From the fears of the two men who stood before him, he divined that a climax would soon be due.

The Shadow's surmise was correct. He was to witness the incredible before he left this place. Like threatened men, who trembled as they waited, The Shadow

was to meet with opposition that carried inhuman power.

From that ordeal would come a trail of madness and destruction. If The Shadow lived to follow it!

CHAPTER II

THE DEAD WHO LIVED

WITH ears strained, the hunted men caught a sound that was inaudible to The Shadow, behind the muffling curtains. Whatever that sound, the terror that it brought was transferred to their faces. Beak Hyler pointed toward a curtained doorway across the room.

"It's from there!" he panted. "They're coming!"

"From the kitchen entrance," voiced Quinrick, his tone hollow. "We can't go out through there. This way, Beak!"

Quinrick pointed to a corner doorway in the same wall as the fireplace. He started in that direction, only to halt, with a staggery about-face.

"The same sound," he croaked. "Coming from the front. Like the tramp of feet - slow-marching feet -"

The Shadow could now hear it. Dull, clumpy, monotonous, those beats were coming from both directions. They carried the thought of impending doom, arriving in slow-motion fashion. The effect resembled a nightmare; and its very slowness betokened power.

"What is it -"

Quinrick gasped the question frantically; but Beak couldn't reply. Mechanically, the racketeer was fumbling for a gun in his hip pocket. That clumsy move roused Quinrick to action.

With a bound, the lawyer crossed the room; he yanked open the drawer of a sideboard. From it, he produced a revolver and flourished it wildly. Beak's glimmering gun came into sight at the same moment; but his hand was shaky.

"There's no use!" Beak couldn't stand the terror of those slow-marching footsteps, louder than before. "We've got to get out of here, Quinrick! That door" - Beak pointed to the end wall - "where does it take us?"

"It's a closet," returned Quinrick. Then, nudging suddenly toward a deep alcove: "There's a way out! An emergency exit to the fire tower! Once we're through it, we're safe!"

Both men stirred their fear-frozen legs. The Shadow saw them dash into the alcove. He could hear the slide of a bolt, as Quinrick drew it.

All the while, from those other passages came the dull tramp-tramp - louder, closer!

The Shadow's gloved hands moved behind the curtain. His fists produced a brace of automatics. Alone, he intended to await the terror that had driven the

conspirators berserk. They could make their exit. It would give The Shadow opportunity to be sole witness to this strange invasion of an uncanny horde.

Then, from elsewhere, The Shadow heard added foot-beats, that clumped upward. There were gasping shouts from the alcove. Quinrick came staggering back

into the living room, Beak close after him.

The new sound was from beyond the emergency door that Quinrick had opened.

Added invaders were entering by the fire tower!

SIDE by side, the conspirators waited in the center of the living room. Slow marchers were so close that their thumping approach drowned the crackle of the fire.

That thumping sound must have had a controlling effect upon the men who made it; for it took on a constant rhythm from all directions. Then, as if by signal, the closet door flung open.

There, stowed away, awaiting the sound that awakened them, were two members

of the invading band. They emerged like mechanical figures loosed from a box.

They were haggard-faced; their clothes were scarcely more than rags. One had a long, aristocratic face above the remnants of a tuxedo tie and collar.

The

other was square-jawed, unshaven, with ill-kempt hair. He wore a hunting jacket

that hung in shreds.

Both were alike in expression, chiefly because of their bulging eyes.

Those

optics, whitened like the eyes of opium addicts, stared with forceful penetration.

Seemingly, they looked right through the shivering forms of James Quinrick

and Beak Hyler. That X-ray vision even gave The Shadow the impression that the curtain had melted in front of him, until he realized that the bulgy eyes were almost sightless.

Beak backed toward The Shadow's curtain. Quinrick, left alone, made a sudden scramble to join the racketeer. They didn't want to be too close, though,

for in the hands of the ragged invaders were pointing guns, that had come up with precise mechanical aim. Beak and Quinrick elbowed way from each other.

A shudder seemed to grip the room. The effect was created by the stir of doorway curtains, moving simultaneously. In from three directions tramped more of the unearthly invaders, coming in single file. Three from the front of the apartment; three from the kitchen route; four from the fire tower!

All had guns, pointed. Against that opposition, the terrified men were

helpless. The Shadow could see sagging shoulders in front of him. Beak and Quinrick were groveling toward the floor, gulping pleas to the unhearing crew that dominated them.

Whether that band of corpse-faced humans saw the pleading men or not, they were certainly aware of their presence; for the aiming guns formed a ring of metal, every muzzle trained in the right direction. The group had spread to form a semicircle, that was flanking inward.

Noting that, Quinrick motioned Beak forward. They crawled toward the center of the room, dragging their guns along the carpet. It was Quinrick who gasped: "You've got to talk to them, Beak! Reason with them - tell them we're all right!"

"I can't!" Beak's whine was hopeless. "They aren't human. They're dead men - living dead men - sent here" - Beak's concluding words came with effort - "sent here by - by him!"

INVADERS were motionless. They were standing in a human circle nearly three quarters completed. They were like clockwork figures, their mechanism stopped. That made it all the more fearful for the two men who stared at the bulge-eyed faces.

Something had put those dooming creatures into motion. At any moment a new command might come, to make them resume concerted action. Beak's frantic eyes went toward the radio, as if he feared the signal from there. Quinrick saw the direction of Beak's gaze.

"We must do something!" he whispered. "We have guns. We can shoot our way through. Which way will we take?"

"It won't do no good," returned Beak. "You can't croak dead men. That's what these guys are - dead! I didn't believe it when he - when he told me; but that was before they came here!"

Quinrick raised his revolver. There wasn't a move from the entire circle. But Quinrick's hand was too shaky for his finger to pull the trigger. His gun wobbled so badly that it went from one fish-eyed sentinel to another.

But he had shown some sign of nerve. It brought a gritted snarl from Beak.

If Quinrick was going to make a break, Beak would do the same. He could tell from the general direction of the lawyer's wobbly aim that Quinrick had picked the fire tower as the route for escape.

Slowly, Beak began to raise his gun hand from the floor. His fingers were tight; they meant business.

That action gave The Shadow sudden understanding. He knew the signal that the circle of corpse-like men awaited. It wouldn't be a voice from the radio. It

was something else; so subtle, that it showed the keenness of the brain that controlled these gruesome invaders.

The brain had calculated that Quinrick and Beak would try to crash the circle; that in such an effort, their first move would be to open fire. A gunshot, therefore, would be the signal for the encircling horde. It didn't matter which doomed man fired first. Once a shot was given, both would become instant victims!

No pity did The Shadow hold for either of the cringing crooks. Beak Hyler was a man who had often indulged in secret murder; James Quinrick knew that fact and defended it. Their deaths would benefit the public; but they would be more useful if they remained alive.

Uncovered by The Shadow, those two could supply important facts if they were rescued. They would talk, too, if they learned that The Shadow was powerful enough to snatch them from their present dilemma. That was why The Shadow moved to instant action.

His arms spread the window curtains. With long, sweeping stride. He launched across the room, passing between Beak and Quinrick. He was driving toward the alcove, to open the path that the doomed men wanted

NOT a surrounding figure stirred at sight of that avalanche in black; but The Shadow's path was blocked when he came upon the sentinel nearest the alcove.

At that close range, something must have told the mechanized man that an attacker was upon him. As if reflecting The Shadow's own action, the living dead man raised his gun arm for a swing.

The Shadow's stroke came first. The bulge-eyed man collapsed when a heavy automatic glanced his skull, thereby belying Beak's claim that the ragged invaders could not be harmed.

With the swing, The Shadow elbowed the next man in the circle. That sentinel turned, drove his gun for The Shadow's head.

Warding off the blow, The Shadow wheeled. The clash of steel was stirring the entire circle. The Shadow had swung toward the amazed men in the center of the room. With fierce commanding tone, he ordered them to flight.

"This way!" voiced The Shadow. "Through to the fire tower, before they close in!"

Quinrick was coming to his feet, anxious to obey. It was Beak who made the error. To the racketeer, signs of The Shadow made him forget everything except the grudge that the underworld bore that black-cloaked battler. Beak's lips snarled his recognition:

"The Shadow!"

With the cry, Beak aimed. The Shadow faded as the racketeer tugged the trigger. The bullet whined wide; it pinged the alcove wall. It was the last shot that Beak ever fired.

At his shot, action stirred the clock-like brains of the men who formed the closing circle. Levelled guns swung as if magnetized to their human targets. Muzzles spouted a terrific volley toward the center of the floor.

Two figures jolted; wallowing under that merciless hail, they flattened. Instant death had found the intended victims: Beak Hyler and James Quinrick.

The Shadow, witness to that double murder, was alone with the roused horde that had committed it!

CHAPTER III

THE SHADOW'S CAPTIVE

BEAK HYLER hadn't been far wrong when he termed these invaders "living dead men." In action, in appearance, they were reanimated corpses. The Shadow had met such foemen before; he knew of one master who had controlled them, and had termed them "zombi."

The Shadow had seen that evil master go to a fiery death. Perhaps he had

risen from his ashes. Possibly these zombie were left-overs from his rule. Those possibilities, however, were of little moment, for the present.

Zombis had turned toward The Shadow. Forced to the alcove by Quinrick's choice of exit, The Shadow was in the very path that the ill-assorted squad intended to follow. Bulging eyes seemed sightless no longer. They carried the glint of blood-lust.

Guns swung toward The Shadow. Fortunately, they came with that mechanized motion that was slow, despite its merciless precision. As flanking zombis aimed,

The Shadow drove for the center of the room, straight into a massed group.

Fingers tugged, as mechanical as the triggers that they pulled. Those shots

whined through the vacancy that The Shadow had left. He was milling with others

who tried to aim. He saw faces all about him - sensitive, likable faces, despite

their ugly staring eyes.

These men weren't killers by nature; but necessity forced The Shadow to battle them. Gripped by an evil control, they were murder-mad.

Under certain circumstances, The Shadow would have been compelled to deliver bullets. Recent experience kept him from that course. He didn't intend to repeat the unwise signal that Beak had given, to produce his own destruction.

Grimly, The Shadow kept to the midst of his opponents, hoping, by his own example, to bring them into grappling tactics. It worked - partly through The Shadow's policy, partly because the zombis - stirred by recollection of their master's order - were constrained from firing upon their own kind.

Slugging as he grappled, The Shadow kept ragged-clad bodies between himself

and those zombi who were aiming guns. Guttural voices croaked, wordlessly.

Shooting ended as the whole tribe gathered, pressing The Shadow back with their

movement.

Downing these fighters wasn't easy. The Shadow must have picked a soft one

in his first encounter; for there were hard heads in this crowd, that took the gun strokes with impunity. Both arms flaying, The Shadow spent half his effort beating off the blows that came in his direction.

He was back against the window, pressing the curtains with him, when he finally saw success ahead. He had whittled his antagonists down to three. The rest were either slumped to, or slowly rising from, the floor where he had pitched them.

The zombie didn't reel when jolted. They either paid no heed or simply folded; but those who collapsed had a faculty of rising, to come back for more.

The Shadow was ready to whip away from the three who struggled with him. He

saw a clear route across the room, and was prepared to take it.

Just then, from the alcove, The Shadow heard a curious, high-pitched call.

ZOMBIS stiffened in The Shadow's grasp. In turn, he became rigid. He saw the rising fighters halt mechanically, to stare in the direction of the cry.

A squatly dark-faced man stepped from the alcove, a greasy leer upon his lips. The Shadow had never seen that face before, but it was one that he could remember. From the left end of the fellow's mouth was a jagged scar that ran toward his ear.

The newcomer saw the bodies of James Quinrick and Beak Hyler. The sight

pleased him; but he was puzzled when he observed the sagged zombie. He couldn't figure how the victims had managed to down so many of the mechanized fighters. As chance had it, The Shadow was almost obscured against the curtains, behind the figures of the three zombie who clustered with him.

The dark-faced man drew a gun. Other faces thrust into sight behind him. The Shadow recognized them as ordinary thugs, who looked awed by what they saw.

"I'll march them out!" spat the dark-faced man, in a thick accent. "You carry the ones that can't move alone. Bring all of them" - as he spoke, he circled the gun about the room - "except this one!"

His gun stopped with a quick jerk, centered upon a stoop-shouldered zombi whose hollow cheeks contrasted with the wide bulge of his forehead. That one invader was better attired than the others. His clothes, though plain and shabby, were by no means ragged.

Before The Shadow could make an effort to prevent it, the swarthy-faced man did the unexpected. He snapped his gun trigger; a burst of flame scorched straight for the zombi's heart. The stooped man stiffened; came straight upright. He held that position, staring straight ahead.

Gradually, the marked zombi swayed; losing balance, he crashed face forward to the floor.

Amid that occurrence, guttural tones came from the other zombie. They started for the dark-faced man, raising their revolvers. They weren't inspired by desire to avenge their fallen comrade. They were simply responding to the old urge: to use their guns when they heard the signal.

The swarthy-faced man didn't budge. He simply repeated the high-pitched cry that the zombis knew. They halted all about him. Slowly, their half-raised hands came downward.

It was then that the man with the dark face saw The Shadow. The cluster of zombis had turned away from him. Before the dark leader could issue an order, thugs shouted their recognition:

"The Shadow!"

THIS was the time for gunfire. The Shadow gave it, as the mobbies dived back into the alcove. The darkish man sprang in the opposite direction, rolling behind a chair. The Shadow would have clipped him; but the blocking figure of a zombi ruined his aim.

Those quick shots were not only wasted; they brought chaos that threatened disaster for The Shadow.

Again, the zombis answered the gunshot signal, taking its source as their focal point. They aimed for The Shadow; and their dark-faced overseer didn't stop them. Instead, he snarled encouragement; useless to the zombis, but inspiring to the thugs.

For once, crooks were willing to battle The Shadow in the open. With living dead men as shock troops, the thugs had no fear.

The Shadow had grabbed the nearest zombi as a shield. He realized instantly that the move couldn't help. The mobbies had seen the overseer shoot down one zombi. They would fire at The Shadow, even if the zombis didn't.

In this dilemma, there was only one route. It was the window, with a straight drop to a projecting roof, two floors below. Even in desperation, Quinrick hadn't thought of pointing out that route to Beak. But The Shadow took the exit that the dead men had neglected.

There wasn't time to shake off the lone zombi, who had made a mechanical clutch for The Shadow's throat. Wheeling, carrying the zombi with him, The Shadow launched straight for the window, hooking the curtains as he went.

The thick drapes ripped from the double weight. Wrapped in them, The Shadow and his struggling adversary pitched headlong into space, leaving a gaping void where the open window showed the twinkle of city lights.

Guns roared again. Thugs and zombis were shooting for the place where no one was. The high cry of the overseer stopped that useless fire. Zombis fell into file; began their tramp out through the fire tower.

This time, their march was steadier; almost rapid. Behind them came the thugs, shoving along a few zombis who hadn't regained full ability of locomotion.

The scarred overseer remained long enough to poke his dark face from the window and stare into blackness below. His eyes were sharp; but they could not discern shape or motion on the lower roof. He was satisfied that The Shadow and one zombi had gone to death; for the darkness made the space seem deeper than it was.

Little time remained to the ugly leader. He could hear the whine of police sirens: proof that the roar of guns had been reported. Turning, he studied the three figures on the floor.

He spat contemptuous words in a foreign tongue at the bodies of Quinrick, Beak Hyler and the hollow-cheeked zombi. With that, the dark-faced man made his own exit.

ON the roof below, The Shadow rose slowly, dizzily. The two-story fall had jarred him; but he had shoved the zombi ahead of him, to take the brunt of it. A

tiny flashlight glimmered on the zombi's face from The Shadow's hand.

Bereft of murderous madness, the zombi's countenance seemed changed. The man was young; discounting the matty beard that streaked his cheeks and chin, his face was well-formed. The Shadow pulled away a clump of drapery, to reveal the fellow's crop of shaggy hair.

The zombi stirred; his lips gave a vague mutter. He was alive, thanks to the wadded mass of curtain that had made a cushion for his skull. Those drapes, too, had slowed the drop, like an improvised parachute. The Shadow remembered that, from the fall.

There was a rumble from an alleyway below. The Shadow felt about for a gun. By the time he found one, to grip it with numbed fingers, it was too late to use it.

A big van had swung the corner, carrying away its load of zombis, back to their master's unknown headquarters.

Rising, The Shadow hauled his captive with him. He reached a ladder at the roof edge, descended it with his human burden. As he drew the zombi through a

passageway between two buildings, The Shadow blinked a signal with his flashlight.

There was a taxi waiting on the back street. Its driver saw the flashes. He

joined The Shadow. Together, they hurried the prisoner into the cab. As The Shadow closed the rear door from inside, the driver took the wheel.

That cab darted for a corner just as a police car wheeled in from the opposite direction. Shots burst from the patrol car; the chase was on, but it didn't last. Within half a dozen twisty blocks, The Shadow's cabby had shaken the pursuers.

A grim laugh sounded within the darkness of the cab, unheard by the semiconscious captive who was propped in a corner. That tone marked the beginning of a trail.

It was The Shadow's challenge to a superman of crime, whose methods, like his ambitions, surpassed those of all others who dealt in ways of evil!

CHAPTER IV

FACTS FROM THE PAST

THE police didn't find much mystery in the scene at Quinrick's apartment. The place was a shambles, its walls pumpe full of bullets, proving that real battle had raged there. But that merely pieced in with the law's theory.

Curiously, the misleading factor was the body that the police found with those of Quinrick and Beak Hyler. The man was identified; his name was Rufus Kane. He happened to be a man with an unsavory past.

Early next evening, Inspector Joe Cardona stopped at the Cobalt Club. Cardona was the ace of all police inspectors; and his visits to the Cobalt Club

were frequent, for that was where Ralph Weston, the police commissioner, could usually be found outside of office hours.

On this occasion - as often - Weston was in the grillroom, having dinner with his friend, Lamont Cranston. Liking the limelight, Weston cultivated the acquaintance of reputed millionaires like Cranston. They were in conversation when Cardona arrived; being in no hurry, the inspector sat down politely and listened.

"Of course, of course!" Weston was saying impatiently. "You are right, Cranston! There have been many cases, lately, of wealthy persons who have turned eccentric. But I attribute it entirely to mob psychology."

"Such persons," returned Cranston, calmly, "would hardly be influenced by mass psychology."

"Bah!" interjected Weston. "Remember mah-jong? And backgammon? Society people took up those inane diversions and carried them to he limit, only to forget them."

"This time," observed Cranston, "they seem to have forgotten themselves, as well."

Weston grunted. He happened to notice Cardona. The commissioner called upon the inspector as arbiter.

"Cranston has an odd theory," chuckled Weston, with a return of good humor.

"I want you to hear it, Cardona."

Cardona nodded, trying to appear politely interested.

"Simply this," remarked Cranston, in a leisurely tone. "Some months ago, four wealthy young men found such fondness for the sea, that they took a fifty-foot schooner and embarked on a round-the-world trip. They have not been heard from since."

"You mean the Iris!" nodded Cardona. "That boat was probably lost. Unless
-
as was rumored later - those four guys headed for a South Sea isle and settled there."

Weston nodded. He considered Cardona's verdict sound.

"There were curious cases of three wealthy young women," recalled Cranston, quite ignoring the opposition. "One took an airplane hop for South America. She did not arrive there. Another went to India to marry a Hindu rajah. We haven't heard how that turned out. The third went fishing off the Florida coast. Her boat was seen in flames, but her body was never found."

CARDONA shook his head. He agreed with Weston. These instances did not impress him.

"Remember the manufacturer from Cleveland?" questioned Cranston. "The one who announced that he had given all his wealth to charity, so that he could go into seclusion? Just what seclusion did he choose?"

"Whatever he wanted," replied Weston. "That was his business, not ours."

"And what about George Grulen?" demanded Cranston. "The young chap who inherited a quarter million and left New York broke, within three months?"

"He spent it all," retorted Weston. "He threw money everywhere to everybody!"

Cranston's gaze fixed steadily upon the commissioner. His eyes, curiously, resembled those of The Shadow; but they lacked the identifying burn. Weston decided simply that his friend had given up the argument.

"Come, Cardona," declared Weston, briskly. "Give me the final report on last night's case."

"It's open and shut," announced Cardona. "To begin with, Beak Hyler went to see James Quinrick. It wasn't for legal advice, either; because Beak didn't need any, that we know of."

"Then what was his purpose?"

"To shake down Rufus Kane. I've got evidence right here" - Cardona tapped some report sheets - "that both of them, Beak and Quinrick, knew how to stage blackmail as a side line."

"You know who Kane was, commissioner. The banker who was supposed to be worth plenty, until he absconded with a hundred thousand bucks in trust funds. Beak probably met up with him, and talked him into getting advice from Quinrick."

"So Kane showed up. They probably thought he had the money with him, and tried to snatch it. Some of Beak's gorillas were around there - we've established that - and there were some others, besides. They must have belonged to Kane."

"When Kane found out the racket, he objected. That's when the trigger-men showed up; but there were two crews of them. The big guys got theirs. Who snagged the dough, we've still got to find out. This is what they left in the alley."

Cardona produced a photograph. It showed a small valise, bloodstained, its clamp ripped off. The bag bore the initials "R. K.", which identified it as Kane's.

From his pocket, Cardona brought three bank notes, also stained with blood. He laid them on the table.

"These dropped from the batch," explained Cardona. "We checked their numbers. They belong to the dough that Kane stole."

IT was The Shadow's turn to be unimpressed, though nothing in his pose of Cranston indicated it. Behind the evidence, The Shadow saw the whole structure of the cleverly planted scheme.

The police theory was based on ignorance of true events at Quinrick's apartment. Since last night, The Shadow had sought an explanation for the overseer's cold murder of one zombi - if the killing of a living dead man could be termed murder.

Identification of that man as Rufus Kane - so stated in the morning newspapers - had opened a new chain of deduction for The Shadow. That squad of zombis couldn't all have been embezzlers like Kane; there weren't enough such men available. They were Kane's sort, though, in that they had once been respectable human beings.

Why, therefore, had Kane been picked as a planted victim, who, in death, would show no traces of having been a zombi?

The answer was obvious. Kane, alone of that mechanized tribe, was a man who could be classed as a criminal sort. But there was a mystery about Kane that the police hadn't bothered to investigate, because it wasn't in their province.

That mystery concerned the reputed wealth that Kane had possessed prior to his embezzlement. The law regarded that wealth as imaginary; The Shadow did not.

As clearly as if he had overheard the conversation between Beak Hyler and Quinrick, The Shadow had found the truth. Through some artful influence, Kane had been plucked of a fortune before he had turned to crooked ways. Madly hoping to curry greater favor with an evil master, he had embezzled added funds for the coffers of the vicious genius who controlled him.

Deprived of wealth, Kane had been stripped of his mentality as well. His reward had been the lot of a zombi.

Those others were persons who had undergone the same stark fate, without the added touch of being forced to crime. They were persons who had not possessed access to wealth other than their own.

Necessarily, though, they must have had large funds in their own right, to prove worthwhile in the affairs of the master brain behind the game.

That was why The Shadow - as Cranston - had mentioned cases to Commissioner Weston. Some of those instances, if not all, were the work of the evil master. The Shadow, himself, held proof, in the person of the captured zombi. Delving into possible cases, he had already identified his prisoner.

The young man was the one whose name Cranston had mentioned to Weston. The

zombi was George Grulen, the reputed spendthrift who had so rapidly squandered away a fortune.

The Shadow had also found a haze surrounding the other cases. No one had seen the four world voyagers set sail in their sloop. The same applied to the airplane flight that one girl had made; the trip to India undertaken by another.

There was no doubting the law's disinterest in the theories proposed by Lamont Cranston. To Commissioner Weston and Inspector Cardona, all that remained was to trace a missing hundred thousand dollars that they thought had fallen into the hands of small-fry crooks.

Since the law wanted no suggestions, the trail belonged to The Shadow alone. He intended to follow it, unhindered, until he could present facts to which the law would listen.

WHEN Lamont Cranston left the Cobalt Club, he stepped into a soundproof limousine. Speaking through a connecting tube, he quietly told the chauffeur to take him to his New Jersey estate. The big car wheeled southward toward the Holland Tunnel.

Meanwhile, Cranston was pulling back a folding seat. From a compartment cleverly hidden in front of that space, he drew a pair of earphones and a microphone. The whisper that he gave was in The Shadow's tone. It brought a methodical response through the earphones:

"Burbank speaking."

"Report!"

"One report," voiced Burbank, over the short-wave radio. "From Doctor Sayre. The patient has shown a sudden recovery."

"Report received!"

Tucking away the short-wave set, The Shadow took the speaking tube. His voice was Cranston's, when he announced to the chauffeur:

"I am forgetful, Stanley. I had an appointment with Doctor Sayre. Take me to his office, at once."

Passing lights showed a silent passenger, as the big limousine turned northward. The hawkish face of Lamont Cranston was fixed and immobile. Noticeable, however, was the sparkle of those steady eyes, that seemed to rip into the future as they gazed.

From that relayed report through Burbank, his contact man, The Shadow was confident that the trail to crime would open before this night had passed.

CHAPTER V

THE MAN FROM THE PAST

DOCTOR RUPERT SAYRE had lately moved to Park Avenue, where his office was located near a corner. The limousine, however, did not stop at the Park Avenue entrance. Instead, Stanley turned the corner and drew up at an obscure door, some forty feet along the side street.

Why Cranston chose that rear entrance to the doctor's office, was something that did not particularly bother Stanley. The chauffeur simply supposed that Cranston's visits were usually after hours, when the main door was closed.

It didn't occur to Stanley that there were times when his master came here on strange missions, wherein darkness was a needed factor. There had been one such occasion the night before, when The Shadow had carried in from a taxicab a living person so corpse-like that chance observers might have supposed him dead.

Tonight, when Cranston alighted, Stanley heard his voice but did not see him in the gloom. The chauffeur drove away at Cranston's order. A silent figure

approached the obscure door. There, with a key of his own, The Shadow entered.

He had donned slouch hat and black cloak, brought from beneath the rear seat of the limousine. Those garments rendered his entrance invisible.

Once inside, The Shadow tucked his black garb beneath a small waiting-room

bench. He smoothed his evening clothes; strolled through a door into a lighted office.

Doctor Sayre, brisk and alert, looked up from his desk to see Lamont Cranston.

Sayre was comparatively youthful; but he had a professional air that made

him seem older than he actually was. His success was due to his own ability; but it was Cranston's friendship that had started Sayre on his climb. Through Cranston, Sayre had gained frequent contact with that mysterious personage called The Shadow.

Those two were closely associated in Sayre's mind; so closely, that at times he felt sure that Cranston was The Shadow. At other periods, Sayre doubted it. At least, he knew, there were times when The Shadow impersonated Cranston. That reversal of his original opinion struck Sayre as being the most likely truth.

Tonight, Sayre was expecting The Shadow. Instead, he saw Cranston. Taking that as a matter of course, the physician led the way into another room.

There, on a cot, lay a different George Grulen than the man who had battled The Shadow the night before.

GRULEN was dressed in fresh clothes; shaven; his hair, though still long, had lost its matted appearance. His face had lost its corpse-like pallor. He was sleeping comfortably, except for an occasional catch in his breath. At those intervals, a spasmodic shudder went through the sleeping man.

"A strange case," spoke Sayre in an undertone. "One that first reminded me of -"

He halted, his manner doubtful. It was Cranston who supplied the rest.

"Of a young man," he said quietly, "a former patient, who had lost his memory through a powerful application of vivid red light."

Sayre nodded.

"And of other cases, perhaps," resumed Cranston, "wherein men's minds were permanently shattered by a blazing bulb that flashed with dazzling sparks. I believe The Shadow told you of that apparatus."

"He did," admitted Sayre. "But in both those cases the man behind the evil

work was Rodil Mocquino, who called himself the 'Voodoo Master'." (See "The Voodoo Master", Vol. XVII, No. 1, "The City of Doom", Vol. XVII, No.6.)

"Doctor Mocquino," added Cranston. "I remember. What became of Mocquino?"

"He died -"

The statement, itself, died on Sayre's lips. Actually, he was uncertain regarding Mocquino's death.

"I saw Mocquino pitch overboard from a Hudson River ferry," recalled Sayre.

"I thought, then, that he had perished. But he came back - to meet The Shadow again. Later, The Shadow himself, saw Mocquino fall into the flaming ruins of a

huge mansion. To believe that Mocquino again escaped death, is incredible -"

"Mocquino is an incredible person," interposed Cranston. "So incredible, that I believe this" - he gestured toward the form of Grulen - "to be Mocquino's work!"

Sayre considered the statement.

"This is a milder case," he objected. "Previously, Mocquino's victims required special treatment; or were too far gone for possible recovery. This patient has recuperated from his zombi trance, entirely through his own stamina."

"Which proves," insisted Cranston, "that Mocquino is even craftier than before. He has found a method of producing a temporary loss of will that fades in twenty-four hours. That enables him, if necessary, to put his victims back

into circulation."

The artful system dawned on Sayre, even though he knew little about the cases that The Shadow had investigated today. He could see how Mocquino might spike rumors regarding persons who had disappeared, by producing them, when required, in apparently good health.

Cranston was leaning above the cot. He turned his head toward Sayre.

"The breathing condition?" he queried. "Is it serious?"

"No," replied Sayre. "It is safe to awaken him. It is probable, however, that he will tire easily. That is why I sent for an oxygen tank."

"It has arrived?"

"Yes. Within the last hour."

Sayre stepped to a corner; he rolled out the tank, with hose and respirator

attached. Cranston raised his hand.

"Later," he suggested. "I shall first test him in his present state."

GEORGE GRULEN roused easily. Soon, he was propped on pillows, staring into the face of Lamont Cranston. Doctor Sayre heard the visitor's quiet voice asking questions to which Grulen responded.

"I - I was a fool!" panted the victim. "Yet - if you knew Mocquino - you would understand. I can hear the beat of those tom-toms - the crackle of the fire! Mocquino fears no fire; but we feared it" - the speaker shuddered - "even after we became zombis!"

"You recall that experience?" questioned Cranston.

"Yes," replied Grulen. "But it is dim. I remember everything very hazily. The voodoo cult - a joke at first" - his breath was coming hard - "and then it gripped me! Mocquino demanded wealth - more wealth - more than I could supply -"

He sank back on the pillows. Eyes half closed, he muttered almost to himself. Listening with one ear close, Cranston caught a name.

"Marcia - Marcia Cortell." Grulen's head slipped toward his shoulder.

"She

was safe - when I last saw her. But she believes Mocquino. Stop her - from going there!"

"Where is the place?"

"I don't - know. We were taken there. How, I don't remember. I forget - everything -"

The tone faded. Strained by his effort. Grulen was panting hard for air. Sayre made connections with the oxygen tank; advanced with the respirator. The hose disconnected as he pulled it; Sayre was forced to affix it again.

Cranston's eyes were surveying Grulen with a steady glint. That gaze told much. The Shadow knew that Grulen's memories, like his words, had faded. When restored, he would be more nearly normal; but his recollections of the voodoo cult would become a blank.

Unquestionably, Mocquino's schemes depended upon such a result. Otherwise,

he would have no need to ever restore a victim.

Cranston's calm tone had taken on a penetrating force. It was low, but audible to Grulen. It had the semblance of a sinister whisper that he had heard

the night before; one that jogged his recollections.

"Name others" - the tone was a command - "others, if you can remember them,

who were members of the voodoo cult!"

Again, the name "Marcia" was forced from Grulen's lips. That was all.

Grulen could apparently remember no other. No longer using the forceful method of The Shadow, Cranston turned toward Sayre, who was at hand with the respirator.

"Very well, doctor. He is ready for the oxygen -"

THE even tones ended abruptly. Cranston's eyes, as leisurely as his voice, had roved along the hose to the tank connection. Despite Sayre's adjustment, there was still a leak; it evidenced itself visibly.

A vapory trickle, green in hue, was coiling like a tiny wraith from the top of the oxygen tank. Its faint hiss, to those ears that noticed it, was as vicious as the tongued warning of a serpent.

In a trice, Cranston was transformed into a being who acted with split-second speed.

His right arm drove beneath Grulen's shoulders. With tremendous power, yet with amazing ease, The Shadow hauled the panting man from the cot.

That sudden motion, plus the fierce warning that The Shadow voiced, aroused Grulen from his lethargy. He actually propelled himself, staggering blindly along, to aid The Shadow's drive toward the door.

Like a many-limbed monster, the pair bowled Sayre ahead of them. The astonished physician lost his hold on the hose and went sprawling backward into the office. He rolled away as Cranston and Grulen came hurtling upon him; for The Shadow ended that lunge with a powerful dive.

It was Sayre who saw what happened, just as the others struck the office floor.

With a sighing puff, the top lifted from the oxygen tank. Though almost silent, the explosion was forcible. The tank disgorged a greenish gas that spread like an expanding monster, filling the entire room that the trio had just left.

Sayre caught the scent of a deadly odor, chlorine, as the ugly vapor writhed toward the open door, seeking to flood the office with its murderous fumes. The physician gave a hoarse shout of warning. Cranston heard it, and acted.

Rolling away from Grulen, The Shadow showed his accustomed speed in emergency. Flat on the floor, he hooked the door with his extended foot; slammed the barrier shut with one deft kick, thus walling off the deadly cloud.

Again The Shadow had warded off a thrust from Mocquino. That gas-filled tank had been sent here by the Voodoo Master.

Mocquino's far-reaching hand had stretched to clutch The Shadow, and had failed!

CHAPTER VI

THE LONE CAMPAIGN

LAMONT CRANSTON appeared unruffled, when he arose from the floor. Together, he and Doctor Sayre propped George Grulen into a comfortable chair. The patient

had lapsed into a comatose state, that Sayre pronounced as merely temporary.

As Sayre saw it, the situation wasn't serious. Cranston, thinking of other

factors, decided differently.

"Regarding the patient," he said, calmly. "Is he in condition to travel by automobile and airplane?"

"Quite," replied Sayre, somewhat surprised. "The car trip would do him good; and in planes, oxygen tanks are available. I must give you instructions, though, regarding the proper treatment."

"That will be unnecessary, since you - not I - are the person who will accompany Grulen."

"But my practice?"

Cranston's smile answered Sayre's question. The physician recalled that he had long ago made arrangements for another doctor to handle the practice, in case of emergency. Sayre hadn't anticipated that he would have to take a trip on such short notice; but he knew that it could be done.

So it was Cranston who issued instructions. He wrote them on a sheet of paper that he handed to Sayre. As the physician began to read them, Cranston turned abruptly.

"I am going to your garage," he told Sayre, "to arrange for your car to be brought here. Wait for word at the rear door."

It was Cranston who brought Sayre's car to a convenient parking place, from which he reentered the obscure door. Once inside, he took the black garments that he had stowed behind the waiting-room bench. From that moment, the identity

of Cranston was blotted. It was The Shadow who returned to Sayre's office.

Silently, the cloaked arrival aided Sayre with Grulen. They brought the semiconscious man to the sidewalk; put him into the doctor's coupe. There, The Shadow whispered for Sayre to await a signal. Returning to the office, The Shadow left the rear door ajar.

He was watching two directions: safeguarding Sayre, while he anticipated new arrivals.

A DOZEN minutes had already passed. Three more produced the result that The Shadow expected. There was a creaking sound from the front of Sayre's suite. Sneaky visitors had jimmed the avenue door.

They were coming closer, through a waiting room. The Shadow stepped back into the darkness of the passage. He saw the arrivals - a trio of rough-looking customers, who looked uncomfortable in the good clothes that they had worn for this foray on Park Avenue.

Evidently, they were thugs, like the cover-up crew that Mocquino had employed the night before. Their faces, however, were new to The Shadow, mute proof of a theory that he had lately developed; namely, that Mocquino had gained control of many forces in the underworld.

The three saw the door to the side room. They opened it. The greenish gas had settled, but they could sniff the traces of it. They stared, puzzled by the vacancy where they had expected to find at least two victims.

Snarling among themselves, the hoodlums removed their only trophy: the fake oxygen tank. They were starting for the front, when a sound stopped them. It was

the clank of an automatic against woodwork, done deliberately by The Shadow.

While the thugs couldn't make out the cause of the sound, they did

discover

its direction. Yanking revolvers, they moved toward the rear passage.

All along, they were lured by vague sounds. The Shadow led them toward the door to the side street. They were close when he edged through, but they didn't

see the motion of the black-clad figure.

From then on, The Shadow's moves were silent. He glided along the sidewalk;

dropped to a flight of stone steps that led to a basement.

The Shadow could hear the prowling thugs back by the doorway. He saw Sayre's coupe; a taxi had pulled in behind it. Half rising, The Shadow twinkled

his flashlight, muffling it so the blinks were invisible to the prowlers but seen by Sayre and the taxi driver.

Sayre was awaiting that signal. The coupe's motor was throbbing; Sayre shoved the car into gear. The coupe pulled suddenly from its place, made a quick start eastward.

Crooks scrambled from Sayre's doorway; they yanked their guns to fire at the fleeing car. A sudden laugh chilled them; it was weird, shivery, from somewhere along the line of building walls. They knew that laugh: The Shadow's mockery!

The three thugs wheeled, and opened a wild fire that was a sheer waste of bullets. Worse than that, they marked themselves for The Shadow. Crouched low upon the steps, four feet beneath the path of fire, The Shadow returned the fusillade. His timely shots clipped the crooks, sprawling them to the sidewalk.

That crew was out of the way.

THE taxi was in motion, when The Shadow sped across the sidewalk to board it.

A rakish car hauled in from Park Avenue. On the taxi's running board, the door open as a shield, The Shadow fired through the window. From his half-crouched position, he aimed at the front wheels of the oncoming car.

Bullets cleaved the treads of tires. The pop of blow-outs drowned the blasts of The Shadow's guns. The car careened; floundered to a halt. The gunmen

in it fired shots as useless as the oaths they shouted. Their only target was the taxi's thick steel door, that closed while they bombarded it.

The Shadow was away in his own bulletproof cab, with another of Mocquino's gun crews completely unable to pursue.

Those tastes of battle told The Shadow that more conflict was due. Sayre was speeding southward on Lexington Avenue, when The Shadow sighted him.

A car cut in from a side street; began to overhaul the doctor's coupe. In the rear-view mirror, Sayre saw what was coming. He gave his car a spurt.

Hitting fifty, the pursuing car drew up on the left; but its speed didn't match the rocketing taxi, which the attackers failed to notice. Moe Shrevnitz, The Shadow's taxi driver - and one of his secret agents - could do seventy with

that high-gear cab.

Just as crooks were swiveling a machine gun toward Sayre's window, the cab overtook them.

Three wide, those cars were roaring down Lexington Avenue, while other traffic scudded for safety. Above the roar of motors came the staccato stabs of

The Shadow's automatics. He spotted the machine gunners; toppled them where

they
crouched.

Other crooks jabbed revolvers in The Shadow's direction; but their gesture was belated. The taxi's rear door was even with the driver of the gunman-filled car. The Shadow snapped a straight shot at the man who handled the wheel. With a howl, that hoodlum lost his grip, for the slug had clipped his shoulder.

He managed to tramp down the brake pedal but he couldn't avoid a crash. The car swerved across the avenue, demolished a fire-plug as it leaped the curb, and battered itself through a plate-glass window.

Moe kept his accelerator to the floor board through all that bedlam; and Sayre copied the taxi driver's example. Both were clear when the attackers took their devastating skid. The taxi, however, had passed the coupe.

Looking through the rear window, The Shadow saw no other pursuing cars. He let Moe pace Sayre from then on. It was a good policy; for Moe didn't stay on Lexington Avenue. Instead, he wangled through side streets, showing Sayre how to navigate corners in expert fashion. When that twisty course ended, they were on Seventh Avenue, in the neighborhood of Greenwich Village.

There, at The Shadow's order, Moe let Sayre speed ahead. Following The Shadow's previous instructions, Sayre made straight for the Holland Tunnel, leading to New Jersey. A few blocks before they reached the tube, there was a last thrust that proved Mocquino's foresight.

AS the coupe passed a corner, it was recognized. A sedan whizzed from the curb, to follow it. That chase was ended in a dozen seconds. Crooks heard the report of an automatic; over their left shoulders they saw a taxi bearing down on them, with The Shadow leaning from the window.

A crash seemed imminent. Thugs didn't have time to open battle. The sedan's driver skewed his car to the right, clipped the rear fender of a parked truck and bashed the radiator of his own car against a building wall.

Half the crooks were on the floor, the others diving from an opened door, as The Shadow's bullets whined through the sedan's windows. Their crash was a lucky one; it meant that The Shadow didn't have to wound them.

The cab reached the entrance to the Holland Tunnel. Sayre's car had started through; on the other side of the river, it would ride the well-policed Skyway, a clear route to Newark Airport. The taxi didn't follow. Instead, it twisted among downtown streets, then started northward.

Meanwhile, from beneath the rear seat, The Shadow drew a short-wave radio set that matched the one in Cranston's limousine. He got in touch with Burbank, his contact man.

"Instructions to all agents," intoned The Shadow. "Take immediate cover! Make contact regularly, but in accordance with emergency provisions."

It wasn't Moe who eventually drove that bulletproof cab into the garage where he regularly kept it. The taxi driver had dropped off along the way, at The Shadow's order, to take cover like the other agents.

The Shadow, himself, pulled into the garage; stopping in a dim corner, he glided, unnoticed, from behind the wheel.

Out through a side door, The Shadow reached the shelter of enveloping darkness. From then on, his course was untraceable. The Shadow needed no cover other than night itself. But he was too wise to put his various agents to the same test.

That trip to the Holland Tunnel had convinced The Shadow that Mocquino's hand reached everywhere. Thrusts like the one at Sayre's could be expected against others who served The Shadow. In previous life, Doctor Rodil Mocquino had learned many facts regarding The Shadow's organization.

If the Voodoo Master had actually returned from doom, he would use every method to entangle The Shadow, once he knew that the black-cloaked avenger was again on his trail.

Should Mocquino capture men who served The Shadow, they would suffer heavily, along with The Shadow's plans.

The Shadow, therefore, had chosen a lone campaign.

CHAPTER VII

SPIES MEET TROUBLE

LAMONT CRANSTON did not appear at the Cobalt Club the next day. His absence was explained by various newspaper items, in both morning and evening editions, which The Shadow read in the solitude of a hotel room.

Several minor crimes had occurred during the past twenty-four hours. Criminals had ransacked an office belonging to an insurance broker named Rutledge Mann, who happened to be out of town. A crazed man had invaded the newspaper offices of the New York Classic seeking a reporter named Clyde Burke; fortunately, Burke was away on an assignment.

Also, there had been a battle at the Hotel Metrolite, between house detectives and some excited guests. The fray had terminated in a room recently occupied by a young man named Harry Vincent, who had checked out shortly before the gunfire.

All three, Mann, Burke, and Vincent, were agents of The Shadow. That fact was not mentioned in the newspapers, for it was unknown.

There were other events, too, within the borders of the underworld. Such things were common; hence, they were scantily mentioned in the newspapers. The Shadow knew that the thrusts had been directed against others of his agents who served him in the "badlands." Those agents, too, had departed before the storm broke.

Evening was close at hand, with The Shadow debating what course he should take. It would be easy for him to shed his guise of Cranston, which was merely an assumed one; but The Shadow hardly regarded that course as profitable. He did not want to avoid clashes with Mocquino's henchmen; contrarily, he welcomed them.

Doctor Mocquino knew that The Shadow often appeared as Lamont Cranston. Therefore, it was wise to retain the Cranston identity. There was an added reason for such policy; one which would surely serve The Shadow, if events turned against him.

That reason was to make itself apparent much sooner than The Shadow foresaw.

At present, The Shadow's chief concern was Marcia Cortell. He knew, from Grolen's testimony, that the girl was a member of Mocquino's new voodoo cult; also, that she was one of the persons who had not yet suffered the plight of a zombi.

Probably there were others of Marcia's ilk; but they were traceless. Mocquino knew how to instill silence among his followers. A meeting with Marcia was the surest, quickest way to reach the heart of Mocquino's invisible empire; but it also promised difficulties.

By this time, Mocquino knew that Grulen might have talked. Since Marcia was the one person that Grulen would have mentioned, she would certainly be under Mocquino's surveillance. No mention was made of Marcia Cortell in the society columns of the evening newspapers; but The Shadow learned that a famed concert pianist named Pangani was being entertained at the town home of Adolph Mellishaw.

That was a worthwhile clue. Marcia was a friend of the Mellishaw family, and might be at the party.

There was another factor that brought a smile to the thin lips of Lamont Cranston. He remembered the Mellishaw pearls - the sort of prize that many crooks would seek to acquire. Those pearls promised a way whereby any of Mocquino's spies could be eliminated.

Picking up the telephone, The Shadow put in a call to police headquarters.

In a disguised tone, quite different from Cranston's, he asked for Inspector Cardona. When Joe came on the wire, The Shadow adopted his own weird whisper.

Cardona listened; he had heard that voice before. The inspector was still repeating the word "yes" in an awed tone, when The Shadow delivered a low, significant laugh and hung up the receiver.

ONE hour later, two huddled watchers were across the street from the Mellishaw residence, watching the cars that stopped in front of the brownstone house. They had chosen an excellent observation post, with a darkened passageway behind them.

A crouchy figure came through the passage and gave a low-growled greeting:

"Everything's jake! No bulls in sight."

"O. K., Luke," vouchsafed one of the spies. "Keep your eyes peeled. If anything goes sour back there, give us the word."

Luke moved back through the passage. He avoided a muddy spot close by the darkened wall. That was why he happened to pass a cloaked shape that pressed there, invisible in the gloom.

One minute later, The Shadow had silently advanced until he hovered just behind the watching men. Like that pair, he saw a taxicab stop in front of the Mellishaw house. From this oblique view, its lone passenger was visible when she alighted.

Even at that distance, the girl's features were distinguishable. She was a pronounced brunette, whose raven hair made a striking contrast against the white fox furs that she wore.

"That's the moll!" spoke one of the watchers. "An' there goes the car that was trailin' her."

"Yeah," added the other. "An' she's alone, like she's supposed to be. So there ain't nothin' for us to report."

"Not until she comes out again. If anybody's with her, that's when we spill the word. Only, what about while she's inside the joint?"

"Suggy's watchin' that. He's stagin' the waiter act. He came in with the

bunch that's goin' to serve pink tea, or whatever them dudes guzzle."

The Shadow's flashlight blinked - a tiny twinkle, cupped in his glove. It was unnoticed by the crouched spies; but eyes in a parked car saw it. A man slid

out, went toward the nearest corner. Meanwhile, The Shadow retreated silently through the passage.

This time, Luke heard The Shadow's approach. That was intended. The sound that Luke caught was the slight scrape of a shoe sole on rough cement. Luke twisted about; his scramble told his position.

The next sound in that gloom was the thud of a gun handle upon Luke's thick

skull, followed by a splash in the mud that Luke had so carefully avoided.

Again. The Shadow's flashlight blinked. Immediately after that signal, he was gone.

IDLERS strolled along the front street. As two of them reached the narrow passage, they moved into action. Flashlights gleamed in their fists, revealing guns and badges. The glow also showed the startled spies. They scrambled to their feet and fled, with the detectives on their heels.

Other flashlights broke the darkness from the rear. The crooks were blocked

by another brace of dicks, who stood with leveled guns above Luke's coiled figure.

While Inspector Cardona was arriving to congratulate his men upon their capture, another cab rolled up to the Mellishaw house. The man who stepped lazily from the interior was Lamont Cranston. His attire was faultless except for a slight trace of mud upon his shoe-tips.

Cranston was a surprise guest; but he was definitely welcomed at the party.

The Mellishaws had met him long ago; knowing that he was seldom in town, they had insisted that he drop in whenever convenient. They were more than delighted

to find that Cranston remembered that invitation.

It didn't take The Shadow long to spot the man called "Suggy." The fellow looked more respectable than the average thug; but his gawking methods were too

obvious. Suggy looked particularly uncomfortable when he saw Inspector Cardona arrive for a word with Mr. Mellishaw.

The two went into a side room. Sneaking away from the other waiters, Suggy

listened near the half-closed door.

Suggy failed to notice the other end of the passage. There, a door opened into the room where Mrs. Mellishaw kept her pearls. A tall guest strolled in there; stopped at an obscure wall safe.

Lamont Cranston had lost his leisurely pose. His fingers were the deft digits of The Shadow, as they manipulated the combination.

The little safe came open. The Shadow found the case that contained the pearls; he plucked the necklace from the interior. He wiped the door and the combination but did not shut the safe.

Adjusting a bandanna handkerchief across his eyes, he moved toward the front of the room, instead of returning to the passage.

There was a door there; as The Shadow opened it, the sound of music reached

him. The noise of the door disturbed the listeners; they saw the masked face that poked through.

Whipping away, The Shadow slammed the door. Pulling away the bandanna, he swabbed the doorknob, then dashed for the hallway.

First comers saw only a vague figure diving into the gloomy hall. Some one

shouted that the safe was open. Half a dozen men took up the chase. Suggy heard the clatter; sprang away from the door where he was crouched. The fake waiter started a dash of his own, when he saw a man heading for him.

A moment later, The Shadow was rolling Suggy on the floor. Others arrived;

Cardona came dashing from his conference with Mellishaw. They saw Cranston locked with Suggy. They piled in to help him.

That was when The Shadow pretended to take a jolt on the chin. He rolled away; Suggy was free, off on another dash.

Cardona captured the fellow on the back stairs. Guests held the glowering crook while Suggy spouted his innocence. That didn't help him when Cardona frisked him, to find the string of pearls and the telltale bandanna. Suggy's eyes went bulge; his mouth opened so wide in astonishment that he couldn't protest.

Lamont Cranston was smoothing his clothes as Cardona put the bracelets on Suggy. No one paid attention to the crook's crazy shouts that the evidence had been planted on him. All the guests were too busy congratulating Cranston on being the first to block the criminal's flight.

Cranston's lips were immobile; his eyes showed no flash. But behind that calm exterior, The Shadow felt new satisfaction. He had matched his outside work with this inside accomplishment.

The last of Mocquino's spies was gone. Marcia Cortell remained unwatched. Soon she would be interviewed by Lamont Cranston, otherwise The Shadow.

CHAPTER VIII

MARCIA MEETS THE SHADOW

MARCIA CORTELL was a girl of gorgeous beauty. Her oval face was a perfectly shaped setting for long-lashed eyes that carried a dark, dreamy languor, a nose of exquisite mold, and lips with a ruddiness as natural as their friendly smile.

Despite the blackness of her hair, her complexion was a clear white, forming a contrast that added materially to her beauty. Her attire was tasteful; her low-necked evening gown was simple and unadorned.

Marcia wore but little jewelry: one modest ring, and tiny earrings. These few gems seemed to carry more luster than the crusting of jewels that appeared on other women present.

It wasn't long before Lamont Cranston and Marcia Cortell became well acquainted.

The episode of the pearls broke the ice; and Cranston's modesty about the whole affair impressed Marcia. The girl was quite reserved. She liked impersonal people, and Cranston seemed to be one.

After an hour of intermittent piano recitals, the two were seated in a place well distant from the music. Cranston was relating stories of foreign lands that he had visited, keeping his own part well in the background of his narratives.

Occasionally, his eyes met Marcia's. Always, The Shadow detected a complacency in the girl's gaze. In another person, that might have been an excellent sign. With Marcia, it was not. She had the self-satisfaction that The Shadow had noted, in the past, among persons who belonged to Mocquino's former voodoo cult.

If a final shred of evidence were needed to prove that Doctor Mocquino still lived, Marcia Cortell supplied it; not by word, but through her demeanor.

It was after half-past ten. The Shadow observed a restlessness in Marcia's expression, a far-away look in her dark eyes. He knew the symptoms; realized that he was closer to the border of adventure than he had supposed.

Marcia was stirred by recollections. Perhaps her brain was responding to the thrum of imaginary tom-toms. The Shadow's conclusion was definite: the voodoo cult was due to meet tonight!

INSTANTLY, Cranston's tone changed. There was a trace of disdain in his usually even voice.

"Two countries where I visited," he remarked, "are scarcely worth mention.

The people are backward; ignorant and superstitious. The supposed glamour of those lands is false. I refer to Haiti and San Domingo."

A sudden challenge flashed from Marcia's eyes.

"Do you know those countries well?" she demanded.

"Certainly." Cranston paused to light Marcia's cigarette and his own.

"Why do you ask?"

"Because you apparently have not heard of strange customs that exist there."

"You mean the voodoo rites." Cranston's laugh was even-toned. "They are shams! A lot of crazed natives dancing half-clad about a fire. Nothing more."

"Perhaps you have never witnessed the true voodoo."

"But I have!" Cranston's tone was insistent "Not in Haiti but in Africa, where the rites originated. In Africa, the ceremonies are far superior; but even there" - Cranston shrugged, as though disappointed - "the stuff is pure hysteria."

Marcia's lips firmed. She seemed prepared to explode facts that would belittle Cranston's statements. She caught herself; resumed her attitude of contentment.

"There are mysteries in this world," she declared, "that are beyond your ability to explain, Mr. Cranston."

"And I have seen them!" This time, Cranston's tone took Marcia with its sway. "Not among the voodoo tribes, for they are shams, but in India, among the Himalaya Mountains; and in Tibet."

"Have you seen persons," demanded Marcia, "who are immune to fire?"

"Of course!" Coolly, Cranston held his cigarette with its lighted tip straight downward. He pressed his thumb upward from beneath, his forefinger downward from above, and held the cigarette in that position. "Like this."

"A trick!"

Marcia's tone was scornful; but her eyes were puzzled. Cranston plucked the cigarette from its position, puffed it, with a slight smile. Marcia was right: it was a trick. The packing of the ash had protected his thumb. But Marcia hadn't guessed the secret.

"A trick?" Cranston's tone was idle. "Why not? All fire ordeals are tricks

- even the ones that I have witnessed in the Orient, though they are far superior to any demonstrations of voodoo wizardry. But in Tibet, one sees miracles that pass all reason.

"For instance, the materialization of a living form. Suppose a being created itself, here, before our eyes. A solid form, with living voice more weird than any ghostly tongue. Would you believe such a being more powerful

than
any self-styled master of voodoo art?"

Marcia considered. Cranston's words had deeply impressed her. Finally,
she
objected:

"That would be impossible."

"But if it actually happened?"

"Then I could believe. Yes. It would be wonderful; even more so than
things
that I have already seen!"

"Already seen?"

"I mean, things that others have seen." corrected Marcia. "Persons like
yourself, Mr. Cranston. But I" - she glanced at her tiny wrist watch - "I must
go. It is late - later than I thought."

THE clock showed eleven when Marcia left that house. A cruising car
picked
up her taxi's trail, as it had before. Occupants of that car saw that Marcia
was

alone. They followed to the apartment house where she lived; then rode away.

Through that departure, they failed to see another cab that stopped a
full
block distant. The driver who handled that cab was dumfounded to find that he
had no passenger. Instead, a five-dollar bill was lying on the rear seat.

There had been a passenger originally - a leisurely man attired in
evening
clothes. But he had become a cloaked figure of blackness that had glided
silently from the stopping cab, into waiting shadows.

In her third-floor apartment, Marcia Cortell opened a closet door and
reached high upon a shelf to draw down curious garments of leather. That
outfit

included a ragged skirt girdled with a snake skin; a tunic with jagged sleeves
and neck.

Sight of that garb brought eagerness. Marcia's eyes showed their former
glint. Her thoughts were pounding with the beat of tom-toms; the gleam in her
eyes was like the reflection of vivid firelight. The feel of the rough leather
garments seemed soft to her touch. She hated the silken clothes in which she
was
so stylishly clad.

Hastily, madly, Marcia divested herself of all civilized attire, flinging
the clothes pell-mell in the closet. She clad herself in the simple voodoo
garb;

gave a long sigh of freedom.

With her change of attire, she felt that she had shed the cares and
burdens

of modern existence. She gazed contemptuously upon the expensive furnishings
of

her deluxe apartment.

She had the tread of a jungle dweller, as she crossed the living room.
There, she unlocked a bureau drawer, and from a box produced a dozen finger
rings that were thick with gems. Spitefully, Marcia slipped the jewelry upon
her
fingers.

Necklaces were next - three of them, with sapphires and diamonds. Marcia
clasped all of them about her throat. There were bracelets, half a dozen of
them. Marcia slipped five upon her wrists.

The final one was a family heirloom: a large bracelet set with rubies. It
was too large for Marcia's slender wrist, so she raised her foot and placed it
on her ankle.

There was a silver box in the drawer. Marcia pondered; then decided to take it with her. She tucked the key beneath the snake skin that girded her waist; closed the bureau drawer and extinguished the floor lamp that alone provided light.

Barefooted, Marcia stole silently through the apartment, picking her way perfectly in the dark. She seemed to have adopted a new personality; one that belonged with outdoor wilds. She knew, though, that her appearance was unsuited to Manhattan. That was why she stopped at the closet. to take along a dark wrap and a pair of slippers.

Through the darkened kitchenette, then to the fire tower. Descending, she reached a dim courtyard. Before crossing that space, she put on the slippers and wrapped the cloak about her, hiding her gem-studded fingers and the silver box.

Walking through to the rear street, Marcia saw a large car parked some distance ahead. Except for her bare ankles - one with its bracelet - she would not have excited notice as she strolled to the limousine. The windows of that car were dark; Marcia knew that they were painted black.

She realized also that two men were watching her: the driver and another, who lurked near the curb. That, however, was usual. Calmly, Marcia opened the limousine's rear door, stepped into the dark interior. There was no inner handle; merely a strap by which she pulled the door shut, locking herself inside.

THE car moved forward. Marcia knew that the watcher had joined the driver, even though she could not see them, for the connecting window was also solid black.

In that darkness, Marcia kicked off her slippers, pulled the cloak from her shoulders and tossed it to the floor.

There was a long ride ahead; she did not have to make it in pitch-black surroundings. There was a light, installed for the convenience of passengers like herself. Marcia found the switch and pressed it.

That click brought light; with the dim glow came another result. The interior of the soundproof limousine quivered with the whispered shudder of a strange, uncanny laugh that seemed to emanate from nowhere. Marcia's eyes showed

startlement. She looked about her to learn the cause of that chill mirth.

Her gaze was riveted by other eyes - hot burning orbs that peered from beneath the brim of a slouch hat. Marcia saw the cloaked shoulders of a black-clad being who sat beside her in the mystery car. So startling was his arrival here, that he seemed a living remnant of the darkness that the light had otherwise dispelled.

Awe showed in Marcia's gaze. Her meeting with this being was more astounding than the events that she was on her way to witness. The beats of imaginary tom-toms vanished from her thoughts; all that she could recall were the words of Lamont Cranston, uttered an hour before.

Marcia Cortell was face to face with a being who had seemingly appeared from space.

She had met The Shadow, as himself!

THE VOODOO GROTTA

THE obvious did not occur to Marcia Cortell. That was not surprising, for the girl's mind was keyed to the impossible. That was the case with all who came beneath the sway of Doctor Mocquino and his claptrap voodoo mysteries; and The Shadow knew it.

That was why he had taken this bold course, instead of flagging Marcia when she came from her apartment.

The Shadow had come across the parked limousine. It has watched; but The Shadow spotted the outside guard. He saw the fellow turn to look for Marcia. That was when The Shadow had silently opened the rear door and edged into the limousine himself.

Once he had deftly drawn that door shut, he had known surely that his presence would astound Marcia Cortell.

From the past, The Shadow remembered the blatant but impressive manner in which Doctor Mocquino addressed the voodoo cultists. The Shadow had outmatched that speech before; he used the same measures upon this occasion.

The sometimes musical utterances of Mocquino were forgotten by Marcia, when she heard the sinister tone of The Shadow. The former spell was forgotten as she felt the grip of a new, more masterful power.

"You believe in voodoo" - The Shadow's tone had a well-controlled semblance of a sneer - "and a self-styled master who invokes it. I have come to meet that master, to declare him an impostor!"

The Shadow's whisper trailed into a tone of mockery that sent shivers along Marcia's spine. Her fears were not for herself, but for Doctor Mocquino. The Shadow understood the cause of the girl's shudder.

"You fear for Mocquino," he accused. "You forget that he declares himself all-powerful. Why should you fear for him" - the tone was a taunt - "when your very fear proves that his vaunted power is a sham?"

That logic drilled through Marcia's brain. The girl sat silent, staring straight ahead. Her lips moved, her head nodded. She looked toward the leather garments that she wore. With a sudden disdain, Marcia snatched up the cloak that she had dropped and wrapped it about her shoulders.

The Shadow, meanwhile, was consulting a watch that had a compass in its back. He had noticed three turns that the car had made; he had checked their direction and the time along each straight run. His other hand moved beneath his cloak, as he jotted his notations.

"I believe you," Marcia said, abruptly, "because you do not fear Mocquino. Your very presence here is proof of that. Your desire to meet Mocquino; to vanquish him, indicates that he is a fraud. I have had my doubts of Mocquino -"

MARCIA paused, looking toward The Shadow, wondering if her amazing companion could tell her why. The Shadow did.

"Because of George Grulen," he whispered, "the man you loved. Mocquino made him a zombi, without cause!"

"There was a cause!" exclaimed Marcia, gripped by a last loyalty toward Mocquino. "George failed to bring the tribute that he had promised. He had

lost
faith -"

"That was Mocquino's pretext," interposed The Shadow. "What George Grulen actually lost was his wealth. All of it had gone into Mocquino's coffers. Grulen had no more to give; by enslaving him as a pretended zombi, Mocquino disposed of him."

Marcia's eyes were startled, horrified. The Shadow let her stare at vacancy, while he made new tabulations of the route. The car was making progress northward, despite its many turns.

"No, no!" panted Marcia. "That couldn't be! George spent so much money on those parties that he gave!"

"Because Mocquino ordered it," returned The Shadow. "That was to cover Mocquino's own crime."

Marcia sank back in a corner of the car. Her last doubts had faded. The Shadow, it seemed, knew all that she could tell him; and he could see many facts

that she had failed to notice, while under Mocquino's spell.

The Shadow drilled home a final point.

"You have made the same mistake," he told Marcia. "Tonight, you have brought all your remaining possessions. Not only your gems, but the contents of that silver box."

"No!" exclaimed Marcia. "I still have a few thousand dollars, for my trip to Europe."

"Which Mocquino has ordered you to take," stated The Shadow, basing his hunch on Mocquino's methods, "so that you can disappear without causing rumors of your actual fate."

Marcia broke completely. Her sobs were audible. The Shadow made no effort to stop them; he relied on Marcia's own determination. He continued to chart the

course that the car followed at an even speed, which The Shadow calculated to be twenty-five miles an hour.

Sobbing ended. The girl drew close to The Shadow; her hands gripped his arm. She remembered Cranston's mention of beings that could materialize into solid substance. The Shadow filled that claim.

"You have come to help me." pleaded Marcia, "and the others who have made this terrible mistake. What shall I do?"

"Meet Mocquino's measures," ordained The Shadow. "Give him the wealth that

you have brought tonight, as if it were a usual tribute."

"But it is everything I have -"

"Mocquino will not recognize it as such, if you are clever - as clever as you can be."

MARCIA'S lips set firmly. Her head bobbed a determined nod. The Shadow spoke other words: instructions that concerned the finish of the journey. Constantly, Marcia expressed her readiness toward full cooperation.

The girl realized that once The Shadow viewed Mocquino's headquarters, he would have the foothold needed to destroy the Voodoo Master. She felt, too, that

there were other facts that would help The Shadow.

During the rest of that ride, Marcia named other members of the cult. She described the voodoo headquarters; the followers that Mocquino had there.

"They look like mobsters," Marcia admitted, "except for Lebox and a few like him. Lebox is -"

"A man with a scarred cheek," interrupted The Shadow, "who sometimes commands Mocquino's zombis."

Marcia nodded; once again, she thought that she was simply repeating facts that The Shadow knew. The Shadow wanted her to retain that impression; he knew that it would strengthen Marcia for the work that lay ahead.

The car was slowing on an upgrade. The Shadow jotted down that fact; added the twists of direction indicated by the compass. There was a downward jolt that Marcia recognized; they were at the end of the journey. The girl started to rise.

She was still clinging to her wrap. The Shadow reminded her that she was still to show an eagerness toward voodoo worship. Marcia nodded; she discarded the wrap and kicked away the slippers; placed the silver box on the seat. The Shadow extinguished the light.

Finally, the car stopped. There was a short interval of waiting, then some one opened the door from the outside. Marcia stepped out onto the bare stone floor of a cellar room that served as a small garage.

The Shadow remained in the depths of the car, while a rough face poked in for a glance at the interior. The fellow didn't think it worthwhile to turn on the light. He took it for granted that the limousine was as empty as it looked.

He simply gathered Marcia's cloak and slippers from the car floor and tossed them on a pile of packing cases, where similar garments lay cluttered.

During that interim, The Shadow could hear the muffled throb of motors somewhere outside - proof that a cover-up crew had followed here. That faint sound was drowned when the door of the limousine slammed shut.

The driver was at the wheel of the big car, ready to back it from the improvised garage. The other man had gone to the inner end of the place, to open a door for Marcia.

The girl was looking elsewhere; toward a side door that opened on stairs leading from a floor above. She saw grinning faces there; they were thuggish guards who always checked whenever a new visitor arrived.

When Marcia reached the end door, they withdrew, being no longer needed. That was when Marcia spoke hastily to the man from the limousine.

"The silver box!" she exclaimed, "I forgot it. Wait - I can get it."

MARCIA scampered back to the limousine, opened the door and obtained the box. When she closed the door, a glove intervened. The catch did not lock. The Shadow waited, giving Marcia time to hurry away.

As the limousine started to back from the garage, The Shadow emerged. He closed the door silently, without stepping from the running board. A quick leap brought him behind the packing cases. He was crouched there when the big car passed.

Then, with quick glide, The Shadow reached the end door through which Marcia had gone.

Gloomy stairs led downward. Hewn through solid rock, the descending passage was irregular, with many crevices that afforded concealment. The Shadow heard footsteps returning upward. He stepped from view, just as the guide from the car came past.

Again, The Shadow was on the stairs, following their sweeping spiral. Soon, he could hear the patter of Marcia's footsteps; for she had purposely delayed.

When the girl paused, The Shadow approached cautiously; for that meant side passages where lurkers might be.

Thanks to the semi-darkness, The Shadow passed unsuspected. The stairs ended; a single light, feeble in the high-hewn passage, showed a huge steel-sheathed barrier ahead. A dark-skinned guard attired in native costume bowed a greeting to Marcia, then uttered a high-pitched cry.

That call was heard beyond the barrier; it was repeated, as if from some great distance. Slowly, with groaning grind, the portal began to slide open. Marcia waited, the guard beside her. They were staring at the barrier; The Shadow drew close.

When the two went through, The Shadow followed; but the moment he was past the opening, he flattened against the rough wall on the right. Marcia had warned him that the move would be necessary; The Shadow saw why.

This wall, alone, was totally dark, except for a space that was too remote to reach. The whole place was a vaulted chamber - a vast cavern with walls that resembled limestone. A natural cave, it had been enlarged to make this subterranean meeting hall.

Marcia had mentioned the name by which the place was known. It was called the Voodoo Grotto.

The name was appropriate. By the light of tall torches surrounding the grotto, and the flicker of a large fire past the center of the room, The Shadow could see a medley of strange sights, that spoke of jungle worship. The figure, however, that immediately caught his gaze was that of a throned man who sat beyond the fire.

That man was robed in golden garments, that contrasted with the satanic features that leered toward the firelight. The Shadow could see the flash of blackish eyes peering from a manila-hued face. He recognized the beakish nose; the lips that seemed too tight-drawn to close about the fangish teeth beneath them.

The throned man was the evil master himself: Doctor Rodil Mocquino, the overlord of voodoo!

CHAPTER X

VOODOO SACRIFICE

THOUGH Doctor Mocquino lived, he bore tokens of his last encounter with The Shadow. There was something parched and withery in his face, particularly noticeable when The Shadow saw the Voodoo Master's profile.

Mocquino bore the scars of flame, not only on his face, but upon the scrawny arm he extended from his robe. Those burns showed like livid brands: a fitting mark for a supercriminal. Mocquino had not escaped unscathed from the flaming ruins of the mansion where The Shadow had last seen him plunge.

Completing his study of Mocquino, The Shadow surveyed the rest of the bizarre scene.

Foremost in view was a roundish pit, to the left of the passage where The Shadow stood. The hole was five feet in depth: the wall had been cut away to make it, thus giving the view of the entire grotto.

Shriekish groans issued from the pit; but they were not uttered by human tongues. The men that The Shadow saw there were dulled to their plight. They were zombis, pushing a great, spoked wheel set horizontally on a crude upright axle. The groaning sounds were from the mechanism.

In endless procession, the zombis continued their circling path. The Shadow counted sixteen of them; among the group, he recognized those shock troops that had appeared at Quinrick's apartment.

There was purpose in the march of the tattered toilers. They were closing the huge door through which The Shadow had entered. The wheel operated the barrier by means of crude cables, that were badly in need of oil. That mattered little to Mocquino, since the zombis did the work.

In fact, the zombis themselves did not seem to care. When the door closed, they kept on pressing against the wheel-spokes until a sharp cry stopped them. That call was issued by a man who stood above the pit. The Shadow recognized the ugly face of Leboux, the overseer who carried out Mocquino's mandates.

Thump of tom-toms brought The Shadow's gaze back to the center of the grotto. There, Marcia had joined a waiting group. The Shadow saw half a dozen men, and as many women, rising to sway with the beat of drums.

He observed that the men were wearing ordinary clothes, but all the women were clad in Marcia's primitive fashion. That contrast did not surprise The Shadow. Mocquino was wise in every move he made.

The voodoo doctor had probably found it simpler to have the men come as they were, recognizing that they might suspect the sham of the cult, if forced to the practice of hiding special costumes between meeting nights. With the women Mocquino must have decided that the reverse policy was more effective. It had certainly appeared so, in Marcia's case.

The attire of the men accounted for the ragged condition of the zombis who toiled in the pit. The Shadow remembered that there were women who had also disappeared. They too, were zombis; but they had not been put to toil.

LOOKING beyond the natives who beat the tom-toms, The Shadow saw life-size statues set near Mocquino's throne. They were motionless, apparently figures cut from alabaster. Two held extended torches, one on each side of the throne. A third was kneeling beside the fire, holding a brass bowl.

As the tom-toms increased their beat, Mocquino stepped from the throne. He reached into the bowl, brought forth a fistful of reddish powder, which he hurled upon the fire. Flames puffed with a slight explosion. The walls of the grotto reflected the crimson light.

Mocquino gave a high-pitched cry. The statues came to life. Mechanically, those beside the throne lowered the torches into sockets. The third figure set the brazen bowl upon a pedestal, rising immediately afterward.

Slowly, the human statues filed past the huge throne toward a darkened portal at the back of the grotto, fading like white ghosts when they reached the gloom.

The dancers were circling the fire, slowing speeding, to the change of rhythm from the tom-toms. Gradually, the drums faded; one by one, the beaters were moving away.

Mocquino raised his hand; the dance ceased. Reclining about the fire, the members of the voodoo cult harkened to their master's words.

A single drummer still tapped a tom-tom. His slow beat made Mocquino's voice inaudible to The Shadow. This was the time for closer approach; but before

attempting it The Shadow disposed of excess equipment, in the shape of a flat box that he carried beneath his cloak.

Part of that box enclosed a make-up kit that The Shadow had brought in case disguise proved necessary. The rest contained equipment of a more important sort, too valuable to risk if a fight occurred.

Opening the lid of the make-up portion, The Shadow slipped the compass watch inside; with it, the paper on which he had recorded the directions of the route.

While watching the voodoo circle, The Shadow had been conscious of a deep crack in the wall beside his elbow. It had struck him as an excellent place to stow the flat box.

The jagged space proved ample. Pushing the box out of sight, The Shadow moved into the grotto. He kept to the darkness of the wall, eyeing Lebox as he went. The overseer failed to detect a gliding motion in the gloom.

Mocquino's words were plain, at last. He was speaking of fire ordeals. He referred to the burns on his hands and face.

"Mementos of my early inexperience," lied Mocquino, in perfect English. "They prove that once, long ago. I was not immune to fire. That, in turn, proves my present power!"

Thus turning the tale to his advantage, Mocquino raised a red-hot poker from the flames. He ran the point along his arm; across his face; gave it a passing lick with his tongue. Scoffingly, he put the poker back into the fire.

The trick did not impress The Shadow, although the poker had given an audible sizzle when it stroked Mocquino's flesh. Such passing of a scorching brand involved no dangerous risk. Mocquino had not halted the poker while it touched his flesh.

There was another factor: the metal, itself. The Shadow classed it as an alloy that glowed at low heat. Mocquino had kept it away from the center of the fire.

CLEVER as ever, Mocquino depreciated his fire test. He shrugged, as he gestured toward the flames.

"Such things are trifles," he declared. "They merely prove my claim to greater power. Remember those statues that you saw before you. Look toward that pit" - he pointed toward the circle of motionless zombies - "and see how I control the living dead!"

"They were human once" - Mocquino's voice was a slow roll, tuned to the thrum of the last tom-tom - "until I deprived them of life. Into their dead bodies, I instilled the power of motion. Creatures without will, they obey my wishes!"

"Each has become a zombie, because he refused to obey while he still possessed his own brain. They - all of them - forgot the tribute that they owed to me! Let none of you forget!"

Mocquino turned and ascended the throne. He sat there with folded arms, while the members of the cult arose. One by one, they rounded the fire, to lay their tribute at Mocquino's feet. Mocquino's eyes gleamed as a tall man bowed and stacked bundles of crisp bank notes before the throne.

A woman was next; she opened a jewel case. Gems bounced like pebbles; some rolled from the lower step and bobbed along the stone floor. The Shadow could see Mocquino's sharp eyes follow them to make sure that none was lost.

As tribute followed tribute, The Shadow observed that Marcia Cortell was

letting the line pass her. That was a bad mistake. It would be better that she make her tribute earlier, for Mocquino should certainly be more alert at the finish of the process. He was calculating the night's treasure as it came along;

he might be angry if it fell short of his expectations.

Marcia's description of the tribute payment had been incomplete. She had described it as though all persons approached the throne together. Therefore, The Shadow had not warned her to be early in the line.

Moreover, The Shadow knew why the girl held back. The repetition of the voodoo rites had not impressed her, after that talk with The Shadow. Marcia detested the whole procedure as a sham; she saw Mocquino as the human monstrosity that he was, and dreaded to approach him.

Fortunately, the toll was running heavy. The Shadow could discern that as the wealth piled up, Mocquino's fangish smile had broadened. All looked well for

Marcia, unless something disturbed the procedure.

Trouble came when only two remained. One was a frail man past middle age, who tottered slightly as he went by the fire; the other, just behind him, was Marcia. He stooped, gave a worried look at Mocquino, then planted a stack of money on the step.

Mocquino snarled a halt before the frail man could move away; with a kick, the voodoo doctor scattered the last pile of bills. The Shadow could tell what had happened, from the man's sudden quail. He had covered small bills with large ones. Mocquino's kick had revealed the fact.

"Is this your tribute?" hissed Mocquino. "To me, the Voodoo Master?"

"It is all that I have," pleaded the frail man. "All, I swear it!"

OTHERS had stopped to watch the scene, gloating expressions on their faces.

One alone lacked elation. That person was Marcia Cortell. For the first time, she dreaded what was to come.

Mocquino clapped his hands; two natives came from the wall. The frail man made no protest as they seized him.

Rising, Mocquino drew a stout-bladed knife from the crimson sash that circled his golden robe. There was a squarish box near the throne; with a powerful fling, he drove the blade into the wood, the knife quivering there.

As the grinning natives drew the frail man close, Mocquino placed his hand

against the victim's chin and drove his head back with a jerk. The man sagged helplessly. Mocquino yanked the knife from the box top.

Gripping the victim's shirt front, the voodoo doctor ripped it away. Placing the knife point against the man's bare chest, Mocquino pushed the blade

straight inward with a punchy stab. The knife-hilt stopped that thrust; there was a sudden gush of blood dripping to the floor.

Drawing the knife from the victim's body, Mocquino calmly wiped the blade upon the man's torn shirt, then hurled it at the box, where it quivered as before. To the funereal beat of the lone tom-tom, the natives carried away the victim of the voodoo sacrifice.

"When we meet again," croaked Mocquino, as he resumed his throne, "you will

see that dead man among those!"

His bony finger pointed toward the motionless zombies, still rigid at their wheel.

That promise given, Doctor Mocquino turned toward Marcia Cortell. The girl

had steadied, despite the horrifying sight that she had witnessed while in a sane mood; but The Shadow could see the shudder that she tried to repress.

Slowly, The Shadow drew forward from his niche against the blackened wall.

His hand drew an automatic halfway from his cloak. Lingered on the fringe of darkness, he waited.

The time was close, it seemed, when The Shadow would finally settle scores with Rodil Mocquino!

CHAPTER XI

MOCQUINO TRIUMPHS

DESPITE its realism, The Shadow saw fakery in the pretended murder that Mocquino had just committed. The Voodoo Master's own statement proved The Shadow's suspicions. Mocquino had declared that the victim would become a zombi.

From past knowledge of Mocquino's methods; from the recent recovery of George Grulen, The Shadow knew that the brood of zombis were not the soul-less creatures that the Voodoo Master declared them to be. All could recover, if released.

The Shadow had let the fake death go through. He preferred, however, that Marcia should not undergo that ordeal. Foolhardy though it seemed to strike at Mocquino in the man's own domain, where The Shadow could expect no other aid, the cloaked fighter was prepared for that very thrust.

There was one way to shatter the confidence of Mocquino's own followers, as well as the members of the voodoo cult. That was to let them see Mocquino sprawled dead at the foot of his own throne. After that, their desire for fight would fade.

It was preferable to rely on Marcia for the present. She might still bluff Mocquino. With that hope, The Shadow waited; for once, he did not realize that his delayed tactics were leading to his own disaster.

Marcia approached the throne at Mocquino's beckon. She laid the silver box upon the step, opened the lid and drew out stacks of bonds, which she solemnly spread for Mocquino's inspection. The Voodoo Master leered approval, while Marcia replaced the securities in the box.

With a rinsing motion, she peeled the gem-laden rings from one hand, then the other, letting the jewelry fall into the box. Biting her lips, she undid each necklace; added those adornments to the tribute. Next came the bracelets from her wrists; kneeling, Marcia drew the last one from her ankle.

Her lips were compressed when she arose to drop that final trophy. With an abrupt bow, the girl turned away to join the circle.

Mocquino spoke a command. Mechanically, Marcia halted. Though she hated sight of the Voodoo Master, she suspected no menace in his tone. It was musical, honeyed.

"Your tribute is large," approved Mocquino. "I shall expect the same at our next meeting. Unless -"

He paused; gestured toward the box beside the throne. As Marcia gazed, Mocquino addressed one of the dark-skinned natives:

"Open it, Ojil!"

The servant used Mocquino's deep-driven knife as a handle to raise the

box

lid. Fierce hisses issued from within. Marcia recoiled as a snake's head darted into sight.

"A fer-de-lance," declared Mocquino. "Deadliest of all West Indian snakes.

We are fortunate in having them in Haiti. We did not have to import them, as they did in Cuba, to infest the marshes and keep slaves from running away.

"The tongue of the fer-de-lance gives death as quick as any knife-thrust. But to true worshippers of voodoo, it carries no harm. You are favored" - Mocquino's eyes were fixed upon Marcia - "because of your loyalty and belief.

"In reward for your tribute, I shall let you demonstrate the immunity which

I transcribe to my most faithful followers. Ojil, bring the fer-de-lance!"

OJIL made a deft swoop behind the snake's head, caught the reptile before it could whip. With its coils writhing about his arm, he swung the fer-de-lance toward Marcia.

The girl's nerve vanished. With a scream, she dashed past the fire, toward

the passage where she thought The Shadow waited. Leboux sprang from his overseer's post to block her.

Instinctively, The Shadow swung in that direction; though he kept to darkness, he was temporarily tricked by Mocquino's ruse.

The voodoo doctor pressed a switch beside the throne. Huge flood lamps gleamed along The Shadow's wall. That brilliance came from the dome of the grotto; it blinded The Shadow when he took a quick glance toward Mocquino's throne.

Leboux had captured Marcia; was holding her helpless. No harm would strike

the girl without Mocquino's order. The Shadow had to deal with the Voodoo Master

without delay. He sped from the wall to avoid the glare.

Into the blinding light sprang native followers. They came in a converging

mass, struck The Shadow before he saw them. Bowled to the floor, The Shadow felt

the clutch of many hands; as he jolted, he realized the uselessness of battle.

No fight could be successful here, if conducted alone, while Mocquino lived. If need be the Voodoo Master would massacre a surrounding horde of his own henchmen, if The Shadow was the kernel of the nut. Thoughts dashed quickly to The Shadow - connecting links in a chain that he had previously considered.

With that inspiration, The Shadow ceased his struggle. His guns were wrenched from his fists; reserve weapons were yanked from holsters beneath his cloak. Clamped in the grip of captors who grinned like apes, The Shadow was dragged toward Mocquino's throne.

Leboux had already brought Marcia there. The girl had forgotten her own plight, in her fear for The Shadow's fate. She was wild-eyed, trembling, oblivious of the fact that Mocquino had stepped beside her. Ojil was present with the fer-de-lance. Marcia failed to hear the snake's hiss.

Then, with one hand. Mocquino jolted Marcia's chin. With the other, he ripped her leather tunic from neck to sleeve. The girl's sigh was drowned by the

approaching hiss of the fer-de-lance. The snake struck; its fangs jabbed Marcia's shoulder.

Silently, The Shadow watched Ojil and another servitor carry Marcia toward

the door beyond the throne. He knew that the girl would survive that ordeal.

The
jolt that Mocquino had applied was the give-away.

He had used the same system with the frail man. That pressure numbed the victim's senses, and enabled Mocquino to follow it with a faked deed of pretended death.

In boasting tone, Mocquino added the insidious promise that proved The Shadow's belief that Marcia lived.

"Another zombi!" announced Mocquino. "One more statue to adorn this grotto!"

RESUMING his throne, the Voodoo Master had The Shadow's captors bring their prisoner to a square-shaped mat that stood between the fire and the throne. Lebox was crouched behind the group, fumbling on the floor. None of the cult members noticed the overseer's actions. They were watching Mocquino and The Shadow.

Low-toned, Mocquino addressed The Shadow, as he motioned for the natives to draw the slouch hat from the prisoner's head. The flickering torches revealed the face of Lamont Cranston. At the sight, Mocquino smiled.

"We meet again!" gritted Mocquino. Except for The Shadow, only the natives heard those words; and to them, English was a foreign tongue. "I, Rodil Mocquino, risen from the dead; and you, Lamont Cranston - otherwise The Shadow - bound for the tomb!"

The Shadow's stolid silence made no impression on the Voodoo Master. Retaining his low purr, Mocquino continued:

"Once I sought mere wealth, through murder. Later, my quest was power, through the same method. At present, I seek both; and I have gotten them. I acquired them without your knowledge, but I foresaw the trouble that you finally brought.

"That was why I used zombis to kill that traitor Hyler, and his scheming attorney, Quinrick. I lost one zombi; Lebox said that the man had perished with you, but I suspected otherwise. You were clever - aiding Sayre and Grulen.

"But tonight, Cranston" - Mocquino's chuckle was a gloat - "your methods failed! Marcia Cortell was under observation; reports concerning her were incomplete. I prepared for your visit, realizing that you might even penetrate here."

Mocquino motioned for the darkish men to turn their captive about, so that he faced the cult members who stood beyond the fire. There, The Shadow saw demoniac expressions. Influenced by Mocquino's power, those dupes were hoping for The Shadow's death.

The voodoo doctor leaned forward from his throne. Again his low tone was for The Shadow alone.

"You would accept death, if you knew it would defeat me," voiced Mocquino.
"Therefore, I know that you have taken precautions. The sudden disappearance of Lamont Cranston would be noticed. But there would be no suspicion, if he should temporarily return among his friends.

"My present methods allow for that. You have seen how my zombis recover - and forget. You shall become one of them - to taste the living death. Not by a slight shock, which you might withstand, but one more powerful. One strong enough to give any one the semblance of death - even The Shadow!"

Reclining upon his throne, Mocquino called to the members of the cult:
"Shall this intruder die?"

A chorus answered, repeating the single word:

"Death!"

Mocquino's left hand probed a second switch beside his throne. He voiced a sharp signal, understood by his native followers. With one accord, they sprang away, releasing their grip so suddenly that The Shadow had to catch his balance.

Mocquino pressed the switch.

Sparks flew from the mat on which The Shadow stood. They came from a metal plate beneath it, where Leboux had attached hidden wires.

The Shadow was flayed by the crackling current; when it ceased, an instant later, he rolled headlong toward the fire. Insensible from the shock, he was to all appearances dead.

Leboux and Ojil drew the black cloaked victim from the fringe of the flames; raised him at Mocquino's command. In the firelight, the Voodoo Master pointed to the face of Cranston.

"Remember him," reminded Mocquino. "His face, and the clothes he wears.

At our next meeting - two nights hence - you will see him, another zombi, toiling at the wheel!"

As Leboux and Ojil carried away The Shadow, Mocquino's musical tone became a chuckle that blended with the crackle of the voodoo fire.

The Shadow had come to the Voodoo Grotto; he had seen all that happened in this underground lair.

The Shadow had come, and had seen. But Rodil Mocquino had conquered!

CHAPTER XII

THE BLACK ZOMBI

WHEN the voodoo cult met two nights later, the arriving members stopped to gloat above the pit where the zombis toiled. Those staring, bulge-eyed remnants of humanity were straining, as usual, at the creaky wheel. Among them was a new-comer, conspicuous by his garb.

That figure was The Shadow. He was hatless, but still wore his cloak. It hung rumpled from his shoulders, like a garment adorning a scarecrow. The cloak was still in good condition but that was because The Shadow had done only a short term of servitude.

Given a month at the big wheel, under the ugly tutelage of Leboux, The Shadow's garb would be as tattered as the clothes the other zombis wore.

The cult members eyed the face of Lamont Cranston, to see if it differed from the rest. Those features bore no distinguishing trace. The Shadow's fixed face was haggard; his eyes, as bulgy as those of the other slaves, had lost the burn that was visible two nights before.

Whenever the wheel turned, The Shadow struggled with the same mechanical motions as his fellows. When it reached its limit, he kept on pushing in the same dumb fashion, until Leboux's high, hideous call brought a halt.

There was another new zombi at the wheel: the frail man who had been

stabbed by Mocquino. His torn shirt, wrapped across his chest, bore the brick-red dye of dried blood.

There was another living statue beyond the voodoo fire. Marcia Cortell had become a new figure of human marble. She faced the fire, kneeling, with arms extended. In her raised hands she held a flaming brazier, that flickered with reddish fire whenever Mocquino sprinkled it with grains of powder.

Marcia's eyes registered the same sightless gaze that characterized the faces of the other statues. Her plight, however, was no ordeal. Marcia was totally oblivious to her situation.

Even if she had been conscious, she would have preferred her present lot to that of two nights ago, when, in voodoo costume, she had gone through those frenzied rituals with other members of the cult.

The meeting, on this night, proved a brief one. Mocquino dismissed the statues; he went through the ceremonies, but gave no demonstrations of his power over fire. He took the valuable tributes indifferently, merely watching each contribution to see if it proved large enough.

Cash and other valuables came up to Mocquino's expectations. Tribute was always heavy after he had created new zombis. His manufacture of three such creatures, at the previous meeting, had encouraged cult members to bring all the funds that they could scrape up. None wanted to put themselves in line for zombi servitude.

WHEN the meeting ended, Leboux gave the signal shout to the zombis in the pit. They pushed the big wheel that opened the portal; the cult members departed in a group. Leboux reversed the clumsy gears; as the zombis continued their circular march, the huge door rolled shut.

Mocquino had advanced from his throne. It was he who halted the zombis when the door had closed. Waving Leboux aside. Mocquino gave a different command. To the new pitch of his voice the zombis sidestepped from their places at the wheel.

Mocquino was standing at the top of crude steps leading up from the pit. The nearest man ascended slowly, mechanically. The others followed as if still pushing the wheel.

That procession was guided by Mocquino's voice. His crackling cries were as sharp as whiplashes. The leading zombi possessed enough vestige of intelligence to know which way Mocquino expected him to turn. The file reached an obscure corner of the grotto; moved through a narrow passage, into a small cavern.

Still, the march kept onward. The place was an underground labyrinth, with many passages that were rough-floored and little used. Along the route were occasional guards, all dark-faced, like Leboux and Ojil. Only those native servitors were allowed in the depths of Mocquino's lair. The voodoo doctor kept his hordes of mobsmen outside.

There was no system among the dark-faced guards. They seemed free to go where and when they chose. They liked to see the zombis march; and they made a good turnout on this occasion. Like Mocquino himself, those native servitors were watching one figure in the line.

That zombi was The Shadow.

Mocquino observed the interest of his followers. When he halted the line at the entrance of a side passage, he plucked a flambeau from a crevice in the wall. Holding the torch high, Mocquino stepped toward The Shadow. He pushed his free hand back and forth in front of the face that had the features of Lamont Cranston.

The Shadow stared, sightlessly.

"You have seen," spoke Mocquino, in a French dialect commonly used in Haiti. "The black zombi is like the others. He sees only whatever I will; hears

only those sounds I wish. He obeys when I command!

"Like every zombi, he has one trace of fear. Flame frightens him, because fire is my symbol. Watch! See how fear can overpower the black zombi!"

Mocquino swung the torch toward The Shadow's eyes. As the flame seared close, the cloaked zombi gave a bleating cry, shrank away, toward the rough side

of the passage. He stumbled there, and sprawled hard upon the stony floor.

The Shadow did not seem to feel that fall. Still mouthing incoherent cries,

he drew his cloaked arms before his face, to cut off the glare of Mocquino's torch. With a harsh laugh, Mocquino drew away. He spoke a command.

Mechanically, The Shadow lowered his arms. The glare was gone. He arose from beside the wall, stepped obediently to his place in line. Mocquino articulated a command. The march resumed.

AN electric light, set in the ceiling, showed the end of the passage. There

the floor was cleft, as if by a giant ax, forming a wide crevasse that went to limitless, blackened depths.

Across that gulf lay a long log from some giant jungle tree trunk. It was a

split half of the original; its flat surface lay uppermost. The ends of the log

were chained to rock, making a safe bridge four feet in width.

Beyond was a wide ledge - a mere shelf in the rocky wall. There, a native stood beside a gaping hollow that looked like a natural doorway. Stolidly, the zombis marched across the log bridge; took a descent into the gaping doorway.

A dim light greeted them. They came into an oval low-roofed cavern, where straw mats lay scattered about.

Two natives followed. When Mocquino halted the march, his servitors singled

out the zombis, shoved each one to a mat. By mutual consent, they left the black

zombi to the last. Together, they hurled him to his resting place; then retired.

Last to leave, Mocquino pressed a switch that extinguished the lone light.

Outside, he pressed another switch that was partly hidden in the wall beside the ledge. A steel door slid from a crevice; it blocked the opening to the zombi cavern.

The barrier operated only from the outside. The vault where the zombis reclined became a gulf of blackness. Figures lay silent in the gloom, their breathing scarcely perceptible. There was a sound, though, that pervaded the cavern.

That noise was a steady hiss; muffled, monotonous. Peculiarly, it had no exact location. It seemed to filter from the living rock. Though slight, the sound was ominous; as fearful as the hiss of a fer-de-lance.

During passing minutes, that steamy sound took no effect upon the silent

zombis. Their dulled brains were constantly at a level which lay between wakefulness and sleep. Roused above that point, they moved about like persons in a trance. Below it, they assumed a state that resembled sleep, from which none had demonstrated the ability to rouse himself.

However, that had been prior to this night. The slight hiss that pervaded the darkened cavern was a sound that could be caught by human ears. Tonight, that sound did more. Ears transmitted it to a brain, which, though dulled, was above the usual zombi level.

There was a stir in the darkness; the scrape of a mat; then footsteps, slow, stumbly, on the stone floor. One zombi had risen from his berth. He was moving blindly, but steadily toward the steel barrier.

COLD metal halted the zombi's progress. He forced himself against the barrier, striving to push away the unyielding steel. There was gathered strength behind that effort; it wearied the persistent zombi.

He stopped; rested against the barrier. Something clicked in his mechanized brain.

The zombi tried new tactics. With one clenched fist, he beat upon the door.

The clangs did not disturb the other zombis, but there were ears that noticed the strange mechanical poundings.

Ojil, moving through a distant passage, heard the faint metallic beat that echoed beneath vaulted tunnels.

Ojil stopped; then approached the passage that led to the zombi cavern. He

recognized that the noise was coming from the steel door. For the moment, Ojil thought of carrying word to Doctor Mocquino; then a contemptuous grin appeared upon the fellow's darkish lips.

Zombis, to Ojil, were creatures who could be controlled by a single word. He would settle this unruly one, then make his report to Mocquino.

Ojil hurried to the log bridge. Crossing it, he pressed the switch, let the door slide open. He waited on the ledge, watching the figure that stepped mechanically forward. Suddenly, Ojil's eyes went wild.

This was the black zombi! He hadn't expected that he would face the newcomer who belonged to Mocquino's tribe of living dead. Ojil remembered the battle of two nights ago. In The Shadow's eyes, reflected by the light, he saw a flicker of fire burn that had existed before!

Ojil stepped back to the log bridge. The Shadow clumped forward, shoulders stooped, arms extended, like a mechanized being of doom. Finding his voice, Ojil uttered the high-pitched cry that forced zombis to obedience.

Perhaps his tone was wrong; possibly the terror that strained his voice made the cry useless. The Shadow did not halt. His advancing foot reached the log bridge. Again, Ojil started the cry; it was throttled on his lips.

Shooting forward like long extension rods, The Shadow's hands took Ojil's throat. Instantly, Ojil was caught in a grapple that he could not resist. Though

zombi brains were slowed, those creatures lacked nothing in physical power. Quite the reverse; it seemed that their mental strength had been transferred to muscles.

THE SHADOW was swinging Ojil back and forth, as the fellow tried to retreat to the center of the bridge. The sweep was becoming wider. The Shadow's feet kept to the center of the log, his stride the slow march of a zombi.

A human pendulum, Ojil was swung from one brink to the other. His clutch on The Shadow's shoulders seemed useless. Frantically, Ojil tried to shift his clutch to The Shadow's throat.

That sudden release brought a spontaneous response from the black-clad zombi. Before Ojil's hands could reach their mark. The Shadow's own grip relaxed.

Sliding into space, Ojil tried to clutch The Shadow's coat sleeve. He was too late; mechanically The Shadow was swinging away in another of those pendulum sweeps, even though he no longer gripped a burden. When he swayed back again, Ojil was gone.

There was a dull crash, echoing up from hidden rocks a hundred feet below. That sound permeated The Shadow's slow thoughts. His swaying halted. His eyes shone straight ahead, as a whispered laugh came from his lips.

Despite his zombi status, The Shadow had returned. The first conflict in his new campaign had resulted in a triumph!

CHAPTER XIII

MOCQUINO'S PROP ROOM

SLOWLY, The Shadow completed his trip across the log bridge. He followed the passage that led outward. Soon he was lost in the underground maze. Except for the spark that kindled him to action, he still had the manner of a zombi.

Impressions were penetrating to The Shadow's brain; gropingly he was assembling those scattered thoughts.

Never, even when first awakened, had The Shadow been completely under Mocquino's sway. Dully, he had followed the line of least resistance, when he obeyed orders in the manner of the other zombis. He had been hazily conscious, however, of affairs about him.

Even the toil in the pit had been real. During it, The Shadow had heard the murmur of the voodoo circle; had seen the flickering fire and the human statues beyond it.

Though he hadn't recognized Marcia at that distance, he knew that she was one of the group; for The Shadow had gained the impression that there were four statues, instead of three.

For forty-eight hours, The Shadow had been in the cave where the other zombis dwelt. He had sensed the tang of ozone in the atmosphere, a curious phenomenon, considering that the air in these caverns was none too pure.

During his present random march, The Shadow again noted ozone. As he drew labored breaths, his flickering brain divined the reason.

That hissing sound in the zombi cave!

It was gas, leaking from underground pipes that led into Manhattan. Filtering through the porous stone, it gathered other chemical elements. Mocquino must have discovered that leakage and noted its effects. He had put the discovery to his own use.

Through constant breathing of that filtered gas, men became stupefied; yet

capable of action when trained to the right commands.

Mocquino had probably found it a task to drill obedience into the first few men who fell beneath his sway. After that, newcomers had simply fallen in line, copying the examples of those about them.

The effects of the gas lingered; that was why the zombies could be brought from their cave, to do service in the pit. It told also, how Mocquino had safely shipped a crew of zombies to become unwitting murderers. He had brought them back to his lair before they had shaken off the gas treatment.

Twenty-four hours.

That, as The Shadow remembered it, was the time that George Grulen had required for an almost complete recovery. The Shadow would need less, if he stayed out of the gassy cavern. Before tomorrow night, he would be himself again.

Those linking thoughts did much to rouse The Shadow from his present lethargy. At intervals, he seemed to shed his zombi ways; during those short bursts of mental strength, he employed the tactics of The Shadow.

It was fortunate; otherwise The Shadow's conquest of Ojil would have gained him nothing.

AS he probed his way through many passages, The Shadow frequently heard the approach of Mocquino's servitors. At those times he sidled to the wall, clung there like a chameleon of darkness, unseen by the men who passed.

He always waited during those long, unpleasant minutes when a haze clouded his mind; then, alert again, he continued along his route.

The Shadow came at last to the deserted Voodoo Grotto. He blundered past the empty pit; sight of it almost forced his footsteps downward, for he was relapsing to the zombi state.

He managed to pass the pit; blundered against the huge door. Pressing there, he waited until a sickening spell had passed.

Thoughts steadied. The Shadow moved toward the niche where he had hidden the flat box. He found the crevice, drew the kit from it. With fumbling hands, The Shadow opened the box. A compact apparatus was revealed.

It was a radio device, consisting of a coil, a tube and several dry-cell batteries. There were wires, not yet connected, plus a small object shaped like

a sending key. The Shadow's fingers fumbled with the wires. Simple though their attachment was, it took him a while to remember the system.

The Shadow's brain was receptive; it could absorb outside impressions. But

to produce actual action was a far more difficult matter. From that thought itself, The Shadow took a warning. It would be unsafe to move against Mocquino until many more hours had gone by.

Wires were fixed. The Shadow held the box pressed against the rock. He waited, eyes shut. With another return of mental alertness, he finally fished out the paper that bore the route instructions.

The device that The Shadow handled was transmitting a radio beam. Elsewhere, Burbank and others had direction finders, set to locate a beam of this short wave-length. If all went well, The Shadow could depend upon their calculations alone.

There was a chance, though, that but one man - probably Burbank - had caught the signal. Acting upon that possibility, The Shadow began to interrupt

the beam, by using the key. With those breaks, he transmitted a slow coded message.

The Shadow was giving the details of his paper covering the ride in the black-windowed limousine. The effort taxed The Shadow. His eyes looked sightless

as they stared at the paper, which lay beneath a tiny bulb that had lighted automatically when he raised the lid of the make-up kit.

Fingers numbing, The Shadow managed, through sheer nerve, to complete the tabulations. Before his fixed gaze, the written records were grotesque, yet legible.

The task was finished. The Shadow's fingers slipped from the key. His body slumped to the stone floor; the flat box fell beside him. Batteries rolled from it; there was a clatter of a breaking tube. The tiny bulb was obliterated.

AFTER a period when all seemed blackness, the dim glow of the grotto began to register itself upon The Shadow. He arose, fumbled for the box. Finding the equipment broken, he closed the box and let it slide into the crack of the wall.

That episode had ended with an unfortunate sequel; but The Shadow's lapse had produced a greater return of strength. He was steady when he moved from the wall toward the great throne that stood beyond the ashes of the voodoo fire.

Passing the throne, The Shadow came to a passage in the rear wall. He saw a steel door, a switch beside it.

This was the cavern where Marcia and the feminine contingent slept. Like the zombis that The Shadow had left, they could not be rescued at present.

Moving away from the door, The Shadow came to an unblocked passage. A light glimmered beyond a turn. This path, it struck The Shadow, might lead to Mocquino's own abode.

As he moved inward, The Shadow saw a door upon his right. It was metal-sheathed, but unlocked. Straight ahead was another door, stronger and tightly shut. The Shadow chose the door on the right. He stepped into a room that was like a wide aisle following the line of the passage.

There were curtains at the end of the room; partly open, they admitted light from the room at the end of the passage. The Shadow could see the end of a sliding door; but it was pushed back. Thanks to the illumination, he could make out the objects about him.

He was in Mocquino's prop room, where the Voodoo Master kept the trick devices with which he fooled his followers.

The Shadow saw the poker that had been in the fire, two nights ago. Its point was a porous alloy, the sort that would hold heat in its center but cool rapidly on the surface.

It's handle was a piece of pipe with tiny holes, through which air could issue. That accounted for the sizzles that had come from the poker. Heated air had simply expanded and sought an outlet.

Moving to a rack, The Shadow saw Mocquino's knife. He examined the weapon; as he had suspected, its handle was hollow. A thrust, the blade would go into the handle, to be forced out later by a spring.

Mocquino, however, had added a double twist to that old trick. A pressure of the guard at the bottom of the hilt caused a catch to hold the blade in place. That explained now Mocquino had hurled the knife into the box. He could

make this dirk an actual weapon, when he chose.

In the hilt, lay the other feature of the knife. Liquid oozed as The Shadow pushed the blade upward. The hollow handle served as a reservoir that could be filled with ruddy fluid, representing blood. That was as why the fake plunge of the knife had caused blood to gush, seemingly from a victim's heart.

The Shadow found the box that Mocquino had used as a target board. He raised the lid; there was a stir within. The darting head of the fer-de-lance whipped forth, to drive its fangs into The Shadow's arm.

That strike was futile. The snake squirmed to the bottom of the box, when The Shadow brought out a cluster of dryish herbs.

Closing the box lid, The Shadow sniffed the leaves. They bore the aroma of a tropical plant. These herbs were the snake's chief food; and The Shadow had heard of their virtue. Such plants neutralized the venom of poisonous reptiles.

THE SHADOW moved farther into the prop room. His course was stealthy; instinctively, he had returned to his old methods of silent motion. That proved fortunate.

The Shadow was close to the curtains when he suddenly detected the sound of voices from the next room. One step more might have brought discovery. The Shadow caught himself, halted on the threshold, just in time.

Then, with the skill that was his custom, he stirred a curtain so slightly that its motion was imperceptible. Through the space thus provided, The Shadow peered into a strangely furnished room - where garish tapestries hung from the rocky walls, and fancy chairs and divans stood upon thick-tufted rugs.

This room was Mocquino's own den. Reclining on a divan, the Voodoo Master was speaking to a scar-faced companion who sat in an opposite chair.

The Shadow had chanced upon a conference between Mocquino and his chief lieutenant, Leboux!

CHAPTER XIV

PLANS COMPLETED

"AFTER tomorrow's meeting," spoke Mocquino, "we shall end our sojourn here. Our future lies before us, Leboux."

Leboux's lips formed a grin so jagged that it was difficult to note where his mouth ended and his scar began.

"I hold sufficient wealth," continued Mocquino, pointing to heavy coffers that were stacked in a corner. "Millions, Leboux, in funds that can easily be cashed! This wealth was not stolen. It was given to me."

Above the coffers was a shelf; there, among other items, lay The Shadow's automatics. Sight of those weapons brought a smile to Mocquino's flame-marred face. The guns reminded him of The Shadow; that, in turn, made him think of the zombis.

"Tomorrow night," resumed Mocquino, "the zombis will toil for the last time. After that, we shall fill their cave with chlorine gas. They shall die; and remain entombed there!"

The Shadow remembered the chlorine gas at Sayre's. There were big tanks in

the prop room, along with barrels of the reddish powder that Mocquino liked to toss on the voodoo fire.

"What of the black zombi?" questioned Leboux. "The others can disappear, but is it safe to dispose of him so soon?"

"Quite," assured Mocquino. "Today, my spies reported interesting news. Lamont Cranston is in Algeria."

"In Algeria? But, master - he is here!"

Mocquino shook his head.

"I have suspected often," he declared, "that The Shadow and Lamont Cranston might be two different persons. That fact has been proven. The real Cranston is

a traveler. While he is absent, The Shadow frequently takes his place.

"With other zombis" - Mocquino's chuckle was reminiscent - "we have had to supply reasons for their disappearance. With The Shadow, that is not necessary.

He, himself, has paved the way to his own destruction. The pretended Cranston will never be missed, since a real one still exists."

"But there are those who serve The Shadow -"

Leboux's reminder brought a hard-spat oath from Mocquino. The Voodoo Master arose, raised waving fists.

"We shall trap them!" he promised. "Sayre, Vincent, Burke - the lot of them! And Grulen, too, though he is harmless by this time. With The Shadow dead, those blunderers can never escape me!

"You know my future plans, Leboux! I shall dwell in the heart of New York City, a spider in the center of the greatest web that ever was designed! Every criminal will serve me! I shall control an empire that can never be overthrown, for its very existence will be unknown.

"With this wealth" - he pointed toward the coffers - "I can buy that power.

The men who already serve me will bring others; and will dispose of those who refuse to serve me. For every dollar that I spend, I shall acquire ten, a hundred!"

Mocquino approached Leboux, laid a withery claw upon the lieutenant's shoulder.

"And you, Leboux," he added, "shall no longer be an overseer of zombis. You shall become prime minister in our empire, second only to myself!"

LEBOUX was pleased. The prospect so stirred him that he could think of no more questions. Evidently Mocquino expected one, for the Voodoo Master smiled.

"You have forgotten certain persons," reminded Mocquino. "The ones who are still members of my cult."

Leboux's face showed a troubled look. Mocquino understood it.

"Perhaps you wonder what I shall do with them," he remarked. "The answer is simple. I shall let them go their way, unharmed. That is easier than having to dispose of them, since we have not yet arranged for them to disappear."

"They may talk!" protested Leboux. "You will no longer control them -"

"You think not, Leboux? You are wrong. Tomorrow, they shall see a sight that not one shall forget. After that demonstration of my wrath, their lips will seal."

"The fire ceremonial?"

"Yes. I shall use the girl, Marcia Cortell, as the victim of the sacrifice."

"But she is a zombi!"

Mocquino shook his head. His smile was subtle; it reflected the crafty thoughts within his scheming brain.

"I have removed her from the zombi cell," said Mocquino. "Tomorrow night, she will be almost normal. I shall declare that she, alone of all zombis, managed to shake off the spell. My followers know the miserable fate of ordinary

zombis, but when they witness the terrible death that comes to those who return

from the living dead they will fear me forever!"

The Shadow heard that final statement, but did not see the satanic fury that registered on Mocquino's face. He sensed that the conference was finished;

that Mocquino and Lebox might soon be leaving the den, perhaps by way of the prop room.

That was why The Shadow had withdrawn from the curtain. Picking his way out

into the passage, he moved rapidly toward the grotto. His swift stride was forced; at moments, his legs slowed, as though anxious to return to the slow tramp of the zombi march.

He was across the grotto when he heard sounds from the passage that he had

left. Choosing a course back toward the zombi cavern, The Shadow was enveloped in the darkness of the underground maze.

Once safely away, he felt the let-down that returned him to zombi bewilderment. The Shadow let himself fall into the slow, plodding pace. He was headed in the right direction; when he reached the final passage, he turned toward it. Suddenly, he halted.

A man was coming from the passage; another of Mocquino's many guards. The fellow had seen the open door of the zombi cavern, was coming to report it to the Voodoo Master.

Pressing his hands against the sides of the passage, The Shadow steadied himself. Instead of trying to straighten his confused thoughts, he let his brain

go blank. The passage blurred before The Shadow's eyes. He was staring almost sightless, when the guard arrived.

THE fellow experienced the same impressions that Ojil had undergone. He saw

a zombi at large; recognized him as The Shadow. With a pleased grin, the fellow

gargled the high-pitched tone that controlled the zombis. Again, the command failed.

The Shadow clumped forward; the guard cowered away. Seeing the chasm a dozen feet behind him, he avoided Ojil's mistake. Wildly, he hurled himself at The Shadow, only to strike a human form as immovable as stone.

Blindly, The Shadow clutched the attacker; throttled him and flayed him back across the passage. The man went limp, as his body bashed the stone walls.

All that saved him from death against those rocks was the sudden finish of

The Shadow's blind fury. Intelligence supplanted the haze of The Shadow's brain.

He halted his attack; stared at the slumped figure in his grasp.

By giving vent to that frenzy, The Shadow had cleared his cobwebbed thoughts more effectively than before. He tossed the lightweight native over his

shoulder, strode across the bridge and reached the gassy cavern.

Breathing as slowly as possible, The Shadow pitched his senseless burden on the vacant mat; taking off his own cloak, he draped it over the native guard.

Outside the cell, The Shadow pressed the switch that closed the steel door.

He started across the log bridge. Dizziness gripped him, from that brief whiff of gas. He staggered; began to sway. He saved himself by staggering forward.

His zigzag increased with every stride, but when his right foot finally slipped from the log edge, he was on solid ground. The rocks were hard, but The

Shadow accepted them gratefully as he took a sprawl.

The Shadow realized that in Cranston's garb, he could not attempt the prolonged journey that he had made before. Such a trip, however, was unnecessary

until some time tomorrow. It would be as easy then as tonight, for daylight never penetrated into these caves.

Sleep, away from the gas-filled cavern, was the best tonic that The Shadow

could acquire. He looked for a little used passage; entered the nearest one that

he could find. It led into deep darkness.

Soon, The Shadow was stumbling among rocks that came knee-high. The condition of the floor indicated that none of Mocquino's men would choose this route, even by accident.

Probing along the wall. The Shadow finally found a fissure that offered a smooth, slanted ledge. He rolled into that stony bunk, closed his eyes and sought sleep. It was not long before it came to him. The slumber was sound.

Thus The Shadow failed to discern the flicker of lighted torches that passed by the entrance to his passage, a half hour later. Doctor Mocquino, followed by two servitors, was coming to take a good-night look at his zombies.

THE Voodoo Master crossed the log bridge where Ojil lay forgotten, far below. He pressed the switch that opened the cavern door; turned on the light to look at the sleeping zombies.

Among them, Mocquino saw a huddled figure beneath a black cloak, as silent, as motionless as the others.

With a discordant laugh, Mocquino stepped from the cavern and slithered the door shut, to close off the blackened space. He was confident that no zombie, not

even The Shadow, could shake off the power of the ever-seeking gas. If victims were to return from their zombie state - as would be the case with Marcia - it would have to be by Mocquino's design.

So thought the Voodoo Master. His plans for the morrow were completed. The

world would soon tremble beneath the overlordship of Rodil Mocquino and the unseen empire that he intended to rule.

It never occurred to Mocquino that another brain might formulate plans to balk him. To one person, alone, did Mocquino credit such strength; and he regarded that being as an extinct power of the past.

Doctor Mocquino was thinking of The Shadow!

CHAPTER XV

NEWS OF THE SHADOW

AT nine o'clock the next night, a car ascended a lonely road that scaled a New Jersey hillside. Its lights showed the foliage of many trees; jutting rocks gave the summit a mountainous appearance. The car finally swung to a stop beside a small but well-kept cabin that nestled close to the hillside.

It would have been difficult for the casual observer to believe that this spot was within thirty miles of New York City; but such was the case. This hill belonged to the low, rugged range of Watchung Mountains, that begin not far beyond the Jersey meadows.

The cabin was situated on the slope toward the valley that ran between two ranges; thus a daylight view would have afforded sight of a scene that had the semblance of a wilderness.

A young man alighted from the car; he approached the cabin and rapped a signal. The door opened; the man who admitted the visitor was Doctor Rupert Sayre.

The physician recognized the arrival as Harry Vincent, one of the most capable agents who served The Shadow.

They seated themselves at a table holding a powerful kerosene lamp that illuminated the room. Harry nudged his head toward a closed door; in low tone, he questioned:

"Gruhlen?"

"Asleep," replied Sayre. Then, noting a strained look on Harry's usually keen face: "Tell me the trouble."

"Last night," stated Harry, "Burbank caught the radio beam, from somewhere in Manhattan. I had a flicker of it, from Westchester County, where I was stationed. But Burke missed it, from Brooklyn."

"You sent Burbank your direction?"

Harry nodded. Then:

"His line and mine were almost the same. Allowing for a small percentage of error, the bad angle ruined our calculation. If we went by our original check-up" - Harry smiled ruefully - "we would have to decide that The Shadow sent that signal from the middle of the George Washington Bridge."

Sayre's eyes reflected Harry's troubled look.

"It's not so bad as it seems," explained Harry, promptly. "The Shadow interrupted the beam with a coded message; and Burbank caught the whole of it. He gave directions to his location, compass points and time spaces."

"You followed them?"

"Moe Shrevnitz did, after dark, tonight. He wound up at the northwest corner of Manhattan Island. He was near the heights, when he ended the trip. He knows the rest of the way, though; it leads to an old mansion, in a setting almost as wild as these hills."

SAYRE looked relieved. The location mentioned was not far north of the George Washington Bridge. That made it fit with the findings from the radio beam. Soon, though, Sayre began to grasp the real reason for Harry's worry.

"That beam was cut off," informed Harry. "It hasn't been repeated. The Shadow has found Mocquino's headquarters; and probably they're beneath that old forgotten mansion. But the question is: What has happened to The Shadow since last night."

The very question was in Sayre's mind. He was guessing the actual truth:

that The Shadow had fallen into Mocquino's power. Sayre could picture him as a zombi. Then came the thought that Mocquino would scarcely be satisfied until The Shadow was actually dead.

"We're going there tonight," asserted Harry, grimly. He laid a large-scale map of Manhattan on the table; traced out the route for Sayre. "But it's going to be a ticklish task. The Shadow's orders were to stay under cover; but he lets us use our own judgment, in emergency."

"And this is an emergency," agreed Sayre. "I understand what you are up against. A false step would be serious, particularly if The Shadow has managed to make plans of his own."

"There won't be any false steps," assured Harry. "We'll move in on that place as if it were surrounded with egg shells."

Harry glanced at his watch; there was still time for more talk. He came to the main reason for his visit.

"Any shred of information may help us," he told Sayre. "Has Grulen remembered any facts? Has he given any description, even a hazy one, of Mocquino's headquarters?"

Sayre shook his head.

"Grulen thinks that he is in West Virginia," informed the physician. "I didn't tell him that we were reversing our trail, with all those plane hops. I knew that if he thought he was close to New York, he would want to go there."

Harry smiled. Sayre's deception was wise one. The two were bending over the map; they didn't hear the slight sound of a door opening behind them.

"The whole episode of the voodoo cult has vanished from Grulen's mind," added Sayre. "I don't think he would remember Mocquino, unless I deliberately drilled the name through his head. It would do him no good to show him this map.

He wouldn't know what we meant, if we told him this route led the abode of a devil doctor who once controlled him."

There was a pause; then Sayre questioned: "What about the girl? Marcia Cortell?"

"She has disappeared," replied Harry. "But, as usual, the police suspect nothing. She is supposed to have taken trip to Europe."

"Which means that she is there" - Sayre tapped the finish of the route that was traced on the map. "If she went to another cult meeting, she is probably a zombi."

Harry started to speak, then made a warning gesture. The flame of the kerosene lamp was sputtering, as if a breeze had reached it. Sayre turned the lantern low.

"That happens every now and then," he remarked. He looked around. "There aren't any windows open, except in Grulen's room."

The door to that room had shut. Neither Sayre nor Harry suspected that it had been ajar. The physician decided to take a look at the patient. He tip-toed into the room. then returned.

"Sound asleep," he told Harry. "Let's go outside, Vincent, where there is no chance of disturbing him. Leave the map here; it will be safe. We can stay on the porch, where we can watch the road."

THE outer door had hardly closed before George Grulen thrust his head in from the other room. His face was flushed - a sign that he had improved under Sayre's care; but there was something unnatural about its color.

George was breathing jerkily as he approached the table. There was a flicker of horror in his eyes, visible even in the dull light. His memory had sprung to action more easily than Sayre had expected. The statements that he had overheard were responsible.

With trembling hands, George folded the map. He looked toward the windows that opened on the porch; set his lips grimly, as he shook his head. With his recollections of the voodoo rites, George had forgotten other facts: particularly that he owed his present recovery to Sayre's care.

He had caught Sayre's statement regarding this location. The fact that the physician had not told him where he actually was, had been enough to bring about entirely false conclusions.

At that moment, George regarded Sayre as an enemy; and he applied the same to Harry. His lips muttered a name aloud:

"Mocquino!" George spoke the name in a tone of detest. Then, with a choke in his voice, he added: "Marcia!"

His next mumbles were incoherent, but his actions showed a craftiness. Folding the map, George tucked it in his pocket. He stole to a rear door, opened

it without a creak. He stepped outside and sneaked around to the front. He saw the road: near it, the dim lights of Harry's parked car.

George reached the car. The ignition switch was locked; that didn't bother

him. Taking the wheel, he released the hand brake. The car coasted from the slight slope, rolled noiselessly down the hard dirt road.

George couldn't find the light switch at first; hence the headlamps were still dim when Harry spotted them from the porch.

"Somebody's got the car!" he exclaimed to Sayre. "What's more, he's away with it!"

They dashed into the cabin. Sayre looked toward the table.

"The map! It's gone! Was it the only one?"

"No. But the question is: who took it?"

Sayre pointed to the inner door. It was partly open. They turned on a light, saw that George's cot was empty.

"Where's the nearest phone?" demanded Harry.

"At the crossroads," replied Sayre. "That's more than two miles below here."

"And Grulen can coast nearly the whole way," groaned Harry. "How long will it take him to get a cab?"

"About ten minutes, if he's lucky. There's a town just over the hill. If he calls for a cab, it will arrive in a hurry."

"He has money with him?"

"Yes. Plenty!"

TOGETHER, Harry and Sayre started a long jog down the slope. Even with flashlights, they found the going rough. It was more than the estimated two miles, before they finally found the car. Both rear tires were flat. George had obligingly seen to that.

They heard the rumble of a motor some distance ahead. It was a quarter mile to the crossroads, and they covered it on the run. The telephone was in a filling station, but the place was closed and tightly locked. Harry guessed why.

"Gruhlen did better than call a cab," he panted. "He paid the service man to take him to New York. That's why the place closed early. It was their car we just heard."

"It's a couple miles over to the town," remarked Sayre. "We might as well hike it."

Winded from their run, they found the tramp a long one, requiring a good part of an hour. At intervals, Harry speculated on the problems that George's departure might produce. Sayre was inclined to be hopeful.

"He didn't hear very much," said Sayre. "His thoughts may wander, causing him to forget the map."

"That's possible," agreed Harry. "But I'm due in New York by eleven. We want to be up there before midnight."

"You'll make it," assured Sayre. "Meanwhile, don't worry about Gruhlen. At worst, he'll only blunder into Mocquino's hands a short while before you arrive there."

"That will tend to puzzle Mocquino, rather than hurt your expedition. I can assure you of one thing: Gruhlen will be bewildered if he meets Mocquino, too much so to give information."

Harry hoped that Sayre was right. That hope, however, was ill-founded. As Sayre had said, George was still in a bewildered state; but it happened that he had gained purpose despite it.

At that moment, George was staring through the window of the service man's coupe, as the car rolled along the Skyway over the Jersey flats. Ahead lay the entrance to the Holland Tunnel; beyond, the glare of Manhattan. Sight of those lights reminded George of instructions that he had already given.

"Don't forget," he told the driver. "I want to go to police headquarters."

"I won't forget," gruffed the man beside him, with a sharp side-look. "That's where I'm taking you, even if you decide to change your mind!"

George fished a half dollar from his pocket, for the fare through the tunnel. With the other hand, he crinkled the map that thrust from his pocket. George didn't intend to forget where he was going, nor what he meant to say when he arrived there.

New factors soon would move in the war against Mocquino. Whether or not they would assist The Shadow, only the future could reveal.

CHAPTER XVI

THE FINAL MEETING

TIME stood still in the gas-infiltrated cavern where the zombis dwelt. Even

when visitors entered, those relics of humanity did not know it, except when their ears heard the signals that they obeyed.

Therefore, it was a silent, unseeing audience that greeted The Shadow when

he arrived at the cavern, an hour before midnight. The light that showed when the door slid back was barely sufficient to reveal the figure of Lamont Cranston on the threshold.

The Shadow had completely recuperated from the gas treatment. Thanks to his recovery, he had roamed Mocquino's premises during the past few hours without

the enshrouding folds of his black cloak. Those passages, with their many niches, offered easy concealment for The Shadow, when he was in his right mind.

Curiously, The Shadow's present venture was the most dangerous that he had undertaken. He intended to risk another sojourn in the gas chamber, basing his plan upon the fact that Mocquino and others frequently stayed there a short while.

Apparently, the air was not heavily surcharged with the ever-trickling gas. Otherwise, the zombis could not live. It was a light mixture that kept them in their lethargic state; and The Shadow was confident that it required considerable time to produce the original zombi symptoms.

The first problem was the closing of the door. The Shadow managed it by stepping inside, then stretching his arm for the outside switch. The barrier took a complete second in its heavy, shutting slide. The Shadow whipped inward at a more rapid speed.

He could tell by the scent of the air that the gas was less dense beside the door. Pressing the light switch, The Shadow studied the rows of sleeping zombis.

The Shadow spoke, with sinister whisper that crept weirdly beneath the low-vaulted roof. The zombis did not stir. Again he repeated the strange tone, this time with a shivery touch of mockery. The sound registered. Two zombis moved.

Though keyed to the high-pitched commands given by Mocquino and his native tribesmen, the zombis could respond to other tones. Such sounds, however, needed to carry some startling feature that would make them differ from ordinary noises.

Repetition of The Shadow's whisper brought the remaining zombis to life. Mechanically, they formed a procession, advancing at The Shadow's summons. With a sharp articulation, he halted them.

Meeting the vacant stare of the foremost zombi, The Shadow gave a piercing gaze. The glow of his eyes must have penetrated deep to the dulled brain, for the zombi moved his lips. Slowly, in sepulchral monotone, The Shadow drilled home words:

"You - hear - my - voice -"

There was a twitch of the zombi's lips; they finally phrased the soundless word: "Yes."

"Return - to - your - resting place - now -"

The zombi stepped away. The file moved forward, to stop at The Shadow's sharp hiss. The first zombi, however, kept going toward his mat; halting there, he settled as if asleep.

ONE by one, the remaining zombis harkened to The Shadow's instructions. The sight would have amazed Mocquino, who thought that these dulled humans could follow only the most primitive orders. The Shadow was employing methods that Mocquino could not have matched.

Through the forceful power of his own will, he was stepping up the remnants of intelligence that the zombis possessed. He was depending, too, upon more than sheer command.

In those zombi minds remained certain instincts, which The Shadow recognized from his own experience. Though they did not display it on the surface, they could experience both likes and hatreds.

In Mocquino's tone, they felt the whiplash of an enemy. In that of The Shadow, they sensed the urge of a friend.

A dark-faced zombi halted before The Shadow. With this arrival, The Shadow wasted very little time. In reality, he was not a true zombi; he was the guard The Shadow had overcome the previous night and had substituted in his sleeping mat, covering him with his - The Shadow's - own black cloak. The gas had made him as obedient as the zombies.

Now, The Shadow plucked away the black cloak that hung from the fellow's shoulders. He pointed to a corner where the floor dropped sharply behind rough rocks.

Mocquino's gassed henchman turned, wandered in that direction. Stumbling over the final rock, the man sprawled out of sight. He did not rise from the hole where he had fallen.

After impressing order upon the last few zombies, The Shadow approached the vacant mat. He stretched there, his cloak drawn tightly across his face.

Conserving his breath, The Shadow drew air sparingly through the cloth. He

was employing a system of yoga breathing that he had practiced in India; the sort whereby fakirs could lie entombed for hours.

Pressed within the cloak he had a cloth that he had treated with chemicals in Mocquino's prop room; but The Shadow was not counting upon it to offset the gas entirely. The less air he breathed, the better.

The Shadow was prepared for an extended wait; but the time was less than he expected. Faintly, he heard the sliding of the metal door. Lebox had arrived a half hour before midnight, to assemble the zombies. Evidently, this last meeting was to be an early one.

Zombies had not forgotten the high-pitched tone, though they responded more slowly than usual. The Shadow was among them when they lined up to begin their march out to the grotto. When he passed Lebox, the overseer saw that the black-cloaked zombi was staring with the same glassy-eyed gaze as the rest.

The Shadow's deception also fooled Mocquino when they reached the grotto. The Voodoo Master sneered at the passing line; gave special contempt to The Shadow while Lebox was driving the procession to their places in the pit.

Soon, the big wheel began to grind. Cult members were arriving so steadily, that the door seldom remained shut for more than half a minute.

Like the other zombies, The Shadow kept at the work with seeming indifference. His eyes, though, were taking in the entire scene. Due to his circular march, he could study every portion of the grotto without changing his gaze.

THE setting differed tonight.

Mocquino's throne had been removed. The fire pit was enlarged, stretching back to the space where the throne had been. Beyond that was hazy darkness.

Three living statues were present. Marcia was the missing fourth. One stood at each end of the fire; the third, slightly in the background but at an angle.

All held torches; instead of the bowl formerly held by a statue, a huge urn stood near the fire and in front of it.

Tom-toms thrummed; but there was no dance tonight. Seating themselves before the fire, the voodoo ritualists formed a semicircle, with Mocquino in the center. The Shadow was facing straight toward that scene, when the wheel came to a halt that he supposed was final.

The big door was closed. Leboux sprang from his post; strolled over to join the voodoo circle. He wanted to witness the coming ceremony at close range. The Shadow had foreseen that Leboux would have that wish, and that Mocquino would grant it.

Though he had formulated plans that would suit any circumstance, this was the one that The Shadow preferred. His head lowered slightly, dipping, unnoticed, below the pit edge.

Soon afterward, there was one less zombi at the huge wheel.

The desertion passed unnoticed. One face less was a minor matter among that spoked array of silent standers. Nor was The Shadow discernible as he ascended the rough steps beside the wall, to follow fringing darkness.

Tonight, he could reach any nook in the main grotto, unless some unforeseen development intervened. Once gone from the great wheel, however, it would be difficult to return there.

Doctor Mocquino had finished a preliminary speech that roused the tense curiosity of the listeners. One zombi, he told them, had returned to normal life. That was no discredit to Mocquino's power. On the contrary, it showed that he had stepped beyond all others who claimed mastery over voodoo.

These witnesses had seen each zombi die. Therefore, the zombis seemingly lived only by virtue of Mocquino's power.

For a person actually dead to draw back the full strength of former life, was indeed amazing. A matter incredible even to those who knew much of voodoo practice. But not to Mocquino. Such a result - the return of a spirit to the body - was a miracle that he had long desired to achieve.

They would view the proof, tonight.

But with it - Mocquino's discordant tone carried a bitter warning melody

-
would come terrible punishment to the person concerned. The victim would be destroyed by the one element that could accomplish complete obliteration.

That element was fire.

RISING flames showed how well the Voodoo Master's harangue had worked upon his followers. Tonight, they missed the rhythm of the dance that worked them to a fever pitch. They were solemn, huddled creatures, more pitiable than the zombis.

Mocquino's bitter words seemed to carry a threat to all. He pressed it home.

"With tonight," he declared, his voice lowered to a roll, "our cult dissolves. It will be melted in the crucible of silence; obliterated like the human being whose sacrifice you shall witness!

"What you see, will be the fate that comes to all who loose their tongues. Silence carries its own reward. Lack of it means death. One death, only: doom amid the flames!"

Mocquino turned to raise his arm as signal to native followers. He stopped, the motion half completed. A dark-faced servant stumbled through the circle, whispered words that only Mocquino heard. The Voodoo Master leered.

"Leboux!" he exclaimed. "The portal! Open it - and leave it open!"

The overseer stepped toward the pit. From darkness, The Shadow turned, drew an automatic that he had reclaimed from Mocquino's unguarded den. The blackened muzzle turned toward Leboux, followed the scar-faced overseer as he strode toward the zombi pit.

Should Leboux shout the news that the black zombi was gone, he would die before Mocquino understood the words. Nor would Mocquino live long enough to guess what Leboux cried, if The Shadow could prevent it.

The odds, however, were bad. The Shadow had not reached the position that he wanted. Mocquino was hemmed in by the voodoo circle that spread like a half-moon shield. It would be better for The Shadow, as well as Leboux, if the latter failed to notice that the wheel lacked one zombi.

There was a chance that he would. Leboux's high voice was already giving the order that made the zombis move. The big wheel started its grind.

Leboux stopped well short of the pit. Moreover, he did not gaze toward the pit at all. He watched the huge door instead.

The short gap amid the toiling zombis swung by unnoticed. When the door had opened, Leboux babbled the halting cry. He saw the door stop; he pivoted about and stalked back to the voodoo circle. The Shadow slid his gun away; resumed his glide along the wall.

During that progress, The Shadow noted Mocquino staring toward the opened portal, his face contorted with a fiendish smile.

"We shall have visitors," announced Mocquino, his voice a malicious hiss. "Our portals are always open to those who wish to see the light. We shall welcome them to our ceremony!"

An ominous silence followed Mocquino's words. The statement carried promise of an added doom. Strained watchers waited as the minutes passed. The Shadow had halted, watching also.

Even The Shadow would be due for a surprise, when Mocquino's guests arrived!

CHAPTER XVII

MOCQUINO'S GUESTS

INSPECTOR JOE CARDONA was standing on a knoll, facing an ancient mansion that formed a jagged pile of darkness. Through the trees that fringed the hilltop, gleamed distant lights along the Hudson River.

Cardona turned to the detective sergeant who stood beside him.

"I think the place is empty," he said. "What do you think, Markham?"

"I think the guy is nuts," snorted Markham. "Nobody would be inside that old house. It probably belongs to the park."

"Yeah?" inquired Cardona. "What park?"

"Search me," grunted the detective sergeant. "When I take a trip in the woods, I go to Connecticut, or some place close. This is the first time I learned that Manhattan Island ran half-way to Albany!"

Cardona laughed. He decided that Markham was right: the expedition was a wild-geese chase.

"I should have known it," admitted Joe. "When Grulen barged in to my office with that crazy story of his, it did strike me as screwy. There were things, though, that checked."

"You mean about the girl?" asked Markham. "The people I called up said she'd gone to Europe."

"Only they didn't know what boat she'd sailed on," reminded Cardona. "I'm worried about the Cortell girl. I'm worried about Grulen, too."

"Why should you be? He's right there in the car, isn't he?"

"Yes, but his name was mentioned the other day." Cardona was recalling the interview with Cranston in the Cobalt Club. "And there was a name that Grulen spouted; a name I didn't like: Mocquino."

"The voodoo doctor? He's dead, long ago."

"I'm not so sure."

Cardona turned and went back to the car. Markham followed him, expecting a prompt departure. Instead, Cardona tugged Grulen's arm; brought him from the rear seat. George gave a listless mumble.

"You brought us up here," snapped Cardona. "You're going to be with us when

we give the place the once-over. We're after Mocquino. Get it? Mocquino!"

The words were electric. George roused. His eyes stared, white in the darkness.

CARDONA had brought a squad of half a dozen men. He detailed them to circle the mansion. While Cardona was shoving George along with him, a detective hurried up through the dark. The fellow blinked his flashlight toward a clump of trees.

"I saw it!" he gasped. "This time, it was real! But it's not there now!"

"Saw what?" demanded Cardona. "Why didn't you report it the first time?"

"I thought I was goofy the first time," admitted the dick. There was a thing there; it moved when the light hit it. Then I figured it was just a bush.

Maybe it was a different one I spotted this time; but it had a face - a dark one."

"An animal?"

"I'm not sure. It could've been a monkey. It jumped away like one. Only monkeys have got fur, haven't they? They don't look like they was bare-legged."

Cardona called a conference. They had covered all sides of the mansion except the back. A driveway led in that direction, and its ruts looked recently made.

"I'm taking Grulen and half the squad," Cardona told Markham. "You wait here with the rest. Give us ten minutes, then come through; and be careful. If it looks bad, send for reserves."

Something stirred close by. Cardona didn't notice it. He thought it was the wind.

"If I want you sooner," added Joe, "I'll give you four blinks of the flash.

That means to join us: all clear."

At the rear of the house, below the first-floor level, Cardona discovered a door that looked like the entrance to a garage. He managed to open it.

A large car was parked inside. To the left, Cardona saw a jumbled stack

of
packing cases, that did not look suspicious. There was a door on the right,
but
it was padlocked.

Cardona's flashlight showed a light switch. He pressed it. A dull glow
filled the garage. Cardona and the spreading detectives were deceived when
they

looked at the big car. Its blackened windows merely made it appear empty.

It was George who suddenly supplied new interest in the scene.

"This is the place!" he exclaimed. "The garage where we came when we saw
Mocquino! And that car! Look out for it, because -"

Before George could complete his sentence, Cardona snapped an order to a
detective.

"Take a peek inside that bus!"

The detective opened the car door; went stiff at sight of a revolver
muzzle

poked between his eyes. Another dick heard a sudden tumble from the packing
boxes: turned to face a second armed thug.

Cardona and the man beside him were quick to aim their revolvers; but
they,
likewise, were too late.

The door whipped open at the other side of the garage. The padlock was
real
enough, but the hasp was a fake. Cardona and the detective were covered by a
brace of sawed-off shotguns. The men who held those weapons growled for them
to
lift their dukes.

WHILE hands raised, George made a scramble for the outer door. A quick
figure blocked him. One of Mocquino's native beaters had sneaked in behind the
squad. The dark man thrust a knife point toward George's chest. Hands lifted.
George backed into the garage.

"Through that way, lugs!"

The hoodlum in charge pointed Cardona and the rest through the end door.
They shoved George alongside the inspector. The detectives were frisked as
they

passed; not only were they deprived of revolvers, but the thugs clamped their
wrists with their own handcuffs.

Only Cardona and George were left with hands free. That wasn't going to
help them, they were told.

Halted on the stairway, the procession waited.

Outside the garage, a sneaky figure drew close to Markham's detachment.
Cardona's instructions to Markham had been overheard by the crooks. There were
four blinks of a flashlight. The detective sergeant came ahead, his men with
him. Once in the garage, they were bagged like the others.

An unlatched door popped open from the limousine, to reveal aiming thugs.
Another bobbed from the packing boxes.

The trick door from the upper stairway served again. This time, two
natives
closed in from the rear.

Weaponless and handcuffed, the second detail was shoved through to join
the
first. The procession started down the long trail of stone steps.

All seemed bleak and lonely around the old mansion that marked the last
outpost of Manhattan. There were figures there, however - forms too stealthy
to
be detected by Mocquino's watchers. Under the shelter of a crag, voices held
conference.

"Moe saw a limousine come through," spoke Harry Vincent to others of The

Shadow's agents. "He spotted it on a couple of trips. Then Cardona arrived, just before we came. We'll wait until we see what he does."

Something dropped from the crag; gave a grunt in the darkness as it landed.

There was a whisper in the group:

"Here's Hawkeye!"

Guarded flashlights showed a hunch-shouldered man, with quick, sharp eyes that peered from a wizened face. He was another of The Shadow's agents.

"Somethin's gone sour," voiced "Hawkeye", his low tone hoarse. "For a while

there, I was playin' peek-a-boo with a couple of human hyenas. Whether I slipped

them, or they slipped me - well, you guess. Anyway, I couldn't get close to Cardona's outfit."

"Are they still there?" asked Harry. "Cardona's men. I mean."

"No," returned Hawkeye. "They got into a place that looked like a garage, from what I could see of it, lookin' over a rock. I slid away from there; next thing, I saw flashlights. That was the rest of Cardona's outfit."

"And then?"

"Them garage lights went out, pretty sudden. I got closer, and felt along the door. It was shut tight. I don't like the set-up. Everybody's gone, including the hyena gang."

Harry put a question to the group. The decision was unanimous. The Shadow's

agents, to a man, were agreed that this was the time for invasion. With Hawkeye

as their guide, they took the upward path beside the crag.

HAD Hawkeye been able to report scenes beneath the mansion, The Shadow's agents would have dropped all caution and chosen haste. For Joe Cardona and his

entire squad had reached the termination of a trail that promised doom.

They were moving through the open portal of Mocquino's Voodoo Grotto, flanked by a cluster of jeering natives who had taken over convoy duty from the thugs.

Cardona's stern eyes saw the standing zombis in the pit. George saw the direction of his gaze, and he, too, looked.

A terrified jargon broke from George's lips. He slumped down, flung his hands before his eyes. Natives prodded him. Cardona dragged the moaning man forward.

They neared the voodoo circle. Cardona saw Mocquino, recognized the Voodoo

Master despite the scars that made broad welts across his face. He heard the bitter, jangling laugh that he remembered from a former episode.

Then, with George beside him, Cardona was backed against the near wall of the grotto, close to Markham and the handcuffed detectives.

Through Cardona's brain flashed a single thought. It was, that there was but one battler in all the world who could defeat Doctor Rodil Mocquino. That fighter was The Shadow; and he was absent from this scene. That was ominous, for, considering past performances, The Shadow should have arrived here ahead of Joe Cardona.

Perhaps The Shadow had arrived; this time, to lose the struggle with that reincarnated monster who called himself Doctor Mocquino!

That, to Inspector Joe Cardona, was a thought more ominous than the mad, discordant tone of the Voodoo Master!

CHAPTER XVIII

THE FIRE ALTAR

To Joe Cardona, the scene in the Voodoo Grotto symbolized a mightier power than that which Mocquino had formerly possessed. Hard-headed, stolid even in the face of death, the ace inspector had a calculating eye. He remembered other lairs that Mocquino had inhabited. They were as nothing, in contrast to this one.

The semicircle of voodoo worshippers were crouched low. So were the few natives who drummed the tom-toms. As a result, the golden-robed figure of Mocquino loomed above them, with the fire as its background. The human statues were visible, also; but Cardona took them for marble.

An ugly-faced subordinate now approached, to boss the group that controlled Cardona and the other captives. The fellow was Lebox, pleased by his new duty.

Cardona looked at the darkish faces that flanked him; he could count more than a score of Mocquino's native followers.

That explained something that didn't occur to Cardona. It told why Ojil and another native had not been missed. Mocquino was so sure of these dark-faced followers and their loyalty, that he rarely kept count of them. Their roving duties made that almost impossible.

Roughly, Cardona nudged George's shoulder. If there was a way out of this mess, George might know it. But George didn't budge. He was cowering. He knew this scene; he had shut his eyes to it. But he couldn't close out the beat of the tom-toms, the crackle of the fire.

Nor Mocquino's voice.

It came, that tone, like the flat chime of a carillon bell heard at too close a range.

"Our guests are here," mocked Mocquino. "Let them witness the rites that are to come. After that, they shall remain!"

Cardona didn't like the emphasis of the final word. It signified that he and his companions would remain permanently.

Lebox was stepping toward the zombi pit. Mocquino halted him.

"Stay with our guests," suggested the Voodoo Master. "We shall keep the portal open. There may be others. If so" - his chuckle was devilish - "we shall welcome them, also."

Cardona saw the pit with its motionless, bowed heads. Beyond, the open path to the outer passage. But he knew that a mad rush for that exit would simply bring quick death. Again he tried to stir George, and failed.

Oddly, George's terror was an excellent symptom.

It proved that any memory lapse would end, once a former zombi again viewed Mocquino's grotto. That, in turn, was proof that The Shadow, never absent from this setting, had suffered no forgetfulness.

But Cardona had ceased to think in terms of The Shadow. This was one time, Joe felt glumly sure, that the black-cloaked avenger could not help. As Cardona reasoned it, The Shadow, if present, would have manifested that fact by this time.

TOM-TOMS increased their beat to the swing of Mocquino's scrawny arm.

Amid

that speeded rhythm, the Voodoo Master uttered a long, weird jungle call, that cackled back from the vaulted dome and distant crevices of the grotto.

Out from the blackness beyond the fire came two native servitors, carrying a long slab that looked like a rough board hewn from the trunk of a tree. They rounded the fire; the members of the voodoo circle spread, to let them pass.

Against the flaming background, Cardona saw a human figure reclining on that slab. That reposing shape was the prone form of Marcia Cortell.

Motionless,

the girl appeared to be a recumbent statue, until she heard the crackle of the fire. With that, she stirred; turned her head toward the voodoo circle.

Those squatting observers saw that Marcia was a zombi no longer. Her eyes told it as they gazed, half puzzled, half horrified. They totally lacked the zombi stare.

At that moment, Marcia didn't realize what had happened to her. She was just coming from her trance; she felt too dazed to recognize her predicament.

She thought that she was in a dream; that the strained faces of the cult members were the distorted fancies of a nightmare. Yet they were real, as the visages of a hideous dream always seem to the person who imagines them.

It was when she met Mocquino's eyes that Marcia caught the truth. Sight of

that flame-streaked countenance leering down at her, was enough to produce full

wakefulness. Marcia tried to squirm from the slab; her muscles failed.

But the girl did deliver a piercing shriek that cut to every cranny of the fire-lit grotto.

With that, Mocquino gestured toward the fire.

With sidelong swing, the natives planked the slab squarely upon the flames, where it rested above the fire level on a grille held by upright prongs of iron.

Dipping his fists into the massive urn that stood waist-high beside him, Mocquino hurled one dash of powder, then another, upon the fire.

There were puffy explosions; they brought smoke that reflected crimson from

the fire. Flames spurted, lashed about the slab, but did not ignite it. That rough wood had been daubed with a liquid that had alum content; it was temporarily fireproof.

So were Mocquino's hands. He brushed the powder from them; nonchalantly, he

picked up some live coals that had rolled from the fire, tossed them among the flames. The smoke had faded; Marcia was completely visible as she tried to rise

on one elbow.

She was too terrified to scream again; but a mad, frantic shout broke suddenly through the grotto.

George Grulen uttered that cry. Marcia's scream had roused him. Staring straight toward the fire, George recognized the victim who lay above the flames.

"Marcia! Marcia!"

GEORGE tried to stagger forward; Cardona snatched him back. Cardona had seen how the slab halted the licking flames. Marcia would be safe - for the next few minutes, at least.

Cardona saw a disdainful grin upon the lips of Lebox. That token pleased him.

Once Lebourg's eyes were fixed upon the fire, Cardona intended to unloose George. When the frantic man dashed forward, Cardona would go with him, in a mad effort at rescue. But the longer that moment could be delayed, the better.

Doctor Mocquino rubbed his alum-treated hands. With a sudden twist, he transformed himself into a creature of frenzy, whose wildness outmatched the mad

dances of the cult members. Huddled, frightened, those followers stared at their berserk leader, as Mocquino jabbed his hands into the powder-filled urn.

The Voodoo Master nearly smothered the fire with doses of the red-grained explosive. With every hurl, there was a hollow burst, a puff of smoke. Mocquino

whipped the flames with those miniature bombshells. Marcia was half lost within the thickness of the smoke that licked up around her body.

Veiled in those ever-rising clouds, Marcia seemed a mist-goddess trying to break from the enmeshing coils. The smoke was heavy, as it coiled above the slab. Flames formed a sea about her, turning her into a fire nymph - seemingly a portion of the blaze itself.

But to Marcia, half risen on the slab, those flames were living lashes of doom.

Smoke was thick about the edges of the slab, where fire had begun to eat the resisting wood. The slab, itself, was a tiny islet in that raging sea, offering but slim security. Marcia saw herself tinted by the ruddy puffs of smoke.

She screamed again, staring toward the smoky screen that fronted the fire.

Through the wavering cloud, she saw the contorted face of Mocquino, the devil-master who presided over this pit of horror. He was close, which meant that the edge of the fire was near enough for a leap. But not in that direction!

Marcia recoiled; looked toward the back of the pit. She saw a three-foot stretch of flame where reddened smoke was thinner. Her desire was to spring across that gap.

Her mind was frantically aroused; she was sure that she could reach the solid floor. But even the roar of the flames, the stifling of the air about her, could not give strength to her numbed limbs.

Marcia still felt the chaining slowness that remained from her zombi experience. Propped on her elbows, she arched her back, doubled her knees, and pressed her feet against the slab. She was poised, not for a spring but for a roll into the narrow line of flame behind the slab.

MOCQUINO saw the effort of the smoke-wreathed girl. His hands paused, clutching red powder for a final throw, that would mark the finish of the human salamander. Smoke thinned; like the members of the voodoo circle, Cardona and George were witnesses to the climax.

But only one man - Mocquino, himself - was close enough to observe the full occurrence.

As Marcia poised, smoke swooped down upon her as if blanketed by a sweep of blackness. The smoke whipped sideways; curled in from the ends of the slab. The enveloping blackness covered Marcia so suddenly, that the mass of witnesses

thought she had rolled into the flames.

Mocquino halted rigid, saw enough to realize otherwise.

That engulfing blackness was real substance! It was an outspread cloak, flung downward by arms that stretched from beyond the fire! Mocquino couldn't quite see the figure that stood on the stone floor in back of the blaze; but he

knew the identity of that being.

The Shadow!

The cloak had settled over Marcia's arched body. She was beginning her backward roll when those arms sped beneath her, thrusting the rear fringe of the

cloak along the slab, in forward direction. Marcia's topple literally brought her into those strong, waiting arms, rolling the cloak tighter in the process.

Quickly, the girl had vanished, completely bundled in a garment that the flames could not even scorch.

The Shadow had come from Mocquino's deserted prop room, where he had dipped the cloak in the same fireproof liquid that formed a sticky film on the Voodoo Master's hands!

Where Marcia was, Doctor Mocquino wouldn't have known, except for the girl's own action. The Shadow had swung her clear of the fire; but Marcia didn't

realize she was safe. Spontaneously, the girl wriggled one arm free from the cloak, to thrust it around The Shadow's neck.

Mocquino saw her face staring upward. He spied the whiteness of her shoulder as it emerged from the cloak folds. The action forced The Shadow to tilt his head sideways. Above Marcia's opened lips and sparkling happy eyes, Mocquino saw the face of Lamont Cranston.

Madly, Mocquino flung both fistfuls of powder to the center of the fire. The double dose brought a violent puff directly beneath the slab. Marcia's deserted couch went toppling, edgewise, into the fire. Vivid flames engulfed it;

at last, the slab was tinder.

Living statues backed away, cult members cowered, as the fire flared like a single torch. Cardona had a powerful grip on George. Thinking Marcia beyond rescue, Joe had grabbed for him when the girl's figure vanished.

But in the fire's mighty rise, Cardona glimpsed the figures beyond: a tall form, turning, to place Marcia safely near the wall.

"She's safe!" gulped Cardona in George's ear. "Stay where you are - she's safe!"

The fire's flare had settled. Smoke rolled heavily from above the blazing pit that Mocquino had intended for Marcia's pyre. Out of that cloud issued a fierce challenge that rose to sardonic mirth; quivered to sudden finish that brought back the shudders of ghoulish echoes from every cranny of the grotto.

The laugh of The Shadow!

CHAPTER XIX

THE ZOMBI MASTER

DESPITE his dramatic rescue of Marcia, The Shadow was faced with a dilemma.

His plans were totally awry, because of the unwise excursion that Cardona had made into Mocquino's stronghold. Had George Grulen not brought the police inspector here, The Shadow could have easily settled scores with Doctor Mocquino.

It had been The Shadow's intention, at first, to drop the Voodoo Master

with a bullet shot from beyond the fire. With that surprise, he could have snatched Marcia from the flames, then dealt with Lebox and the others from long range.

Changed circumstances had rendered that impossible.

Well did The Shadow know that Mocquino's followers would turn madmen if they saw their master die. If they sought The Shadow alone, and blindly, that would help his cause. But if Mocquino fell, the natives who guarded Cardona's group would show their first fury against that helpless squad.

The Shadow had to bring them in his own direction; that was the reason for the challenge. By sparing Mocquino, he had spurred the result he wanted.

The Voodoo Master, himself, shouted for the native fighters to attack. They moved forward - some with knives, others with guns - for the darkness beyond the fire.

Lebox headed that charge; he left a few men to guard the prisoners. Those

natives halted uncertainly, which gave Cardona a chance. Yanking George with him, he sprang for the nearest foemen, to wrest weapons from them.

Fiercely, Mocquino's men hurled the attackers back. Others joined the fray; too many for Mocquino's few. The new fighters were the handcuffed detectives. They sledged hard with their steel-clamped wrists, beating off knives that thrust toward Cardona and George.

Ever wise, Mocquino had dropped away into the cluster of voodoo worshippers. In harsh tones, he was encouraging them to keep close about him.

Smoke, hovering above the fire, was a screen that blocked The Shadow's view of Mocquino; but the Voodoo Master wanted human shields as well. He knew that The Shadow, seeking to rescue the dupes, as well as others, would not fire into that unarmed group.

Mocquino's shrill laugh told that he expected his men to overwhelm The Shadow through force of numbers. Once past the fire, Lebox would spy the figure of Cranston.

And so he would have, had The Shadow remained where he was. Instead, The Shadow performed a move so astounding that it took the attackers unawares.

Leaving Marcia by the wall, The Shadow had launched forward. Huddled as he sped, he was driving straight toward the fire. Through the smoke, he saw the iron grille that rested over the fire bed.

That metal glowed; the grating was packed with chunky, heated coals, but in this swift drive it offered what The Shadow wanted: secure footing in his dash.

His breath drawn, an arm raised toward his half-closed eyes, The Shadow sprang straight through the smoky pit where fire blazed.

His feet trod the solid metal, never pausing as they passed. Flames licked knee-high; they were too slow, however, to sear that speeding form.

With a long spring, The Shadow emerged from the fire's midst, leaving a wallow of smoke behind him. His laugh was strident as he wheeled, straight toward the flank of Lebox's startled crew!

THE SHADOW'S big guns spoke. Each fist brandished a .45 that mouthed destruction. He jabbed new aim with each recoil of a gun and his close-range

thrusts took steady toll. All the while, The Shadow faded, swinging away from the cluster where Mocquino stood.

He could expect a stab in the back from the Voodoo Master, if Mocquino found the chance. For the present, the archfiend was depending upon Lebox and the native fighters.

Strategy of The Shadow offset the efforts of those fighters. He had clipped the first half dozen, when Lebox started a shout to scatter. Sidestepping the aim of a gun-bearing foe, stooping as a knife whizzed past his shoulder, The Shadow snapped a bullet that dropped the scar-faced overseer.

That brought the rest of the tribe in one mad lunge; exactly what The Shadow wanted. Mocquino had left too much to Lebox. Shrilly, he voiced the overseer's ungiven order to spread; but the Voodoo Master shouted too late. The

Shadow had flung himself squarely into the last attack.

Meeting the fighters low, with unexpected drive, The Shadow was beneath their hurried fire and the jabs of knives. Conserving bullets, he used his guns

as bludgeons to flay the heads about him. Out of that milling mob came staggering figures, to the accompaniment of The Shadow's taunting laugh.

The Shadow whipped away, as final knives sliced for him. He gestured with a

gun muzzle; its sweep made foemen duck. The Shadow fired, not for his own opponents, but toward the last two men who blocked Cardona and his squad.

Followed by the handcuff-swinging detectives, Cardona led a rear attack upon the group about The Shadow. Joe had a gun, snatched up from the floor. George Grulen was swinging a big knife. It was his shout that forced Cardona to hurried fire.

Twisting, The Shadow had met a concerted dash. With swinging guns, he bashed aside revolvers. But he couldn't stop the knife thrust that came downward

from a darkish hand. That blade was pointed for The Shadow's heart. He swung his shoulder toward it, just in time.

The knife drove deep into The Shadow's flesh; he staggered. The knifer plucked the blade away, to make another stab. The Shadow had dropped one gun; his backward sag was actually a move to bring the other into play.

As the knife point poised above him, The Shadow triggered a shot from the automatic that he braced against his hip. The knife clattered, useless, as its owner took the bullet through his heart.

The knife wound was painful; it crippled The Shadow's efforts. He had accepted that stab, to acquire Cardona's aid; and Joe gave it, helped by George

and the handicapped detectives. They were beating down the last of the natives, subduing those who were coming back to action. They had no chance for other action.

Despite his wound, The Shadow had to handle Mocquino lone-handed.

SWINGING toward the voodoo circle, The Shadow aimed his remaining automatic. Mocquino saw that looming muzzle; he didn't know the gun was empty.

Drawing the trick knife that he carried, the Voodoo Master made sure that its blade was tight. Thrusting huddled persons ahead of him, he worked in The Shadow's direction.

The Shadow matched Mocquino's shifty tactics, closing in as speedily as he could. He couldn't waste time in getting at the Voodoo Master. The flow of blood

from his stabbed shoulder was bringing weakness.

Mocquino knew it; tried to outmaneuver The Shadow. It was the threat of the gun that worried the Voodoo Master, cutting short his shifts. Moreover, Mocquino saw that his own time was short. The Shadow wavered; Mocquino decided to deal with him before Cardona could supply aid.

All that took place in a dozen seconds. The climax was Mocquino's twisty dart, wherein he flung his living shields aside. He couldn't have beaten The Shadow's aim; for the fighter who wore the guise of Cranston had faked the waver that lured Mocquino forward.

It was then that the Voodoo Master learned the gun was empty. He parried the swing that The Shadow made. In turn, The Shadow let his gun go from his fist; clamped Mocquino's forearm in a sudden clutch.

They grappled. Mocquino's eyes glared toward the open portal. That was the spot from which he had expected aid. He knew that the news of battle had been carried upstairs to the thugs who dwelt above. But Mocquino realized that the fray had been too rapid. His reserves could not arrive within the next few minutes.

The Shadow had already calculated the menace of that open doorway. Originally, he had been sure that it would be shut when battle came. The fact that it was open, was another bad break that had resulted from Cardona's well-meant invasion.

Reserves would be due, but not soon enough for Mocquino. The Shadow's laugh, whispered close to the Voodoo Master's ear, was the voicing of that very thought.

Grappling tighter, Mocquino tilted his head. He gave a long, high-pitched cry; with it, his face gleamed malicious hope of triumph. Mocquino had seen a last chance for victory. His wild tone was the zombi call.

Stolidly, they came from the stone steps of the pit - a slow-tramping throng that marched with the tread of doom. Hearing another of Mocquino's cries, they spread; moved in with staring faces straight ahead.

Rigid hands were thrust forward. Dried lips uttered inarticulate tones. They were keyed to deliver death; human creatures mechanized to inhuman service.

Within their closing midst was a tight-locked pair: Mocquino and The Shadow!

MOCQUINO let his knife fall. He shoved his freed hand for The Shadow's face. The wounded fighter sagged. Mocquino wrenched away; babbling a final command, he pointed a scrawny finger toward The Shadow.

Following on Mocquino's screech came the tone of The Shadow's laugh: the whispered, sinister mirth that he had rehearsed in the zombi cavern. His finger, too, was pointing; it was toward Mocquino.

Firelight showed the burn of The Shadow's eyes, vivid in their gaze. That same glow brought dull reflections to the staring optics of the zombis. Their lips formed words: tokens of obedience. The zombis turned.

With awkward forward movement, they fell upon Mocquino, taking the Voodoo Master in their slow-grasping clutch. The fierce shout that he gave was unheard by his former slaves. Again, the only sound that registered was the weird tone of The Shadow, repeating its mirthful command.

The Voodoo Doctor's rule was ended. The Shadow had supplanted Rodil Mocquino as master of the zombis!

CHAPTER XX

THE CRIMSON DOOM

STUBBORNLY, Mocquino fought off defeat. If ever a living being had halted the hand of fate, the Voodoo Master held that claim. Twice he had been consigned to doom, only to rise from his supposed graves.

In this third career of evil, he was not willing to relinquish that life, upon which depended his ambitions for an empire of crime.

Furiously, he wrenched himself from the clutches of the zombis, tried to make a dash into the clear. They hemmed him steadily, blocking his escape, but he managed to beat away their grasp. All the while, he shouted for new aid - from the scared dupes who made up the voodoo circle.

Those followers saw the zombis pressing toward the wall, driving Mocquino into a final corner. They responded to the Voodoo Master's appeal. Men who wore ordinary attire; women garbed in leathery voodoo costumes with one accord, they started forward to pit their frail strength against the powerful zombis.

That rush was blocked by Cardona and his squad. They had finished with the natives; these others looked easy. Cardona heard The Shadow's warning tone, clear despite its weakness. Joe understood that the cult members were to be subdued without injury.

It wasn't easy. Though weaponless, the men used their fists; the women clawed at the faces of the detectives.

The Shadow watched that curious fray, while he painfully slid new clips into his automatics. Resting on the floor, he had shoved a wadded handkerchief to stop the blood flow from his shoulder. He intended to be ready for any later battle.

With tripping feet and shoving shoulders, Cardona's squad sprawled the members of the voodoo circle, to hold them down by sheer weight. Cardona came over to stand beside The Shadow. He had at last met The Shadow as Cranston; but that didn't convince Joe that he had learned The Shadow's true identity.

Cardona recalled a few puzzling incidents, when Cranston had seemingly been two places at once. At last, those were explained. The Shadow, whoever he was, had found it convenient to adopt Cranston's guise.

The zombis had cornered Mocquino. The voodoo doctor gave a splitting yell. There wasn't a chance for him to escape, in Cardona's opinion. The inspector was more interested in The Shadow's order:

"Watch the door! Have Grulen gather guns. The zombis can use them. They will be needed."

Cardona remembered the outside thugs. He grabbed George, told him to get to work. Turning, Cardona started for the doorway, when a new shout made him turn.

That cry was from Mocquino: a spasmodic howl of glee. The Voodoo Master had ripped free again. He was stumbling along the wall; his golden robe was ruined and its crimson sash was gone. But when Mocquino lowered his warding arms, his face was intact, its gleam ugly.

The police inspector thought that Mocquino's luck was only temporary; for other zombis were clumping upon him, their vengeful hands extended. Mocquino's

only refuge was a deep space in the wall, where one of the living statues cowered, still holding an upraised torch.

WITH that torch, Mocquino turned the tide.

He seized the flaming brand from the white hand that held it, swept the fire back and forth to stop the closing zombies. He was using the one weapon from

which they instinctively shrank. Sullenly, the zombies retreated.

Cardona saw The Shadow rise, take aim from the spot where he rested. He was

armed with a single gun, for he had given the other automatic to Joe. But The Shadow needed only one shot to fix Mocquino - if he could find a chance to deliver it.

That was known to Mocquino.

Craftily, the Voodoo Master kept the zombies huddled. He was flanking them with the torch; withdrawing it whenever they started to break their cluster. Away from the wall, he was forcing their retreat in the direction of the fire.

Flame still flickered furiously in the pit; and its smoke was heavy. Once he stood before that fire, Mocquino would have a tricky avenue of escape. He was

planning The Shadow's own ruse: a sudden dash through the flames.

Again, The Shadow was on the move.

At moments, he saw chances to clip Mocquino; but he let them pass. A mere wound would not stop the voodoo doctor; it would only increase his caution.

The Shadow was counting on a better moment, when - if only for the fraction

of a second - Mocquino would be entirely open.

Mocquino was hurrying the zombies toward the fire front, anxious to gain the

advantage of the smoke-screen background. He had to speed it, for The Shadow was

slowly working to a flank position that caused Mocquino to change tactics rapidly.

Standing by the portal, Cardona wondered why The Shadow occasionally helped

Mocquino's course. Oddly, Joe didn't realize how short the time was. He should have; for, already, from distant passages, the approach of descending footsteps

promised trouble.

Thugs had received the news. They hadn't believed that Mocquino could meet

defeat in his own headquarters. They were coming down, stealthily, to investigate.

The Shadow didn't hear those footsteps that Cardona, because of his close location, should have caught. But The Shadow knew that once invasion entered, Mocquino would surely escape, if still alive. There was only one way to stop the

Voodoo Master; oddly, it depended upon Mocquino arriving at his present goal.

With the speed of a maestro's baton, the torch began to flay in Mocquino's

hand. He had seen his chance to outwit The Shadow. He was speeding the zombies with the bare flame, lining them the way he wanted.

He reached the fire front, steadied there. Withdrawing the torch, he beckoned the zombies closer, as he leaned backward toward the pit.

They formed a semicircle, those marchers, from one end of the fire to the other. Mocquino arced the torch in a wide sweep. Stooping to swing from one side

to the other, he lashed the torch out with his right hand, while his left clutched the huge urn that fronted the fire.

Back went the sweeping hand. Outside the zombi circle, The Shadow caught kaleidoscopic views of Mocquino's gold-tattered form. He knew that after a few more sweeps, Mocquino's leap would begin.

Picking a three-inch space between two zombi elbows, The Shadow aimed. The instant that he saw a flash of gold, The Shadow fired.

IT was the very type of shot that he had previously avoided; but, this time, it had a purpose. The bullet winged Mocquino, clipping him in the side. It wasn't a serious wound; but it jarred its living target. Furthermore, the shock caught Mocquino off balance. The torch flipped from his hand.

It caused the zombi circle to waver. Mocquino huddled, trying to escape The Shadow's aim; forgetting his wound, he tried to turn for that long jump through the fire. To steady, he shifted his weight against a handy object, not realizing that he had chosen a top-heavy brace.

That object was the big urn, its giant cup more than half filled with the powerful red powder that Mocquino used in careful dashes during the voodoo rites.

The Shadow heard the clang of the overturning urn. He toned a laugh that brought the zombis full about. No longer was Mocquino out of sight; he was slithering sideways, trying to halt the urn's ungainly roll. He was an open target; but a shot was unneeded.

Mocquino's struggle failed, when the urn jarred his wounded side. It tilted crazily away from him. He clawed for its upper edge, hung frantically, but the weighty vessel took him with it.

Over the urn, amid a huge outpouring of red-grained powder, Mocquino pitched headlong toward the fire.

The Shadow did not see the finish of the Voodoo Master's plunge. The powder sprayed the flames before Mocquino reached them. There was a mammoth puff that magnified to a roar. A volcanic burst of crimson spouted to the ceiling of the grotto.

That explosion flung the zombis to their faces. It sprawled detectives among the cowed members of the voodoo cult. It rolled the dead forms of Mocquino's native henchmen along the stony floor.

Fissures opened in the walls and ceiling of the grotto. Stones clattered to the floor; bats were fluttering from their hiding places in the upper niches. Remnants of the voodoo fire were rocketed everywhere, leaving a blackened pit where the red blast had spoken.

Amid those relics of a crimson doom lay fragments of a scattered corpse, along with stray wisps and tatters of a golden robe.

Such were the final remnants of Doctor Rodil Mocquino.

CHAPTER XXI

THE LOST EMPIRE

THE Voodoo Master had perished; but final victory had not been won. Deep in this forgotten grotto, The Shadow, like those whom he had rescued, still needed an open path. Otherwise, they might be trapped as badly as had

been

Mocquino and his native horde.

Menace lay close.

Faces had flooded the open portal, at the very instant of the crimson blast. While The Shadow had been watching Mocquino's plunge to doom, guns had been shoving in his direction.

Fortunately, the explosion's impact had reached the outside passage with the same power that it had evidenced in the grotto.

Thugs had been flung pell-mell along the corridor floor. The roar of echoes, the clatter of stones, had instilled them with belief that the caverns were due for a complete collapse.

That conjecture was scarcely a wise one. The passage had been the chief outlet for the rush of air forced by the explosion.

Wind had swept that passage with the fury of a typhoon; and sprawled thugs

had scrambled with it. They were at the stone steps, when the gale subsided.

Dim

lights still shone from the grotto. Leaders rallied the mobsters for an attack.

The Shadow heard the shouts of voices. On his feet, he looked for the zombis, to see them rising in their clumsy, stolid fashion. Close to the voodoo

fire, they had been scorched by the passing flames; but they were oblivious to the minor burns that they had received.

There wasn't time to march them back into the pit, to have them crank the huge wheel that would bar the portal. The only course was to give them guns.

With whispered order, The Shadow started the zombis in two files. George handed them weapons as they passed, aided by shaky members of the voodoo cult, who had become thoroughly subdued at sight of Mocquino's finish.

Markham and the shackled detectives were of little use. Crooks had kept the

keys to the handcuffs; that put the squad out of service, when it came to guns.

Approaching Cardona, The Shadow turned to halt the zombis. Joe looked puzzled. The Shadow explained; his tone had a new grimness.

"They would be massacred, at long-range fire." spoke The Shadow. "The two of us will have to handle the opening fight."

Passing the zombis, who stood beside their pit, The Shadow neared the doorway. Cardona was at his elbow; with a sweep, The Shadow flung the ace detective to the floor. An instant later, The Shadow dropped, choosing his uninjured shoulder to break the fall.

Gunshots sounded from the passage. Bullets were whistling above the heads of the two fighters. Forward, with raucous yells, came a dozen murderous hoodlums.

They were picked killers from the underworld: the best trigger-men that could be provided. Mocquino had chosen them as shock troops, later to be commanders of the roving crews that would obey his criminal rule.

THOSE marksmen found the going tough, along that rough stone floor. The cavern entrance formed a hump; The Shadow and Cardona had rolled into small depressions. They were showing only their gun hands as targets, while they answered the massed fire.

Bullets ricocheted along the passage. Thugs staggered; others took to niches in the walls, then sneaking closer for another surge.

The Shadow gave a nod to Cardona. They came up suddenly; ducked back into the grotto, firing last shots as they went.

Minus a few of their number, the underworld fighters followed with a rush.

They came through the crude doorway, looked for their former targets. Before

they could spot them, they heard The Shadow's laugh.

Weird, hollow, that mirth had the tone of a knell. Its echoes were grotesque, creeping from everywhere within the grotto.

Thugs snarled, dropped back, only to be urged ahead by the men behind them.

They shouted their contempt for The Shadow's challenge. They weren't to be bluffed by an enemy who didn't talk with guns.

Though crooks took The Shadow's laugh as a challenge, it was not uttered for their benefit. That sinister signal was the command that put the zombies in motion. As wheeling crooks turned toward the pit, they saw those fearless fighters on the move.

Again, The Shadow laughed.

Hands extended, the zombies began to tug their triggers, choosing targets that were moving blurs before their bulgy eyes. That fact didn't injure their mechanized aim. From the flank position, where The Shadow had placed them, they

were shooting at close range.

Even hardened gunmen couldn't face that motley array. They bolted for the passage, thinning as they went. The zombies followed, pumping bullets until their guns were empty.

That was when The Shadow commanded a halt. He was among the zombies, wheeling them about. Their trigger fingers hadn't stopped moving. The zombies couldn't distinguish between a gun blast and the mere click of a revolver hammer.

His gun reloaded with another clip, The Shadow had taken over the finish of the battle. He had counted on the zombies wiping out the hoodlums; but they hadn't. Their guns had been previously handled by Mocquino's native henchmen; too little ammunition had remained.

Crooks were rallying in the passage - a mere few, when The Shadow faced them, for this final effort. Then, from the steps came six more. They knew their

adversary, though he lacked his familiar garb of black.

Only The Shadow would have dared this last fight!

THE attack came. With it, crooks volleyed. Weaving, with his good arm thrust forward, The Shadow jabbed his answers. The thugs didn't worry because their long-range shots were wide. It was worth the chance; any lucky shot might clip The Shadow.

"Death to The Shadow!"

That was their shout, stepped up with oaths. The cry was lifted by others:

crippled thugs along the passage, who raised guns with their shaky hands, to join in the fire.

To The Shadow, crouching low, death would be welcome when it reached him, if he could only break that charge. His last gasp would be a whisper to the zombies, bringing them in to grapple with the staggering crooks. Cardona, too, with his handcuffed detectives, could beat off the last survivors of that incoming underworld crew.

They were close to the point where The Shadow, his last cartridge fired, could do no more than spring toward them. He might beat down one, maybe two, while they were loading him with bullets.

The Shadow tightened for the lunge; then suddenly dropped flat.

New guns were thundering from the passage. Crooks stumbled; pitched headlong. One slid to The Shadow's bulwark, shoved his gun across the chunky rock. The Shadow's gun hand was sledging down, as the revolver poked toward his

face. His .45 jounced the gunner's head; flattened him with revolver unfired.

Mobsters had swung about to meet the fire from the rear. That volley didn't stop. The last of the crooked horde rolled helpless. Fingers tugged triggers; but guns were pointed to the walls and floor.

The clearing smoke showed The Shadow's agents, half a dozen of them, the victors of this last assault. Advancing, they saw The Shadow rise to beckon them. They recognized him by the solemn laugh that he gave as welcome.

THE SHADOW stepped away when the agents entered, leaving Joe Cardona to be the official greeter. Cardona ordered a search of the crooks in the passage, to find the handcuff keys. When those were reclaimed, he released Markham and the detectives; put them to immediate work.

Survivors of Mocquino's tribesmen were segregated with wounded thugs. The members of the voodoo cult were placed in another group. Cardona left the zombies where they stood; then hurried toward a rear passage, in response to a shout from Markham.

The detective sergeant had reached Mocquino's den. He and two detectives had opened the Voodoo Master's coffers, to display a mass of wealth that Cardona had never dreamed one man could possess.

Those coffers were loaded with gold, with jewels. Amid the glitter lay stacks of bank notes, piles of bonds.

Cardona saw numbers that reminded him of box-car figures.

"And they handed the guy all that!" exclaimed Cardona. "No wonder Mocquino thought he could run everything! With this stuff given him, without a squawk, he'd figure he could take anything else that he wanted!"

George Grulen had reached the den. He reminded Cardona of another detail, which George expressed in one strained word:

"Marcia?"

"That's right!" exclaimed Cardona. "The girl! Where is she? And the other three - the ones I thought were statues. I haven't seen them since Mocquino grabbed the torch!"

There was a stir of the curtains that covered the doorway to the prop room.

Marcia Cortell stepped from them. She was wearing The Shadow's cloak no longer.

Instead, she was wrapped in a flame-colored robe that Mocquino had used in devil dances.

Before Cardona could ask Marcia about her zombi companions, the girl gave a low-keyed call.

From the prop room came the living statues, robed in other ceremonial costumes. Their eyes had that placid, steady stare that gave Cardona the jitters. But Marcia smilingly explained that their condition would fade.

"I can control them," she said. "He - The Shadow - used the call that you heard me repeat. They will sleep, at my command. By tomorrow night, their recovery will be like mine."

George added his assurance.

"The same with the others," he told Cardona. "The men that are like I was.

What's more, I know the right physician to take care of them. His name is Doctor

Sayre. I guess" - George smiled as he looked toward the doorway, to see Harry

Vincent standing there - "I guess that Doctor Sayre is back in New York, by this time."

MARCIA conducted her former companions to the grotto. There, Cardona started them upward, followed by prisoners under charge of two detectives. The Shadow's agents convoyed the members of the voodoo cult.

Markham, George, and the remaining detectives carried the coffers that held the reclaimed wealth, later to be distributed among the dupes who had supplied it to Mocquino. That sequel would mark the melting of the Voodoo Master's ill-gotten wealth.

Cardona stood alone, facing the motionless troupe of zombis. There would be cars waiting for them, when they arrived outside the mansion. The present problem was to get them up there; and it stumped Cardona.

The problem was solved when a strange whisper crept from somewhere in the grotto, so low-toned and uncanny that, to Cardona, it seemed to be spoken by the very walls. Its sibilance had a penetration, that worked upon the ears of rigid, staring men.

With solemn tramp, the zombis began their last march, out through the portal that they had so often toiled to open. Like the statue slaves of Mocquino, these mechanized beings were advancing to regain the lives that they had formerly enjoyed.

Cardona followed the procession. All was still in the dim grotto, until the last echoes of departing footfalls had faded. Then a long stretch of blackness streaked the floor. It marked the advent of a living figure, that stalked to the center of the grotto.

Cloaked once more, wearing the slouch hat that he had regained from the prop room, The Shadow stood alone upon the scene of battle. The triumphant laugh he uttered brought back solemn, shivery reverberations, heard by himself, alone.

Thus did The Shadow mark the conquest of Doctor Rodil Mocquino; thrice living, thrice doomed. Perhaps before, the Voodoo Master had heard the tone that signified his death; but not on this occasion.

The world was rid of Doctor Mocquino, forever!

THE END