



THE STARS PROMISE DEATH

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CHAPTER I

FROM the lounge car of the Shore Express, Lamont Cranston watched the meadows slither by as the speedy streamliner ate up the last few miles of its run to Seaview City. Ahead, jagged in the afternoon haze that was creeping in from the ocean, the skyline of the resort hotel was growing like a school of leviathans rearing from the deep.

Perhaps the scene fascinated Cranston, but Margo Lane wasn't watching it at all. Rather annoyed by the proximity of Seaview City, Margo was staring steadily at Lamont to remind him of a promise that he'd apparently forgotten.

Except that Cranston seldom forgot anything and never a promise. How he was to keep this one rather puzzled Margo, since she felt sure he had a lot to tell within a very few minutes.

It never helped to rush Lamont Cranston. His face, impassive and calm, was the very symbol of deliberation. Odd features, Cranston's, the sort that might be classed as those of a rugged mystic. Caught now in the glint of the setting sun, Cranston's visage was singularly masklike, as impenetrable as the thoughts that Margo was waiting so eagerly for him to express.

Whether Cranston was gauging the distance to Seaview City or the limit of Margo's patience, was a debatable question. Perhaps both factors were the answer, for he timed it to perfection. An annoyed frown was forming under Margo's wealth of brunette hair as she opened her lips to deliver an exclamation. She was at her prettiest that way, though oblivious to the fact, as Cranston noted with a calm turn of his eyes.

Then, in an even tone that interrupted Margo before she managed to speak, Cranston announced:

"I shall tell you why we are coming to Seaview City. A dead man sent us."

Margo's undelivered exclamation transformed itself into a gasp.

"A dead man!" Margo heard herself saying it. "Then - you mean there's been murder in Seaview City?"

"I said a dead man sent us," Cranston reminded, "not that one brought us."

To Margo, that detail was more astounding than the statement that produced it, at least until Cranston specified the person.

"Odd that you should have forgotten so soon," remarked Cranston, casually. "Hugo Trenkler died only this morning."

It wasn't that Margo had forgotten Hugo Trenkler; she just hadn't imagined the connection. She started to say so, then decided to let Lamont do the talking, since the train was now half way across the Meadows and minutes were becoming few.

"Nothing ominous about Trenkler's death," declared Cranston. "The doctors expected it, but they hadn't broken the news. He was just a little ahead of schedule, like this train."

As he spoke, Cranston produced his watch to show that there were a few more minutes than Margo expected. As if timed to the action, the streamliner slackened speed. Relaxing with a smile, Margo shook her head. She'd never known Cranston to miss with a display of casual dramatics.

"Go on about Trenkler," suggested Margo. "I know you went over to his house to make sure his curio collection was safe, but that was after he had died. So Trenkler couldn't have told you anything."

"Neither did his collection," added Cranston. "It is gone - like Trenkler."

"You mean - stolen?"

"Sold, to the last item, with the money deposited in the bank. Trenkler did fairly well disposing of it. He took in better than one hundred thousand dollars."

Margo's new frown was of the recollective type. She was trying to think of Hugo Trenkler minus a curio collection. It just didn't fit, for Trenkler had been a miser when it came to curios. Margo could picture his place as she had last seen it, a veritable potpourri of oddities that old Trenkler had gathered from all over the world.

"As a curio," defined Cranston, "Trenkler was probably the best in his collection. He was the hook that gathered things by crook, or vice versa."

"You mean his house was full of stolen goods?"

"Practically," nodded Cranston, "considering the way he swapped bad items for good. I'd been watching Trenkler for quite some time, expecting him to step too far out of line."

"So he wound up with a legitimate sale," said Margo, sadly. "Too bad, Lamont. If only he'd left a few odd items that could have revealed his past, especially the sort that you might have returned to their real owners."

"He did leave a trifling collection of that type," declared Cranston. He was watching from the window as the train snailed across the drawbridge that brought it into Seaview City. "It consisted entirely of hotel keys."

"Hotel keys!" exclaimed Margo. "Why did Trenkler steal those?"

"He didn't exactly steal them. His housekeeper said he intended to return them, but the jackdaw in him made him forgetful. That is, Trenkler planned to return all his hotel keys except this one."

From his vest pocket Cranston brought a sizeable key that bore the number 608. Staring at it, Margo didn't notice that the porter was gathering the luggage as a sign that the train was practically at the depot.

"Returning a hotel key is a simple matter," explained Cranston. "You simply drop it in the mail-box. But this one was posted in a little package."

"That's odd," remarked Margo. "Do you know why it was mailed that way?"

"Certainly," replied Cranston. "Because it was sent to Trenkler. That's odd, too, having a hotel key come to a person instead of the other way about."

Margo was looking closely at the key, noticing that it bore no tag to identify the name of the hotel. Before she could question Cranston on that point, he was motioning her to her feet, since the train had come to a stop.

"The package was postmarked Seaview City," undertoned Cranston, as they moved toward the line of passengers waiting at the door. "So it seemed worthwhile coming here, since the long distance call was from Seaview City too."

"What long, distance call?"

"One that the housekeeper received last night. She said that Mr. Trenkler wasn't feeling well, but she didn't specify how well he wasn't feeling."

"Who made the call?"

"Some man who didn't give his name. He said for Trenkler to come tomorrow - that meant today - or to send somebody. Today would be his last chance."

The line was through the doorway now, but Margo paused to ask another question.

"How will you find out where the call was from?"

"The man said something else," replied Cranston. "He told the housekeeper to remind Trenkler to take the blue green cab."

"The blue green cab!"

Margo was repeating the words as Cranston gestured her from the platform down the steps where the porter was waiting to take her arm. Somehow the combination didn't make sense, but Cranston took it at face value, whatever that was worth. Beckoning a red-cap to take Margo's bag, Cranston gestured to a row of station wagons that bore the names of Seaview City's leading hotels.

"Take your choice," said Cranston with a smile. "I'll phone you later, Margo. I'm going to look for that odd cab."

"If you find it," came Margo's parting shot, "you'll have something crazier than any of the items Trenkler collected."

After watching Margo pick her hotel by its station wagon, Cranston sauntered along to a line-up of cabs. From the window of her own vehicle, Margo watched his tall figure, saw Cranston thread his way out from a cluster of train passengers and take his stance beside a waiting cab. Margo hoped the cab would stay until the station wagon pulled out, and it did. In fact it was the last cab left, with Cranston still lounging beside it, when the hotel car began its trip and rolled by.

Meanwhile, Margo hadn't been oblivious to the other cabs. They were all of regulation pattern, bearing the names of two different companies; one called the Black and White, the other the Green. Appropriately, all the cabs were of the colors that their names represented.

All except Cranston's.

Driverless, the cab was standing with Lamont waiting patiently by when Margo saw it closely. In the sunset the cab showed its color plainly and its hue was a vivid blue. But on its door, Margo saw the painted emblem that belonged to one of the regular cab companies.

Emblazoned in a yellow diamond were the words:

GREEN CAB COMPANY

The message to a dead man had brought results here in Seaview City. Substituting for Hugo Trenkler, deceased, Lamont Cranston had found the blue Green Cab!

CHAPTER II

ATTACHED to the Seaview City depot was a lunch room that Cranston watched with a casual but expectant gaze. It was a logical place from which a driver would arrive, should the blue Green Cab be in operation.

Other persons, however, came from the lunchroom first. Two looked like workmen, a third was a crisp faced old gentleman who was mostly wing-tipped collar and polka-dot necktie. The workmen saw the cab, decided they could use it, and went back to rap on the window of the lunchroom. While the old gentleman was looking from the cab to Cranston and back again, a middle aged lady with a shopping bag and umbrella was attracted to the scene. It was then that the cab driver put in an appearance. He was shirt-sleeved with the sleeves cut off to show a pair of brawny arms, as freckled as the broad face that showed beneath the warped visor of his cabby's hat. He looked over the prospective passengers and grunted.

"I was supposed to haul this back into the garage," the cabby affirmed. "But since there's a load of you, I guess I can make deliveries. Only room for four though. Who's first?"

The cabby put that question straight at Cranston as though expecting him to answer it, which Cranston didn't. The gentleman with the wing-tip collar began to clear his throat, but hadn't finished when one of the workmen spoke.

"This gent was," the workmen said, with a nudge toward Cranston. "He was waiting when we came along."

"The lady here was last," vouchsafed the other workman, "only what's this you're telling us about an overload? You can ride two of us in front, me and my pal here."

The cabby decided that he could, since two passengers asked for it. So Cranston found himself in the rear seat, between the umbrella lady and the polka-dot gentleman, riding toward the Main Boulevard, which was the name of Seaview City's principal street that paralleled the ocean. But before reaching that thoroughfare, the cab driver asked for destinations.

All gave them except Cranston. He wasn't sure where he intended to go. He said drily that he'd expected a friend to meet him at the station, but without result. Having no hotel reservation - he'd expected the missing friend to attend to that - he would be glad to accept the cabby's recommendation.

"I'll see what I can figure, mister," the cab driver declared. "It's the summer season and the hotels are pretty full. Maybe we'll hit luck, though, only I ought to drop these other fares first."

Cranston acquiesced and the cab headed to its first stop which was a side street rooming house between the Boulevard and the Boardwalk. This was the address given by the gentleman with the wing-tip collar and the procedure brought an argument from the umbrella lady.

"I told you the City Market!" the lady reminded the cabby. "You've taken me right past it! I have to do some shopping and it's getting late!"

"Better late than never, lady," retorted the cabby. "The Market's on the other side of the Boulevard, ain't it? Well, if I drop this gentleman first, I can hit the Market coming back and you won't have to go walking across the Boulevard through all the traffic. I figured you as kind of careful and foresighted, seeing how you had an umbrella with you and now it's raining." It wasn't exactly raining, but the mist was bringing what amounted to a drizzle. A bit mollified by the cabby's flattery, the lady reduced her grumble.

"Slippery, too," the cabby added. "That makes it even worse, walking across streets. Guess we're both of us smart at looking ahead, lady."

The cabby emphasized this with a jerk of the steering wheel as he veered toward the curb beside the rooming house and the blue cab responded with a slight skid. The man with the polka-dot tie stepped out but Cranston's eyes weren't following him.

What Cranston was studying happened to be the net result of the cab's slight skid. The sun-flap above the windshield gave a slight flip, revealing what should have been on constant display, the cabby's license card.

Only part of the card showed, enough to disclose the name "Jerry" but no more. Quickly, Jerry pushed the flap up again and reached out to receive the fare from the passenger who had just alighted.

One of the workmen riding in the front seat said: "S'long, Colonel" to the departing gentleman with the wing-tip collar. Benign until this moment, the "Colonel" turned to throw back an angry glare that was something more than mere annoyance. A muttered apology from the workman soothed the face above the fancy collar, but Cranston's eyes, idling in the Colonel's direction, didn't miss the incident.

Apparently Mr. Wing-tip really styled himself "Colonel" and for some reason didn't like the reference. At any rate, Cranston gained a good index to the Colonel's nature. Until now, the Colonel's face had been drab, almost expressionless, but the purpling of his features, the narrowing dart of his eyes beneath a broad, high forehead, were the sort of characteristics to be remembered. So too was the tremble of the Colonel's lips, which rendered them puffy and naturally so, rather than tight and compressed, the way he had hitherto retained them.

Continuing, the cab dropped the umbrella lady at the City Market where Jerry suggested that one of the front-seat passengers get in back, rather than have an argument with any of the local law and order, since the cops didn't like three in the front, especially along the Boulevard.

But the cab didn't do much rolling along the Main Boulevard. Instead, Jerry wangled it in and out of side streets, up to beach front hotels and around again, pausing at each hostelry to get out and talk with door men. Always, Jerry returned with a head-shake, meaning that the hotel in question was filled.

Just why the two work-men didn't object to a tour of Seaview City was something that might have puzzled a less astute analyst than Cranston. His face retained the constant calm that to persons who knew him indicated a lot of keen thought behind it, but these workmen didn't know Cranston. If they had, they wouldn't have been so careless. The one in front kept talking in an undertone to Jerry, which was rather surprising on so short an acquaintance. The fellow in back kept his arms folded with one hand under his coat, right where it ought to be if he wanted to grip a hidden gun and keep it secretly trained on Cranston.

This had the makings of a one-way ride if Cranston started to act nervous, which he didn't. Should the situation be more than imaginary, the time to worry would be when Jerry gave up trying the hotels and decided to take his passenger elsewhere, but Cranston wouldn't worry even then. The trip wouldn't get that far with Cranston, even if Jerry so intended it; but Cranston doubted that such would be the plan at all.

The runaround was nothing but a stall, in Cranston's estimate. For some reason it wasn't time to deliver the very special passenger to the hotel where he was expected. So Cranston maintained the patient manner that properly should be adopted by an appointed representative of Hugo Trenkler.

It worked out as Cranston expected.

Pulling to a stop in front of a fairly pretentious hotel called the Neptune, Jerry gave a nod to a door man who wasn't looking. Acting as though he'd received a similar response, Jerry turned in the driver's seat, and announced:

"This is it. One buck."

It was dusk now, thanks to the increasing fog, but the lights of the hotel portico gave Cranston a good look at Jerry's freckly face, just as a last tally. Paying the dollar, Cranston alighted, carrying a briefcase that constituted his entire luggage. Instead of handing the briefcase to the door man, Cranston walked into the Hotel Neptune as though he belonged there, which was quite the thing to do. Scarcely through the revolving door, Cranston heard the rumble of the cab motor as Jerry jockeyed away.

So far so good. Cranston had passed muster with Jerry and the cabby's gun-bearing associates, which the hard-faced workmen unquestionably were. That deferred future events until Cranston reached room 608 which was his - or Trenkler's - appointed destination.

Entering a waiting elevator Cranston turned to the operator and said: "Seventh."

Well-timed, that order for the wrong floor, Cranston didn't give it until he'd turned around and viewed the lobby to make sure that no one was close enough to be checking on him. By going one floor above the sixth, Cranston could approach the latter from a proper vantage and besides, there were some preliminaries before he visited room 608.

Those preliminaries took place while Cranston was coming down one flight of deserted stairs. With a twist of one hand he inverted his briefcase while the other automatically drew a hidden zipper in the

bottom. A V-compartment opened between the regular divisions of the briefcase and from it, compressed garments literally disgorged themselves. With a single sweep, Cranston slid a black cloak over his shoulders and topped his head with a slouch hat that accompanied it. A pair of thin gloves completed his new regalia, while the briefcase, a flexible contrivance, disappeared beneath his cloak.

The fringing gloom of the stairway literally swallowed Lamont Cranston, or in another sense, it became the unseen route for his other self, The Shadow. The same applied to the sixth floor corridor when The Shadow reached it. He knew exactly where 608 would be and how to get there without encroaching too much in the light. He'd simply made a quick survey of the seventh floor hallway, knowing that the sixth would be practically identical.

In fact the sixth floor corridor was made to The Shadow's order, specifically the door of 608. It was set between two pillars marking the connection of the original hotel and an additional section; hence anyone stopping at that door could step completely from sight.

Apparently room 608 had been selected for the benefit of clandestine visitors, to give confidence to strangers such as Hugo Trenkler. All that anyone had to do was unhook the door quickly and spring into the room.

So The Shadow did neither.

Silently, as smoothly as though engaged in a piece of fine precision work, which indeed this was, The Shadow inserted his key and unlocked the door without a click. His gloved hand squeezed the knob, turning it as noiselessly. The door seemed to open of its own accord as The Shadow released the knob and applied pressure of a single thumb at the hinged side.

The interior of the room was dim, the floor being entirely obscured because the only illumination came from the fog-laden dusk above the window level. Without a sound, to all practical purposes an invisible entity, The Shadow entered and closed the door with the same care.

Probing the wall, gloved fingers found a light switch and pressed it. Lights flashed from wall brackets, but their mild illumination still did not reveal The Shadow, motionless and well-nigh spectral in the gloom just within the door.

It was by voice that The Shadow signified his arrival and his tone was a whispered laugh, grimly significant. Perhaps that laugh should have been given an hour ago, when Margo Lane, misinterpreting a remark by Lamont Cranston, had asked if there had been a murder in Seaview City.

Grim in turn was the sight that brought that mirthless laugh. From what The Shadow saw upon the floor, he knew that he hadn't just reached the threshold of a new adventure.

The Shadow had crossed that threshold.

CHAPTER III

THE thing upon the floor was a body, sprawled in the half-writhed fashion that represented violent death. The victim was a man of frail appearance, which gave an inkling to the mode of murder. Past middle age, he wasn't the sort who could have put up much of a struggle; therefore The Shadow judged that the man had been strangled.

Over toward the corner was an easy chair in which the man had probably been seated. The chair had a broad back, wide enough to hide a lurker. Looking at the victim's throat, The Shadow saw no traces of finger marks nor the impression of a rope, so he began a search for some other form of lethal instrument

and promptly found one.

From a bureau drawer poked the corner of a silk scarf that had been poked there hurriedly. Down through the slight opening, The Shadow saw that the scarf was twisted and its strands showed signs of strain. It could have sufficed for murder and probably had.

On a writing table lay a ruler along with some pencils. An interesting exhibit the ruler, since it could have completed a tourniquet if thrust through the knotted ends of the silk. Apparently some murderer knew the methods of his calling, although crude in modes of covering up.

Now for other clues.

The victim was well dressed, but his face had the droop of dissipation that went with failure. The Shadow classed him as some boardwalk character who probably traded on old acquaintance or chiseled his way as a better-class panhandler. In giving the man this broken-down status, The Shadow allowed for the changes that death had brought to the scrawny face.

Carefully searching the man's pockets, The Shadow came across some pawn tickets, an employee's pass to the Long Pier, a hotel key for this very room, but with a hotel tag attached, and finally several dollars in small bills. The pass bore the name of Peter Klurg and had a passable picture of the dead man.

These items were not all that The Shadow found. Beside Klurg's chair, half covered with a footstool in which the man had apparently tangled during his forward sprawl, was a newspaper open at the racing page. This edition of the Seaview City Evening Breeze, had probably been printed about two hours before.

What intrigued The Shadow, however, was a chance item on the page opposite. It linked with other matters in such fashion that a whole mental chain seemed to clank.

It was a death notice, covering a former resident of Seaview City, a wealthy collector named Hugo Trenkler.

Again, The Shadow's laugh came with grim softness.

Here was something that The Shadow hadn't checked, the fact that Trenkler once had lived in Seaview City. A resort of this size was the sort where one would make acquaintances merely as a visitor, hence The Shadow had thought the fact applied in Trenkler's case. The housekeeper hadn't mentioned any connection between Trenkler and Seaview City, but the news item itself explained why.

It stated that Trenkler had moved to New York more than thirty years before. The housekeeper, The Shadow now recalled, had been in Trenkler's employ only during past few years.

At any rate, the news of Trenkler's death had reached Seaview City ahead of The Shadow's arrival as Lamont Cranston. The Shadow had left such a possibility out of his calculations, since Trenkler wasn't important enough to rate an obit except in his home town. It was just bad luck that the home town happened to be Seaview City, though The Shadow could see other connections.

Something was afoot in Seaview City that called for outside contact. Somebody must have remembered Trenkler for the doubtful character he was, or kept in touch with him during the years between.

What Trenkler's name may have meant to Klurg was a wide-open question. Perhaps it meant less than the names of certain race horses, because Klurg had checked a few of those on the sporting page. The newspaper, however, wasn't all that served Klurg in the way of literature. Lying over beside the chair was a folder that The Shadow promptly picked up and spread out to half the size of a newspaper.

The folder bore the photograph of a man who wore a turban and a bushy black beard and in large type it stated:

DOCTOR DEE

HE TELLS

YOUR LUCKY STARS

AND NUMBERS

Pictured on the chart was a figure with bow and arrow, entitled "Sagittarius, The Archer" and beneath it was the legend: "A Reading for Those Born Under This Sign."

The reading was largely stock stuff, but Cranston's eye was quickly caught with certain paragraphs marked in pencil, which Klurg appropriately would have checked.

One paragraph referred to "Business and Speculation" and gave a list of lucky days where such were concerned. One of the dates was the tenth, which happened to be this day, and there was a penciled ring around it.

Further along was a paragraph with a much more vital significance. Since it was also marked, Cranston read it closely. It stated:

"Due to the unfavorable position of Saturn, Sagittarians are at present subject to serious accidents during this period. They should therefore guard well their actions as they may meet with untimely and perhaps fatal misfortune often due to highly unexpected causes."

A voice spoke suddenly at The Shadow's elbow; it might have startled another person, but he instantly defined its tone. It was coming from the radio, a small set half hidden among a stack of old newspapers, and an announcer was giving the results of the day's races.

Dee's chart hadn't been wrong in naming the tenth as one of Klurg's lucky days, where speculations were concerned. As the announcer reeled off the names of winning horses, The Shadow heard the names of two that Klurg had picked.

Among The Shadow's unusual faculties, one was this: his off moments were his best. In short, The Shadow never allowed anything to distract him. His survey of this room where Klurg lay dead had been intensive, therefore it had commanded considerable concentration. But while listening to a radio newscast and merely making mental tally of some minor item in the case, The Shadow wasn't otherwise idle, because he couldn't be.

The Shadow's eyes were noting the half-open window, with an old-fashioned cast-iron balustrade that lay beyond, about all that even his keen gaze could discern, considering that darkness had settled completely outdoors.

Even the balcony with its old wrought rail wasn't a new discovery to The Shadow. He'd noted a whole tier of such balconies when he had entered the main door of the hotel which lay on a plumb-line beneath this room. But now The Shadow was noting something else.

That something was a reflected flicker from somewhere off in the lower darkness. With swift, sweeping paces, The Shadow reached the window and spotted the cause.

Those repeated flickers were the lights of a car, parked over on a side street away from the hotel. They

came from about the only patch of darkness where a car could be stationed and still seen from this room.

Instantly The Shadow thought of the blue Green Cab and his mind completed a deductive process.

The car hadn't parked so he could see it. Jerry's purpose had been to put it where Jerry himself could view the window of 608. Having seen the lights come on in that room. Jerry was becoming nervous because something hadn't happened; therefore, he was repeating a signal blink for other people to see.

How long this had been going on, The Shadow didn't know, but it was the sort of thing that might nullify his clever job of entering 608 unseen. The thing now was to maneuver an equally invisible exit. Acting on that plan, The Shadow wheeled toward the door.

Sounds greeted The Shadow before he could reach his goal. Fists were hammering against the door, and hard, accompanied by a gruff, powerful voice that ordered:

"Open! Open in The name of the law!"

So that was it: a frame. Somebody had tipped off the police that matters weren't too right in room 608 at the Hotel Neptune. At least somebody was to have sprung the tip-off, but hadn't, until Jerry's lights began telling them that they were missing out on an important detail. With a quick turn, The Shadow strode across the room. Behind him, the door really echoed with the newer and harder pounding of gun butts. Too much of that hammering and the door would come crashing through. Time was getting short, even for The Shadow.

Not too short, though.

The balustrades were the answer. In the darkness they would serve as a simple ladder. Dropping from one ornate contraption to another wasn't even a task for an acrobat, let alone The Shadow. Something of a laugh was on The Shadow's lips when he cut it short, along with his stride.

Getting out of here was too easy. Those gunners who had posed as workmen could handily be down below. Not having seen the interior of the blue cab's trunk rack, The Shadow couldn't swear that it hadn't contained a very modern machine gun. If Jerry's comrades wanted to dispose of a wrong visitor to room 608, they could certainly do it with such a weapon. Even The Shadow couldn't help but darken the window, target fashion, unless he turned the room lights off. At that, it would be best to test the outside and for that The Shadow's quick mind promptly found a way.

With a swift swirl, The Shadow hoisted Klurg's body from the floor, finding the task easy despite the dead weight of the corpse. With a forward motion that gave the body a fantastically lifelike motion, The Shadow sent Klurg's remains on a slow topple against the balcony rail so that it would pause there, leaning, like a figure of someone taking stock of the route below.

That would bring a response from itchy fingers on machine gun triggers, if there were such over by the cab. But there was more for The Shadow to do, and hurriedly.

Lights out, next; then a quick spurt to the window before the police crashed through the door. Provided of course that machine guns didn't begin a tattoo.

No machine guns rattled. Instead, the door crashed open before The Shadow could even reach the light switch. His only chance was a quick swerve to get behind the incoming door before the invading police spotted him and The Shadow made it by inches.

Even then, the chance was slim, for the police might readily have guessed that the rebound of the door

indicated a hidden buffer behind it. But the police didn't guess, not one of the three who came surging into the lighted room, all in the khaki uniforms of Seaview City's finest.

The police had seen the decoy, Klurg's body, just finishing the slow, almost laborious topple that The Shadow had skillfully given it. They thought that the man at the window was alive and trying a getaway, so they charged through to overtake him. The Shadow hadn't counted on that ruse working so well that it would fool persons seeing it from this close range, but it did that and more.

Indeed, what Klurg's body did, even surprised The Shadow, though only briefly.

Before the police could reach the decoy all of Klurg's dead weight was on the balustrade, but it didn't halt there. With a human shriek that hearers attributed to Klurg, the old iron work gave, pitching the dead man's body headlong toward the masonry of the portico, six floors below!

All three of the police stopped to stare from the void that the window now represented. Before they could think of turning to gaze back at the shattered doorway, it too represented void.

The Shadow had taken this timely advantage to be on his way elsewhere!

CHAPTER IV

GETTING in out of the rain seemed to be the chief industry of boardwalk pedestrians on a night like this, and Margo Lane was no exception. At least Margo's mind was not encumbered with notions about Jerry, the Colonel, a pair of unidentified workmen, and somebody named Peter Klurg.

Even Hugo Trenkler was merely a name to Margo Lane and the evening drizzle had washed out practically all Margo's recollections of it, considering how many other names had impressed themselves upon her.

Names on windows under helpful canopies where Margo paused along the boardwalk; names even on the canopies themselves. Other names on the fronts of arcade shops, closed this evening because of the nasty weather.

What Margo wanted was somewhere to dry out, before starting back to her hotel, the Coral House. The only havens seemed to be movie houses but Margo didn't want to take time to see a picture, because she might miss Lamont if he called.

Stopping at a dimly lighted doorway, Margo saw a sign that promised something. Emblazoned in big letters, its gilt announced:

LET THE STARS GUIDE YOU

DOCTOR DEE KNOWS ALL AND

TELLS

FREE LECTURE INSIDE

It was all very well, except that there wasn't any free lecture. The only sign of Doctor Dee was his heavily turbanned and bewhiskered image, plastered above a blackboard alongside the door. All but washed-out, the chalked letters read:

NEXT LECTURE AT NINE

O'CLOCK

It was too long to wait until nine o'clock, so Margo wangled along her way. Several dull blocks of races between canopies brought her to a lighted store front where a wide open door invited all within. Here was another sign that told its own story:

THE HOUSE OF BANKHILL

AUCTIONEERS

IN BUSINESS TWENTY YEARS

Here too was a subsidiary placard that was less necessary than the one at Dee's. It stated:

SALE NOW GOING ON

Since the door was open and several people were seated among rows of chairs within, the fact that a sale was under way was obvious, particularly as Margo saw the auctioneer waving pairs of nylons in front of his disinterested audience. At least his blatant voice was proclaiming the hosiery to be nylons and Margo was ready to believe anything on a night like this.

What was more, a bland-faced man at the door helped Margo make up her mind. His waving hands beckoned her into the commodious auction room and gestured her to a chair. Sitting down, Margo began to appraise the House of Bankhill while the insistent auctioneer kept declaiming on the merits of the nylons.

As purveyors of gee-gaws, the House of Bankhill outdistanced anything that Margo could have possibly imagined. Coming into town on the streamliner, she'd talked with Cranston about the famous curio collection owned by Hugo Trenkler, as though it had been something unique; but the stock carried by Bankhill was a greater, though strictly different assortment of junk de luxe.

Trenkler's curios would have excited the haute monde, whoever they were; similarly, Bankhill's goods were aimed to attract the rabble.

Here was the difference:

The lamented Hugo Trenkler had gone in for oddities, like music boxes, spinning wheels, penny banks, ships' wheels, wampum shells and what-have-you. His collection had consisted of the old and the authentic, though it trended to the curiosa rather than the more recognized branches of collecting.

But Montague Bankhill, whose name appeared as proprietor on a business card that the attendant handed Margo, was a law unto himself. Everything his place displayed was designed to catch the eye, but none of it appealed to taste.

The so-called Oriental rugs that hung about the walls were glossy with a sheen that would wear off once the rugs were used on the floor, and the rugs would probably wear out with it. There were tea sets smeared with a gaudy gold leaf which justified a placard stating "Genuine Twenty-two Karat" as though the chinaware were made of precious metal. A "solid silver" table service lacked the label "Sterling."

Gaudy lamps with ornate shades, fancy vases with pictures termed "hand painted" but which looked like stencils, pieces of crockery and china clocks that seemed the products of a nightmare, all went into the general hodge-podge of the auction gallery.

If Bankhill's could properly be called an auction gallery. Margo was beginning to doubt that point as the

sale proceeded. Certainly it wasn't following the pattern of any regulation auction that Margo had ever before attended.

Having disposed of the nylons, the auctioneer was now holding a square cardboard box, while he demanded: "How many people here would bid on an empty box? Mind you, I say this box is empty, just to learn if you are in a mood to buy. On everything we sell, we give our guarantee and we have never had a dissatisfied customer. Everybody leaves here happy, that is our motto. They go away happy, because they have our confidence. It is to create that confidence that I ask again: Who will bid on the contents of this empty box?"

Looking around, the auctioneer began to check raised hands.

"One over there - another here - the lady near the back? No? Very well, there is a gentleman who makes number three."

The gentleman in question gave a dignified bow that befitted him. He was elderly and looked like more of a period piece than anything in the auction room. Margo noted his face with its high forehead, crisp expression and tight-pursed lips above a wing-tip collar and polka-dot necktie that the gentleman probably termed a cravat.

"Three bidders on an empty box," continued the auctioneer. "But how much will anybody bid? One dollar - two dollars - there you are, Colonel!"

With that, the glib auctioneer passed the box to the dignified gentleman and asked him to open it, while collecting the two dollars. Opened, the box proved empty, much to Margo's surprise, for she had expected this to be a come on.

It was exactly such, but in a different way.

Smiling drily, the auctioneer took back the box and returned the two dollars.

"This was just to prove that every statement is exactly as represented," he declared, "including the fact that we refund all money if the customer is not satisfied. You wouldn't want an empty box, would you, sir?" This to the Colonel, who shook his head. "You'd rather have your two dollars, wouldn't you?" That query brought a nod. "Very well, sir" - the auctioneer had completely dropped the title Colonel - "and here is a souvenir for your trouble."

The auctioneer gave the Colonel a small box that might have contained anything from a pack of cigarettes, to a gold watch, then began to assure the other half-dozen customers that they too could expect gifts.

"This our method of advertising," the glib man stated. "We want you all to remember us, because satisfied customers are our motto. Now, while I am getting the other souvenirs, I shall turn over the sale to Mr. F, my associate."

Mr. F proved to be the man who had beckoned Margo in the door. Stepping up to the auctioneer's stand, he nodded and said "Thank you, Mr. L." As though timed to the occasion, another man came from a doorway at the back of the auction room, bearing a tray of watches.

"Here is our buyer, Mr. S," introduced Mr. F, in a style more convincing than that of his predecessor, Mr. L. "He is bringing some fine watches which he specially recommends, having purchased them personally. Correct me if I am wrong, Mr. S, but I believe these watches came from Chicago, where -"

Two people, a man and a woman, were rising to leave the auction room together. Mr. F interrupted

himself with a quick glance at Mr. L, as though calling upon him to hurry the free souvenirs. Caught flatfooted, Mr. L could only shrug, and by the time the two people had gone out the door, the whole auction was on the point of collapse.

The three letter men went into a huddle, from which Margo saw them sending sharp glances directly her way, which made her feel quite self-conscious. In fact, Margo was almost ready to spring to her feet and dash out of the place when another man saw her plight and eased it.

This man appeared from the same doorway that Mr. S had used. He was an imposing man, much more so than the auctioneers, and he was wiping a pair of pince-nez glasses with a handkerchief, as he looked over the slim batch of customers. His eyes were keen, his face long but square-jawed, and his close-cropped gray hair formed a striking contrast to his tawny complexion.

"Allow me to introduce myself," announced the newcomer, in a terse, authoritative tone. "I am Montague Bankhill, proprietor of this auction gallery. I am pleased that so many clients should have braved this harsh weather to attend our sale.

"Nevertheless, it is useless to continue, considering that we can expect no further bidders. I thank you one and all" - oddly, Bankhill too seemed to be singling out Margo, as the others had - "but may I suggest that it would be advisable for you to return to your hotels before the night becomes worse."

Thus dismissing class, Bankhill passed his handkerchief across his forehead and under his square chin; then, finding it damp as he began to fold it, he simply stuffed the kerchief into his side pocket. Starting for the door, Margo reached it just as the colonel arrived there and the elderly man opened it for her, with a courteous bow. It was nice of a mere customer, thought Margo, to be as polite as though he belonged to the auction house.

The barren reaches of the deserted, drizzle-swept Boardwalk were singularly ominous as Margo hurried the remainder of the way to her hotel, and the clatter of her own heels was more disheartening than helpful. Her sigh of relief at reaching the comfortable lobby of the Coral House became a glad one when she saw Cranston rising from a chair to greet her.

"It's really terrible out, Lamont," Margo began. "I only hope you don't have far to go back to your own hotel -"

"Except that I'm not going back there," interposed Cranston, quietly. "I think I shall try somewhere else tonight. I'm not anxious to be seen where I was before. Listen."

Cranston's keen ears had caught some distant sound that he indicated by an uplift of his hand. Listening, Margo heard it too, the passing siren of a police car, speeding down the Main Boulevard.

Margo's eyes were as startled as her query:

"For you, Lamont?"

"Not exactly," returned Cranston, calmly. "It would be better to say on my account."

Blinking the remnants of the drizzle from her eyes, Margo brushed the dampness from her forehead, then stared as though she didn't understand.

"Read tomorrow's newspaper," suggested Cranston, "and whatever you don't understand, I'll explain. Good-night, Margo, and don't let it worry you."

CHAPTER V

At breakfast, Margo read the Seaview City Morning Sun while enjoying the appropriate sunlight that flooded the Deck Cafe of the pretentious Coral House. The bad weather had passed with the night and here, in a pleasant dining room that overlooked the Boardwalk, Margo found the day delightful.

She was glad too that she hadn't worried, because the news seemed only slightly alarming.

The police call the night before was in answer to a case of suicide, not murder. A man had plunged from the sixth floor of the Hotel Neptune, probably in a fit of despondency. At least so his circumstances indicated, since the dead man was identified as one Peter Klurg, who had recently resigned from the staff of the Long Pier because of ill-health.

Reading further along, Margo discovered that Klurg's position hadn't been a very important one, because he was simply listed as a night attendant, which probably meant watchman. Then, as Margo was laying the newspaper aside, she heard Cranston's voice from near her elbow, suggesting that she might invite him to have a cup of coffee.

"So that was it," said Margo, referring to the Klurg story. "From the way you acted last night, I'd have thought it was murder, not just suicide!"

"And what would you think now. Margo?"

"Why, the newspaper covers it," Margo replied. "Newspapers always prefer a murder story, so they'd have printed one if they had it."

"Not in Seaview City," returned Cranston. "It wouldn't help business for the Hotel Neptune if the truth came out."

"You mean murder?"

Cranston's reply was a nod.

"But the police!" exclaimed Margo. "Surely, they would insist on the facts. What is their position?"

"More delicate than that of the hotel," explained Cranston. "Officially they were after Klurg when he jumped. They would only hurt business worse if they admitted their own inefficiency."

"Why were they after Klurg?"

"Because they had a tip-off that someone had been murdered in room 608 at the Hotel Neptune:"

Very suddenly the number 608 flashed home to Margo, for it had stuck in her mind ever since Cranston showed her the mysterious key that had been mailed to Trenkler.

"You mean the blue Green Cab took you to the Hotel Neptune, Lamont?"

"Precisely," replied Cranston. "Now listen carefully while I go on from that point."

Detail for detail, Cranston outlined what had happened in room 608, while Margo listened breathless. Cranston didn't mention that he had gone there as The Shadow; hence the ruse of planting Klurg's body at the window was all the more graphic to Margo, since Cranston's dilemma sounded highly serious in terms of his own self.

"Then the police mistook Klurg for a murderer instead of a victim," decided Margo. "Now they probably think the tip-off was completely false, all because the balcony rail gave way by accident."

Cranston was nodding up to the last two words. At the term "by accident" he shook his head.

"That rail was fixed," Cranston stated. "It broke because the murderer planned it."

"But the murderer couldn't have known that you would put Klurg's body there."

"Of course not," said Cranston. "He expected that I'd go over the balcony, taking the rail along, when I tried to escape the police."

Horror mingled with Margo's puzzlement.

"Somebody expected Trenkler here," detailed Cranston. "That was, either Trenkler or an authorized substitute. News of Trenkler's death proved that he couldn't have sent anyone in his place. Therefore whoever took the blue cab would be someone who knew too much."

"I see it now," expressed Margo. "So the thing was turned into a trap for you. But where does Klurg fit?"

"He must have been someone who already knew too much," decided Cranston. "The murderer lured him to the room, killed him, and fixed matters to put the blame on me."

"But how could the murderer have been sure that you would go out by the balcony?"

"He wasn't sure," was Cranston's dry reply, "because as a matter of fact, I didn't. But in that case, the killer thought the police would trap me and put the blame of Klurg's murder on me."

Admiration glowed from Margo's dark eyes as she realized how cleverly Cranston had eluded a two-way trap without leaving any evidence that he had even been there. Then the girl asked:

"What about the cab after it flashed the lights?"

"It was gone when I reached the street," explained Cranston. "Probably the murderer was gone too."

"The murderer?"

"Yes. He must have been in the hotel somewhere to see the signal and give the police the quick tip-off. He'd been watching for me to go into room 608 but evidently he didn't see me."

Margo's forehead furrowed, but not because she was puzzling over how Cranston had managed to enter the hotel room unseen. Margo was thinking in other terms.

"If you find the murderer then," said Margo at length, "he will be someone who won't have an alibi covering the time you were in the Hotel Neptune."

"Well put," commended Cranston, "but that proviso might fit a great many people."

"It fits Doctor Dee," recalled Margo. "He wasn't in his place at that time. I happened to stop by there just about then."

"Another good point," agreed Cranston. "I think that Doctor Dee will be due for some questioning by the police, since Klurg had one of Dee's astrological charts. But there are two other persons - in fact four - who may prove excellent leads. For the present I prefer to confine it to two."

Margo was all agog.

"One is a freckled cab driver," specified Cranston, "who answers to the name of Jerry. Another is a quaint old character whose friends call him Colonel."

Now Margo was really enthused.

"A dignified old gentleman?", she queried eagerly. "With a broad forehead and sharp eyes? Does he go in for a polka-dot tie and a wing-tip collar?"

"An excellent description," returned Cranston. "Where did you run into him?"

"At the House of Bankhill," Margo stated. "It's an auction gallery down the Boardwalk, stocked with the most impossible lot of worthless goods you've ever seen. I went in there to get out of the rain."

"Tell me more, Margo."

Margo told more, in fact all she knew. Weighing every detail, Cranston gave a verdict that rather surprised Margo.

"Regarding Montague Bankhill," said Cranston. "He didn't appear until he terminated the auction. Therefore we can class him right with Doctor Dee as someone unaccounted for at the time of that tip-off."

"Why, that's so!" realized Margo. "I hadn't thought of that. But what about the Colonel? He was there all the while."

"His work was done," Cranston analyzed. "Jerry dropped him off first, so he could phone the murderer and tell him the wrong man was coming to the Hotel Neptune. Then the Colonel went to the auction partly to alibi himself."

"Why only partly?"

"Because he had other business there, such as buying empty boxes."

"What had that to do with murder?"

"Nothing at all. It was just another job. One of the auctioneers - Mr. L, didn't you say - made a slip in calling the Colonel by his title, just as one of Jerry's passengers did."

"But what was the Colonel's business?"

"He was what is termed a shill," explained Cranston, "or in more recent parlance, a stick. That is what they call people who make fake bids at jam auctions."

"What do you mean by jam auctions?"

"The kind that aren't even auctions, like the one you attended last night. They're sheer hokum, a build up to swindle individual dupes. After those two customers walked out, you were the only one left."

"But there were half a dozen people -"

"All sticks, like the Colonel. That's why Bankhill called the auction off. His workers were already deciding that it wasn't worth wasting time on a single dupe like you. They always like to have other customers around, just to make everything look fair. Real customers I mean."

Understanding matters better, Margo found herself thinking of Bankhill.

"I'm sure Bankhill had just come in," she decided. "He was wiping off his glasses and his forehead. I had the same trouble with the drizzle when I arrived back here. Remember?"

Cranston remembered and credited Margo with another point. Then came his summing up.

"You've done nicely so far," Cranston commended, "so I'm going to let you continue, Margo. First, I want you to consult Doctor Dee; then attend another of Bankhill's auctions. Learn all you can about Dee and Bankhill without giving yourself away."

Nodding, Margo decided on another task.

"I'll watch for the Colonel -"

"Only you won't see him," interposed Cranston. "He knows by now that I'm still alive. He'll keep away from places like jam auctions. Leave it to me to find him."

"But what if he finds you first?"

"He won't." Cranston gave one of his cryptic smiles. "I happen to be leaving Seaview City."

To anyone unacquainted with Cranston's ways, that wouldn't have made sense, but Margo Lane understood. She had seen evidence of Cranston's versatility at being places where he wasn't.

Not as The Shadow, for the ways of that mysterious being were hidden and untraceable. But Cranston could shed his personality without benefit of black cloak and slouch hat. A past master of disguise, he could adopt other faces than his own, so capably that Margo had long since come to the correct conclusion that this friend of hers was really someone other than Lamont Cranston.

Crime at Seaview City was due for a rude awakening from The Shadow, the master investigator who might turn out to be anybody!

CHAPTER VI

EARLY that afternoon a young man arrived at the office of the Green Cab Company to make an inquiry about a package lost the day before. The man's name was Harry Vincent, he was older than he looked, and he hadn't been in Seaview City yesterday. However he found it unnecessary to establish any of those facts.

Long in The Shadow's service, Harry had come to town along with certain other agents to set up shop for what might prove an extended campaign. In dealing with criminals whose very motives were obscure, who unquestionably had an organization to further those secret purposes, The Shadow had decided to utilize retaliatory tactics.

Harry Vincent was the sort of chap who made complex things easy. He had an honest appearance that made words unnecessary; when he made statements, they were frank and briefly spoken. It was Harry's way to say something that would make the other man do the talking.

Asking for a lost package was a simple matter; it became complicated when such a package didn't exist, as was the present case. That sort of thing was Harry's specialty however.

It was a package, so Harry affirmed, that he couldn't very well identify, since his aunt remembered only that she'd been carrying it with her umbrella. It wouldn't help to describe the contents, because the package was an unopened souvenir that Harry's aunt had been given at an auction. In fact, Harry felt apologetic where his aunt was concerned, because he was sure she must have ridden in some other

company's cab, unless she happened to be color blind and didn't know it. The Green Cab company certainly wouldn't be one to have blue cabs on the street.

Hearing that, the man at the inquiry desk became singularly interested.

"A blue cab, you say?" he demanded. "You're sure that your aunt rode in it yesterday?"

"I'm not sure about anything," admitted Harry, "but I think so."

"What time of day was it?"

"Late in the afternoon, just before the City Market closed."

The man at the desk drew his chin across his hand and then reached for the telephone. Harry checked the number as he dialed it. The number was 2-0386.

"Hello... Mr. Glook?" Pausing a moment, the company man talked louder. "This is the Green Cab Company, Mr. Glook... It's about that repaint job. Didn't you get it yesterday morning? Not until today?... Who brought it in there... Hmm, you don't know... Just left outside, you say... I thought so..."

Slapping down the receiver, the company man turned to Harry.

"That cab was a used car we'd bought," the man explained. "We send all those jobs down to Marvin Glook, who has a paint shop near the old lighthouse. They have to wait their turn so naturally we use them meanwhile. Only that cab should have gone there yesterday."

Harry showed a puzzled expression that verged on the disturbed.

"Some wild-cat driver must have worked a side-rake," explained the company man. "They do it every time. They pick up the odd cars out at our lot and say they were told to drive them. If they're questioned, they've got their hack cards to show."

"Of course then they just say it's a mistake, so they won't get fired. But if they don't get caught, they keep the day's dough. I don't know what your line is, mister, but you ought to be glad you aren't in the cab business. It's full of a lot of hustlers who are always thinking up new angles."

Harry might have pressed the inquiry further, even to claiming that his "aunt" remembered that the cabby's first name was Jerry. But at that moment, a hobbly old gentleman with a cane and a crackly voice pushed into the office and crowded Harry aside.

This was Harry's cue to depart, according to instructions from The Shadow.

"My name is Isaac Twambley," clucked the old man. "I want to hire a car with a chauffeur, while I am here in Seaview City. Not a car that looks like a cab and I must know all about the driver."

"Certainly, Mr. Twambley." The company man opened a wicket to usher the customer into a private office. "We shall be able to accommodate you."

Since Harry was on his way out, the matter of the missing package was dropped. Harry had handled it well, that fake inquiry, using data gained by Cranston and Margo: first, that an umbrella lady had ridden in the blue Green Cab; second that people did pick up free souvenir packages from local auction houses.

But when it came to finishing a flock of things with a single stone flip, The Shadow rated tops. In the guise of old Isaac Twambley, the erstwhile Mr. Cranston was picking right up where Harry had left off. He was not only on hand to learn if Harry's inquiry had created any suspicion in the cab company office; The

Shadow was also learning what other available cars the company had, along with facts concerning the past merits or doubtful qualities of certain drivers.

In any event, a trip to Glook's paint shop near the old lighthouse would soon be in order. It afforded a chance to pick up clues regarding the discarded blue cab.

Other clues were already being followed, with Margo Lane doing the active work. Visiting Doctor Dee's place on the boardwalk, Margo was striking luck of a sort that Dee didn't promise his customers.

Dee's bushy beard came up to expectations and the brush looked genuinely solid as Dee wagged his chin while he boomed a convincing lecture on the zodiac and its signs. But Dee didn't limit himself to astrology among the occult sciences. Palmistry, Numerology, a host of other things were among his specialties.

Like other persons, Margo had given her birthday and received an astrological chart for the current price. But when the crowd thinned, she decided to wait for a palm reading and very politely, Margo let others take their places ahead of her. This gave her a chance to remain longer at Dee's occult parlor and lecture hall.

It was just getting to be Margo's turn when two stocky men entered the place and walked right past her to the little room where Dee did Palm readings. Half hopeful, half fearful, Margo thought for the moment that they might be the two alleged workmen who had taken the cab trip with Cranston, but when they flashed badges on Dee, she knew differently.

These were members of the local detective force and they wanted to hold their own consultation with Doctor Dee. The walls of the private room weren't thick enough to cut off their argumentative voices, so Margo, seated outside, overheard everything as she pretended to read her astrological forecast.

"It's about Klurg," informed one dick. "He had one of your astrological charts up in his hotel room."

"Klurg?" queried Dee. "Who is Klurg?"

"The guy that jumped from the Neptune," put in the other fly-cop. "You ought to know him, being he was one of your customers."

"Names are not necessary in interpreting one's stars," asserted Dee, pompously. "I know my clients only by their birth signs."

"You ought to know Klurg for another reason," argued the first dick. "He used to be a professional shill."

"A shill?" queried Dee. "What is a shill?"

"A stick to you," said the dick. "A booster, who starts the biz moving. You got 'em out front buying those charts of yours so the suckers will start coughing."

There was a brief pause during which Margo could picture Dee drawing himself up to the full dignity of his beard and turban. Then:

"Such practice!" boomed the astrologer. "Far from even considering it, I wouldn't know of its existence."

"You know about it now, Doc," put the detective, curtly, "and you're not making us believe you don't use shills. The gyp joints along the boardwalk couldn't operate without them."

"Gyp joints!" stormed Dee. "You class me in that category! What month were you born in?"

"Why - May."

"And the date?"

"The eighteenth."

"I thought so." Dee's voice came triumphant. "Your sign is Taurus, which proves you are bull-headed. You can never be taught anything, but you can be shown, because you are in the cusp of Gemini, the Twins, which indicates a double nature. Now listen carefully -"

From thereon, Doctor Dee went into his regular spiel but he was concentrating upon an audience of one, instead of a group. He hadn't forgotten the other detective, though, because soon he was inquiring that man's birthday and from then on Dee was discussing the sign of Pisces, the Fishes.

Dee was right; he didn't need skills.

When the two dicks walked out, each was carrying an astrological chart, while the bowing Doctor Dee was smiling through his beard as he folded a pair of dollar bills.

Having sold such difficult customers, Dee apparently felt he'd done enough work for the time. Seeing Margo, the bearded Doctor spread his hands apologetically.

"Sorry, young lady," said Dee, "but I have another appointment. If you could come back this evening, or tomorrow, I shall give you a much better palm reading than I could now."

Leaving Dee's, Margo started up the Boardwalk toward Bankhill's, only to change her mind and decide to go bathing instead. Bankhill's would be too tame, Margo decided, after the way Dee had high-pressured the detectives into buying horoscopes. Maybe later Margo wouldn't mind sitting through another auction, just to turn in a routine report.

Postponement was an inspiration in this instance. That later auction was to produce results for which even The Shadow hadn't bargained!

CHAPTER VII

OLD Isaac Twambley liked the view from the end of the Long Pier. A long hobble out here, but it was worth it, for it seemed like going to sea. It was a popular place, the outer end of the Long Pier.

The main attraction was the miniature submarine that was hooked to two short extensions of the pier. The sub was more than a model; it was big enough to accommodate a dozen passengers a trip.

For twenty-five cents people went down steps and entered the moored boat. Then the hatch was clamped, the ship submerged and for ten minutes the inmates had a lot of fun looking at fishes through the water-tight port holes that lined the sides of the sub.

Old Twambley didn't take one of those trips; he just sat on a bench and mulled over matters. He didn't look like a man who was trying to solve a murder, but he was. Finally, he remembered that he had an appointment ashore, so after a glance at his watch, Twambley got up from the bench and started back along the pier.

Being an old man, Twambley stopped at intervals to rest. It was a long trek past the pavilions and other structures that dominated the Long Pier. At the half way mark, Twambley paused to study a cut-out section in the center of the pier where wooden steps led down into the water.

This was where the wave motors were once located. A wonderful invention, the wave motor, but it hadn't paid. It took a whole day's waves to make the blades produce enough electricity to light a single

room, so the wave motors had been junked as impractical.

Disappearing into the water where the wave motors had been, the old steps received the swash and pound of the surf, but the noise of the ocean was drowned by a closer roar that attracted Twambley's attention.

The caged lions of the Pier Menagerie were acting up because they were annoyed with their cramped quarters. Walking shoreward, Twambley passed the line of cages and felt rather sorry for the lions. Sea lions would have been more appropriate exhibits on an ocean pier.

Maybe it was that thought that caused Twambley to look toward the water. Roving the beach, his eyes became keen as they surveyed the day's crop of disporting beauties. Old Twambley provided a chuckle as he singled out a brunette who was putting on a red bathing cap to match the rest of her rather trivial swimming costume.

Rather humorous, catching Margo Lane playing hooky from an auction sale. Twambley would have to put a black mark on her report for that. Right now, though, his rolling chair was waiting on the Boardwalk and it was time to be getting back to the Hotel Neptune where Twambley was expecting a hired car with a reliable chauffeur named Jerry Lanthrop who worked for the Green Cab Company.

It happened that Jerry Lanthrop too was playing hooky in his own style. Down at the depot a commodious but old-fashioned car was nosing in among the taxicabs that were waiting for the Shore Express to arrive. A couple of cabbies came over to view the reconditioned relic.

"How come, Jerry?" queried one. "What did the boss do, put you on probation?"

"I've been promoted," retorted Jerry. "A private chauffeur is what am now."

"Yeah? Then why are you hacking here?"

"Orders," announced Jerry bluntly. "I was sent to meet a gentleman who's coming in on the streamliner. A friend of Mr. Twambley."

Cab drivers weren't the only persons who heard that statement. Lounging nearby was a shambly, stoop-shouldered man who looked like something washed from the ocean, except that his ill-fitting clothes and frayed cap were dry. This derelict happened to know that Jerry's statement was a fabrication.

The shambly man was named Hawkeye and like Harry Vincent, he was one of The Shadow's agents. Hawkeye had been deputed to watch the depot just for something like this. Already Hawkeye was informed that Jerry had been immobilized, but this didn't look like it. By now, Jerry should be at the Hotel Neptune, reporting to Mr. Twambley. Apparently he was going to attend to something else before taking up that job.

Now the Shore Express was arriving and soon its flood of passengers was overwhelming the line of cabs. Nobody invaded Jerry's car, because it wasn't for hire, but Jerry himself was on the anxious lookout for a passenger who wasn't coming to see Twambley. At last a tall, stoop-shouldered man detached himself from the throng and darted looks along the line while balancing himself between two oversized suit cases.

Jerry happened to be handling this situation very neatly. He was parked where a private car had no right to be, but he was using his prerogative as a cab driver to stay there. A clever device this, even though the order had come from someone higher up than Jerry. It fitted too with a message that had gone out to

someone, specifically the stoop-shouldered stranger with the suit cases.

That man, whoever he was, had been instructed to look for a car parked among the cabs. This car hadn't been particularly selected; Jerry had just been told to bring any car that he could borrow, provided that it didn't bear the trade mark of a cab company. So Jerry had sped matters by bringing the car which had been assigned to Twambley.

Likewise, Jerry was on the watch for a man with two suit cases who would be looking for just such a car. Mutual recognition was rapid and the intended passenger climbed into the old-fashioned hulk, ready for a ride.

Hawkeye too was ready.

In that brief interval, the hunchy little man had summed the stranger's face, noting it to be pasty and droopy, the way hard faces usually got when the years caught up with them. The face looked somewhat familiar to Hawkeye, but he didn't bother about that.

The car being commodious, Jerry had put the suit cases right in with the passenger, which left plenty of room in the trunk for Hawkeye. With a quick dart from the curb, The Shadow's little man reached the rear of the car, tried the trunk handle, found it unlocked, and deftly whipped himself inside, just as the car was about to pull away.

This trip was bumpy but brief. When the big car came to what seemed a final stop, Hawkeye peered out from the trunk rack and saw a door man lifting the bags to lug them into a very fancy hotel which Hawkeye recognized as the Waterloo.

Rolling out, Hawkeye made a quick shamble to some shrubbery that flanked the pretentious hotel entrance. So far inconspicuous, Hawkeye knew he'd become otherwise if he forayed into the glittering lobby, so he decided to find another way of entry. He lingered though, long enough to learn something.

Hawkeye heard the stoop-shouldered man speak to the attendant.

"Hold my bags here," said he of the droopy face. "I want to check my reservation. The cab can go though. I'll call another if I need one."

Next Hawkeye saw something that the door man didn't. In entering the hotel, Mr. Droop Face pulled a key from his pocket. Apparently, this stranger already had a room at the Hotel Waterloo.

The number of the key was 512 and the stranger used it as soon as he reached the room that bore that number. The room was quite empty and the newcomer paced it impatiently for a few minutes, then paused at the window to look out toward the ocean.

Next, the stranger reached into his pocket, produced a wallet, and counted out a large bundle of money. That bundle was large in two respects, there were forty-nine bills in it and each bore the denomination of one thousand dollars.

As the droopy man pocketed the cash, the telephone jangled and he pounced for it, pronto. Recognizing the voice that spoke, the stranger gave a harsh chuckle.

"Yes, this is Seth Gaudry," he announced. "I thought I'd be hearing from you... The money? Certainly I brought it... Yes, the extra thousand in smaller bills, too."

Gaudry paused at that moment to plant his hand against his trouser's pocket where another wad of bills buffered his thwack. Then:

"At the next auction," repeated Gaudry in response to words across the phone. "The third statuette... I'm to buy it... Electra, yes I can remember the name... Certainly. I'll have the extra cash ready..."

Another pause, then Gaudry gave one of his short harsh laughs.

"Naturally, not at your place... You're right, it would be bad to pay over the big dough there... Maybe I ought to know what I'm buying too... You'll convince me? Good... Back here then, right after the auction... Yes, I'll have my bags brought up. You'll find them waiting here..."

The speaker on the wire must have mentioned something about the time, because Gaudry didn't waste any. Fishing for the room key, he brought it from his pocket and tossed it on the writing desk, knowing he wouldn't need it because his visitor would be here first.

Two minutes after the elevator went down with Gaudry, Hawkeye poked into sight from a fire tower and scanned the fifth floor corridor. Seeing no one, Hawkeye was about to be on his way when another elevator door flung open. Out stepped a bell-boy carrying two suitcases that Hawkeye recognized.

The bell-boy used a pass key to open the door of 512 which was enough to tell Hawkeye that the man he was tagging had left the hotel. Dodging out by the fire tower, Hawkeye was on his way again.

Scanty though the facts were that Hawkeye had acquired, they were the sort that must reach The Shadow as fast as they could be gotten there!

CHAPTER VIII

MARGO LANE was in a hurry too.

If she missed this next auction, Lamont would never forgive her.

Back in her hotel room, Margo had maneuvered a quick change from bathing garb to Boardwalk attire and now she was practically racing along the Boardwalk itself. In fact, Margo was traveling so fast that she almost missed the House of Bankhill.

Beckoning hands were what halted Margo. They were pulling them in as usual at Bankhill's and again it was Mr. F who was on the door. He smiled when he saw Margo, Mr. F did, because he recognized her from the evening before. Then, his bland face becoming very serious, the front man produced a card.

"You'll like this sale, miss," he said in a confidential tone. "If there's any special questions, just ask me. Personalized service, that's our motto."

The card said "Elwood Ferth" and Margo was rather surprised to find that "F" was the man's actual initial, since she thought that the courtesies between the auctioneers was just a matter of bluff. So Margo gave Ferth a smile that he returned as he ushered her to a chair, well front.

This afternoon's auction was fairly well attended and Montague Bankhill himself was surveying the situation from the door of the back room. The business was being handled by the convincing Mr. L, with Mr. S standing by to display the goods, while Mr. F, now known as Ferth, kept watch from the outer door.

Somehow these people didn't seem as sinister to Margo as they had previously. If the term applied to anybody, the customers deserved it. There were some queer looking ducks, both male and female, and the dignified Colonel wasn't gracing the scene today.

But try as hard as she could, Margo couldn't decide which were the shills or sticks, as the local

detectives termed the business boosters. Margo's choice as a sure-shot was a droop-faced man who sat by himself saying nothing, but her one bet was wrong.

That man happened to be Seth Gaudry, one person who was here definitely as a buyer.

Today's preliminary offering consisted of a series of framed landscape paintings which the auctioneer extolled as high as the clouded skies depicted on the canvases. They were the works of famous but obscure artists, Mr. L insisted, that had been acquired in very unexpected places.

Margo had her own opinion of those places.

Often in chain stores, Margo had seen rapid fire painters doing such jobs in ten minutes and selling them for a dollar or two apiece. If these marvelous offerings hadn't come from such sources, Margo would never make another guess at anything.

A good enough bet, since this time Margo was guessing right.

Convincingly, Mr. L disposed of the streamlined chromos at prices ranging from twenty-five to fifty dollars each, all the while bemoaning that he was giving them away. Judging from the people who bought them, Margo decided that about half were sticks and the other half suckers, which she took it was the proper name for customers in these environs.

So far, Margo hadn't said a word, even when the auctioneer pressed her. In that pinch, she looked toward the door and caught a headshake from Ferth. Maybe Ferth was really a friend, perhaps he was just priming Margo for a coming trim. Wondering what Mr. Bankhill would think about it, Margo looked for him, but found that he'd left.

That didn't surprise Margo. If any customer recognized the type of paintings that were being peddled and gave out the word, Bankhill wouldn't want to be around. It would be better for him to show up later and blame the whole swindle on his initialed auctioneers.

Just as the last chromo was going on the block, a portly dowager came bulking through the doorway to pause and give a rebuking stare at Ferth.

"You should have told me!" The lady was really angry. "Those marvelous paintings, sold for a song in all probability. If I had only been here!"

"Sorry, Mrs. Tarleton," apologized Ferth. "I phoned your hotel and they said that you had gone."

"The fools!" snorted Mrs. Tarleton. "It was my sister-in-law who left, the very person who has objected to my spending money at auctions! They would tell you about the wrong Mrs. Tarleton!"

Ferth was planting Mrs. Tarleton in a chair beside Margo, who was almost dazzled by the flock of jewelry that graced the dowager's arms. At first glance, all those diamonds looked like the very sort of junk the House of Bankhill peddled and at closer study, even more so.

Mrs. Tarleton's rings were of the same category, as were the over-sized earrings that she sported. Now Ferth was giving her a persuasive purr, which Margo was close enough to hear, as was probably intended.

"You wouldn't have wanted those paintings," insisted Ferth, gesturing toward the brilliant monstrosities that were being tagged for their buyers. "They aren't colorful enough. We have others coming in shortly that are truly vivid. You're staying in Seaview City a while longer?"

"Another week," replied Mrs. Tarleton. Then, eagerly: "They'll be in by then?"

"We'll see to it that they are," answered Ferth. Then, turning so that Margo would also hear officially what he had to say: "Don't pass up the statuettes that are being offered now. They are really unique items."

There were seven of the statuettes, each about twelve inches high. They were made of china, gaudily painted, and they were standing on a shelf that stood out like a tray. Bringing the statuettes was a job for Mr. S, but instead of drawing out the shelf, he decided to take down the statuettes singly, since they were breakable.

Deserting Margo and the Tarleton lady, Ferth hurried over to help with the handling of the statues. He preferred to handle the whole shelf as a tray, stating that the statuettes should be kept in their proper order. Winning his point, Ferth helped bring the trayload to the auction table.

The auctioneer took over.

"Seven magnificent statuettes," he reeled off. "They represent the famous sisters, the Pleiades. Mind you, these statuettes were known in the days of ancient Rome. They graced the homes of the patricians and were valued at their weight in gold.

"Why, a single statuette of Roman antiquity would bring a price as high as a king's ransom! Here you see the genuine replicas of the famous household gods of the ancients. In the ruins of Pompeii, not a single statue of this sort was found intact. Think of what you are buying when you acquire one of these rare and perfect specimens!"

Margo could think all right. Somebody would be acquiring a piece of first-class junk. Not a single statement that the auctioneer had made could prove that any of these statuettes were worth more than an ordinary china ornament.

"We shall auction them in order," the speaker continued. "Alcyone, Celaeno, Electra, Maia, Merope, Asterope, and Taygeta, the Seven Pleiades worth their weight in gold!"

"Maybe," humphed Mrs. Tarleton to Margo, "if they were made of gold. I prefer paintings. They endure and the fame of their creators increases."

Apparently Mrs. Tarleton wasn't being sold the proper bill of goods, but by now the bids were starting. Ten dollars, twenty, then twenty-five. It paused there until Margo heard Ferth's whisper close beside her:

"Say thirty."

Margo said "Thirty," though she didn't quite know why. Somebody jumped the bid to forty and Ferth gave another whisper:

"Make it fifty."

Just on the chance that Ferth was right, Margo called "Fifty." With it, the bidding stopped, leaving Margo wondering how she was going to buy the statuette of Alcyone, considering that she had a mere ten dollars with her. Indeed, Margo felt very much abashed, as though guilty of some more than minor crime. She looked toward Ferth, saw him smile and gesture to mean that everything was all right. Somehow his suave way reassured her.

The auctioneer put Celaeno on the block.

At least Margo's spontaneity had helped matters for the bidding became quite spirited, getting away from the shills that boosted it. Even Mrs. Tarleton was drawn into the thing, and suddenly jumped the offer up to a hundred dollars, which brought a prompt "Sold" from the auctioneer.

Electra came next.

While Mr. L was starting his spiel, Mr. S picked up the first two statuettes and told Margo and Mrs. Tarleton that they could pay for them in the back room, Ferth raised an objecting hand and undertoned:

"Wait.

"Two of these rare prizes gone," the auctioneer was saying. "Don't you realize, ladies and gentlemen, that with each sale there are less left and therefore they are worth more? And now Electra, most famous of these sisters who adorn the heavens as the stars called the Pleiades.

"You can see them on every wintry night, just as over your mantel you can look at one of the famous sisters if you do not allow this opportunity to escape you. Electra, the third of the Pleiades. What's that? Fifty dollars bid?

"Now a hundred - who will say a hundred and fifty? A hundred and a quarter - now one and a half - one fifty - five? I shouldn't take such a bid, but I must. Two hundred - two fifty -"

The sticks were really working now, like the pistons of a well-regulated machine. For the first time, Gaudry was in the bidding, helping push it too. To Margo's sheer amazement, a mood which Mrs. Tarleton shared, the statuette of Electra went for a full five hundred dollars.

A whisper from Ferth:

"Now."

They went to the back room, where Mr. S was carrying the first two statuettes, while Ferth picked up the one of Electra and brought it along personally. Gaudry followed and Margo was rather astonished at the look of smug satisfaction that firmed his face.

While Mr. S was wrapping the first two packages and saying that they'd be delivered, Ferth bundled the third and leaned over to whisper to Margo:

"Never mind the fifty. It's on the house."

Though she still couldn't understand. Margo realized this was no time to put questions, so she just stood by. A delivery boy was standing by too, and Ferth, finishing the wrapping of his single package first, placed it in the boy's hands and turned to Gaudry with the question:

"Your hotel, sir, and the room number?"

Only briefly did Gaudry hesitate. Then:

"The Coral House," he said. "Room 920. Send it over there right away. I'll be going there as soon as the remaining statuettes are sold."

Ferth dispatched the delivery boy before Margo could think to tell him that she too was staying at the Coral House. She mentioned that later, while she watched the other buyers pay for their statuettes. Ferth simply nodded and said that the messenger would make another trip.

Bankhill was definitely absent from the back room. Margo took note of that as she walked to the auction

gallery, trying to look like somebody who had just paid out fifty dollars for a wonderful bargain.

Maia and Merope had been peddled at five hundred dollars each, but Margo was sure from the auctioneer's expression that Shills had bought them and that he was stalling in hope that the former buyers, particularly Mrs. Tarleton and the droopy Mr. Gaudry would go heavy for the last remaining pair of Pleiades. But they didn't, so the auctioneer let the regular boosters take them at six and seven hundred respectively.

Mrs. Tarleton seemed quite satisfied, so Margo looked around to see how Gaudry felt, only to discover that he had left. Not knowing his name, Margo wondered who the man might be and what his business was, only to decide that she could find out when she reached the hotel, since he was stopping there too.

So Margo Lane left the auction house, little realizing how much she would hear about Seth Gaudry and how soon!

CHAPTER IX

DUSK was settling over Seaview City as Margo Lane left the House of Bankhill. Glancing down the Boardwalk, Margo failed to see any light in Dee's place and decided that the Doctor of Astrology must have gone out to dinner.

Included in the dusk was the Hotel Waterloo and room 512 held its share of gloom as a shadowy hand opened the door with a special skeleton key to admit a cloaked figure.

Here on Hawkeye's tip-off, The Shadow wasn't surprised to find that Gaudry was absent, since he knew that the man had gone out. What did intrigue The Shadow was the fact that Gaudry had left his own key lying on the writing desk. Stepping over there, The Shadow picked up the key, carried it to the window, and examined it in what remained of daylight.

Letting the key rest in his gloved palm, The Shadow weighed it as if it were some priceless object. Then, singularly, a low-toned, comprehending laugh quivered from his hidden lips. In that sudden but smooth style that characterized him, The Shadow planted the key on the desk where he had found it and moved swiftly from the room, closing the door behind him.

Not for a moment had The Shadow concerned himself with Gaudry's suit cases. Maybe the reason why he didn't was because Gaudry himself wasn't bothered about them, nor for that matter did Gaudry particularly care about the room in the Hotel Neptune.

Right now, Gaudry was entering another room in a different hotel. He didn't have to unlock it, for while he was inserting his key, the door opened. For a moment, Gaudry hesitated on the threshold, disturbed by seeing a lighted desk lamp within. Then, a brisk bell-hop turned to meet him. The boy asked:

"This is your room, sir?"

Gaudry nodded.

"And the name is Mr. Kramer?"

"That's right," responded Gaudry. "Worthington Kramer. I reserved this room."

"There was a package just arrived, sir -"

"From the House of Bankhill. It's something I just purchased there." Stepping deeper into the room, Gaudry saw the package on a table. "That's it," he added. "Here, this is for your trouble."

From a sizeable roll of bills in his trousers pocket, Gaudry peeled off a five, the smallest that he had. The bell-boy received it with much thanks, but his face changed as he was leaving the room.

"It was too bad about the messenger," he said. "I suppose they were too late to inform him at the auction house."

"Inform him of what?" demanded Gaudry.

"About the accident to his family," said the bell-boy. "Their car was in a bad smash. They are all at the Municipal Hospital."

Quickly Gaudry relaxed his facial muscles to wipe off the suspicion that grew upon his features. Then, a bit gruffly, he said:

"Too bad. I'll have to do something to help the boy. Very sorry, very sorry."

The bell-hop left with the impression that Gaudry, otherwise Kramer, was visibly shaken, which he was.

The moment that the door closed, Gaudry pounced for the package and ripped its wrapping open. He found the statuette of Electra inside, gave it a frantic examination, testing its weight as well as measuring its size, as he carried it close to the light, so as to make sure it was the proper goddess.

Much though he seemed to prize this purchase, Gaudry thumped it rather heavily on the table as he turned his attention to the telephone. Hands trembling, he went through the pages of the phone book, found the listing for the House of Bankhill and made a call there.

It was Ferth's voice that answered promptly.

"Hello," began Gaudry. "This is -"

Breaking off before giving his right name or his wrong one, Gaudry steadied.

"This is the man that bought the statuette of Electra," he said. "It's here at the hotel all right, but I understand that the delivery boy had trouble -"

"Trouble in delivery?" interrupted Ferth. "But if it's there -"

"No, no," broke in Gaudry. "It's about the accident."

"Something happened to the statuette?"

"No, to the boy's family. An automobile crash. Weren't you the people who sent word to the hotel?"

"Why, no!" exclaimed Ferth. "I've been wondering why the boy didn't come back. There are other orders to deliver, you know."

"I know."

Planting the receiver on the hook. Gaudry drew a deep, worried breath. Turning to the window, he stared out at the ocean and gradually became relieved. After all, the scene was placid. Looking at the ocean made people feel better, otherwise they wouldn't come to Seaview City.

There was a land breeze blowing and as a result the waves were small, the surf close to the beach. The sunset still shone upon the scintillating sand and a few remaining bathers seemed reluctant to call it a day.

More than a hundred yards above the beach fronting the Coral House, the long bulk of the Long Pier carved its way to sea. It wasn't quite time for lights to appear along the pier, but when they did, it would have the appearance of a huge ocean liner about to sail.

It was the beach though, that really lulled Gaudry. The sunlight seemed to be plucking at the deep green waves, drawing the small white-caps from them. White too were the boats that life-guards were hauling from the surf, one a short way toward the Long Pier, the other further down the beach.

Three girls were tossing a big rubber ball among them and their figures were gaining the effect of lithe silhouettes against the background of the ocean. In their snug bathing costumes, they reminded Gaudry of the unadorned statuette of Electra that stood so prettily upon his table. His thoughts thus diverted, Gaudry turned to reach for the slender image of decorated china.

A knock at the door halted him.

Tightening, Gaudry called hoarsely:

"Who's there?"

"Evening paper, sir," came a voice from outside. "Delivered to all guests when they arrive."

Gaudry went to the door and opened it to pick up the newspaper that the boy had left. He was unfolding it as he stepped back into the room, but he turned again, more startled than before, as he heard a creak of the door hinge.

It wasn't the door of the room. This was the door of a clothes closet. As a figure moved forward, Gaudry heard a cold voice speak and he froze with it.

Gaudry knew that tone, forced though it was. Its words were a calculated accusation.

"We have met at the time we planned," the voice said, crisply, "but not at the place where we planned."

No answer came from Gaudry. He couldn't have spoken if he'd tried.

"Perhaps our plans differed." The speaker was moving forward as Gaudry retreated. "If so, one of us should have told the other."

Now words came from Gaudry's lips.

"I - I wasn't trying to double-cross you," he stammered. "Nothing - absolutely nothing - could have been further from my mind. I only wanted to be sure -"

"To be sure." There was a sneer to the crisp tone that interrupted. "To be sure; you wanted to be sure."

"That's it." Gaudry was over beside the table. "I wanted to be sure about the statuette."

"Then why did you come here?" The challenger had become vicious as Gaudry could tell by the face that he now saw and recognized. "You had everything ready at the right hotel. We were to meet at the Waterloo, Gaudry, not at the Coral House. Do you remember?"

"I thought we could go there later," argued Gaudry, his own manner becoming glib, though with a slight touch of the frantic. "I wasn't just sure that everything would be safe. I was afraid that somebody -"

"Somebody like myself?"

"Like anybody. Like whoever was responsible for last night's murder, might be after me."

That brought a chuckle from the man who confronted Gaudry. His figure was plain now, stoop-shouldered, as though ready to lunge, a robed form, clad in something of gray.

"You know," gulped Gaudry. "Like Klurg was murdered."

"I know why Klurg died," spoke the man in gray. "He was a double-crosser. You were safe enough, Gaudry, until you became the same. Only Klurg's death was not termed murder. Read your newspaper, Gaudry, if you don't believe me."

Numbly, Gaudry's fingers plucked the newspaper from the table. The room was now too dusky for Gaudry to hope to read anything; he was simply trying to play along with this man who accused him of the double-cross. As he unfolded the newspaper, Gaudry felt something slip from it, but such a minor matter did not bother him. He'd started to talk fast, Gaudry had, now he was thinking fast, too. Pretending to read the newspaper, Gaudry spoke.

"I'll go through with the deal," Gaudry promised. "After all, it's cheap enough. Why should I argue?"

Gaudry's hands were alive now and they were working the newspaper toward the statuette that stood on the table. All he wanted were a few moments more, but they were to be denied him.

"You shouldn't argue, Gaudry," declared the man in gray. "It wouldn't matter. Whatever you do now is too late."

Up came Gaudry's face, startled to the point where its droop was ghastly. His features were frozen like a death mask, his eyes as glassy as ice. Cold too was the sight that chilled him, colder than the gray man who was the cause.

Gaudry could have cried out the name of that man who confronted him, but it was useless. The gun was all that mattered; it was the chilling sight. Trained straight upon Gaudry, a revolver muzzle was ready to speak the final word in this discussion of death!

CHAPTER X

TIME is life's greatest factor.

From years to hours; from hours to seconds, with all the intermediate divisions, time rules life and with it holds sway over death.

Yet time itself is indeterminable. Shaded to the finest degree, it becomes split-seconds, and such fractions are impossible to tally.

The things that suddenly began to happen in this room at the Coral House came in a series of flashes that were so closely knit that they seemed instantaneous. Yet they were in a certain order, otherwise they wouldn't have occurred precisely as they did.

Gaudry's hand grabbed the statuette of Electra. The door from the hallway flung wide. The gray man pulled the trigger of his steel-gray gun. A flash of flame darted from the revolver muzzle.

Blackness, in cloaked form, flung itself upon a figure robed in gray. A newspaper fluttered to the floor, sparks coming from the hole that the heat of a punching bullet had set aflame. A flying arm, Gaudry's arm, sent the china statuette scaling through the air.

Those things happened all as one.

Another series of packed events took over. The gray robe dodged. The flying statuette reached the figure in black and a cloaked arm came up toward it. A fierce cry spat from Gaudry's lips. Its echo was the crash of crockery as the deflected statuette struck the wall.

Wheeling, The Shadow flung himself upon the dodging man in gray, despite the revolver shots that the would-be murderer jabbed at this black-clad foe. The Shadow escaped those shots, not miraculously though it seemed so, but because he lunged with a swirl that carried him around his antagonist's aim.

Here again, fate played a tricky hand.

If the first shot had been a trifle more accurate, it would have staggered Gaudry sufficiently to put him out of action. The gray-robed man had expected it to do just that; so had the black-cloaked Shadow. Instead, Gaudry wasn't slackened by the bullet; if anything, it increased his speed. With all the fervor of a wounded beast, Gaudry came hurtling forward.

In reward, Gaudry received the shots meant for The Shadow, by coming right into a path of fire that he would have escaped, had he stayed where he was.

Jolted by the impact of the bullets, Gaudry veered and blindly clutched The Shadow. Victim and rescuer reeled across the room in a clinch that The Shadow recognized as a prelude to a death clutch. No mere nerve, but only sheer abandon, could have given Gaudry the power that he now displayed.

It couldn't last long, this blind fight that Gaudry displayed, but even half a dozen seconds could be too many. That was why The Shadow did not try to fight off his attacker; instead, The Shadow turned the grapple into a long, hard plunge.

That dive was straight in the direction of the robed man who had fired the fatal shots. If he could be brought into this tussle, his part would be finished. Either Gaudry's death grip would be transferred to the man who deserved it or The Shadow would provide the clincher. But the man with the revolver didn't stay to meet the twisting figures that came towering at him.

Scooping something from the floor, the man in the gray robe huddled it along with his gun and loped out through the doorway to the hall. There was a double thud as The Shadow and Gaudry hit the floor together and the jar broke them apart. One figure alone arose; the cloaked form of The Shadow.

Gaudry's struggle was over; he lay motionless in death. The Shadow was after a murderer, a real one, not the intended variety.

The chase halted suddenly.

Out here in the corridor there wasn't a trace of the fugitive that The Shadow sought. He couldn't have taken an elevator; they were so close that The Shadow would have heard the door clang. The stairway was at the other end of the corridor; too far away for the murderer to have gained it in such short time.

The Shadow was really balked.

Then, in this dilemma where moments were so vital, luck came The Shadow's way, abetted by Margo Lane. It was double luck that Margo should also have a room on this floor and that she had arrived there just before the shooting started. The rest was quick thinking on Margo's part.

From her door, which she had opened in a panic, Margo saw The Shadow halted in the corridor. She guessed that he was after someone and in one glance, Margo sized the situation. Remembering

something, the girl shrieked it:

"The bather's elevators! Down the corridor and to the left!"

Taking the cue, The Shadow took to the trail. Margo's hooky party of the afternoon was bringing dividends, otherwise she wouldn't have known that this hotel had special elevators that bathers used to go directly to the basement. At that, The Shadow was still too many paces behind, because when he reached the elevators in question, the door of one was clanging shut.

Gaudry's murderer had reached the route that he was sure meant safety. He had parked the elevator here for use in a hasty getaway.

Clever business, but the murderer hadn't allowed for all contingencies. There were two of these elevators and he had simply taken the one that wasn't being operated at this hour. The other elevator was still in use and almost as if The Shadow had ordered it, the car arrived at this floor.

As it opened, the elevator disgorged three girls in bathing suits. They screeched as a cloaked figure whirled between them into the elevator where an astonished operator tried to grab the strange intruder. Then the operator came flying after the girls as they dived in all directions, letting their beach ball bound across the floor.

From the corridor, Margo saw the sequel. Astonished mermaids were draped here and there, staring wide-mouthed at a clanging door, while a half-dazed elevator boy was picking himself up, wondering what it was all about. Knowing that The Shadow had resumed the pursuit, Margo rushed back to her own room to look for what happened next.

The murderer had gained considerable distance, but down in the basement, The Shadow spotted him going out through a door that led beneath the Boardwalk and directly to the beach. For some reason, the gray-robed fugitive had let himself lose ground, but he had accomplished something in the process.

The way to the outer door was blocked by all sorts of debris such as beach chairs and umbrella stands that the fugitive had flung behind him. The last obstacle that The Shadow encountered was a large cylindrical tank that the gray man had overturned in flight. Half-tripping over the tank, The Shadow regained his footing and reached the door, only to find it clamped from the outside. Hard heaves from The Shadow's shoulder broke the barrier, but by then he had lost more precious time.

It was Margo Lane who had the best vantage point from which to view the mystery that followed, something that approached the truly incredible.

From her high room, Margo saw a gray-clad figure spurt across the beach from beneath the Boardwalk. The hue and cry of murder must have been sent below, because persons were already rushing from the hotel. They were pointing after the obscure gray figure and shouting to the life guards to stop him.

All Margo could tell was that the fugitive was wearing a gray bathrobe and that his form was a stooped one. His posture however could be attributed to the fact that he was in a hurry and that he seemed to be carrying something huddled close to his breast. Details were quite vague from this distance, but despite the deepening dusk, Margo could view the general result.

A score of witnesses saw the same and The Shadow was one of them. Halting beneath the Boardwalk, he saw the life guards starting after the murderer and left the capture to them.

Only there wasn't to be any capture.

With the speed of a frightened crab, the man in the gray robe dashed out into the surf and through the

short line of breakers. His robe left his shoulders as he went beyond his depth and only his bobbing head was seen, out beyond the white-topped sector of the surf.

By then the life guards were changing tactics. Only one or two were racing after the hunted man; the rest were getting to their boats and putting out through the surf. Coming in from two sides, they were sure to box their quarry. The breakers were so mild that launching the boats and putting out in them was a matter of mere routine.

Apparently the killer knew that he was trapped. A few hundred feet out from the shore he stopped his swim and began treading water. Swimming life guards were about to reach him, the boats were converging upon the bobbing head when it suddenly disappeared beneath the water.

The murderer might quite as well have played ostrich and buried his head in the sand along the beach. Two minutes at most were all that he could hope to stay under the heaving swell. Swimming life guards had reached the spot where the man had disappeared, while the boats were halted a dozen yards on either side, marking about the average distance of an under water swim, if the hunted man expected to bob up somewhere else.

It took five minutes to prove that the incredible could occur. At the end of that time, the man hadn't reappeared. The life guards were completely baffled as they scanned the darkening water at close range. As for Margo, she was ready to believe that she couldn't have seen the man dash out there and vanish, except that a gray bathing robe was floating in among the breakers.

Five minutes grew to ten. Twilight settled, blackening all the water, except for the white plumes of the breakers. Darkness was absolute beneath the Boardwalk, the spot from which The Shadow gazed.

A low, strange laugh whispered from that spot and drifted weirdly toward the foam into which the murderer had vanished. The grim tone of that mirth signified The Shadow's knowledge that a criminal had somehow maneuvered an impossible escape.

When and how this trail might be regained had become a singular problem, even for The Shadow!

CHAPTER XI

OLD ISAAC TWAMBLEY gave a withering glance at his new chauffeur and delivered one querulous word:

"Well?"

"Sorry. Mr. Twambley." In the light from the hotel portico, the freckled face of Jerry Lanthrop looked quite sincere. "I've been parked here outside the hotel for the last couple of hours or more. Ask the door man - ask anybody -"

Old Twambley gave a peculiar wince that might have been meant for a sneer. He didn't have to ask anybody, though he didn't say so. He'd already heard from Hawkeye, about the last person in Seaview City that anyone would ever connect with an old blatherskite like Twambley.

What really mattered was Jerry's alibi.

The chap had fixed himself a good one. The Shadow knew that Jerry had brought Seth Gaudry to the Hotel Waterloo. After leaving Gaudry, Jerry had gone directly to the Hotel Neptune where Isaac Twambley was a guest. By that time, Twambley wasn't around the Neptune. As The Shadow, he had set out on Gaudry's trail. Unfortunately for Gaudry, he'd finished his quick buy at the House of Bankhill and

had gone on to the Coral House to keep a rendezvous with death, before The Shadow was able to overtake him.

Meanwhile, Jerry's alibi had built itself solidly, simply because Twambley's new chauffeur had stayed put, outside the Hotel Neptune.

Getting into the car, Twambley spoke an order in a dryish crackle:

"Take me down to the old lighthouse."

If that demand puzzled Jerry, he didn't show it. The chauffeur simply took the wheel and drove toward the destination given. If anything, he showed concern for his new employer, for Jerry spoke back from the front seat:

"I'd better take it slowly, sir. The road isn't very good and I need to get used to this car. If anything proves unsatisfactory, be sure to say so."

Plenty was unsatisfactory, but Twambley didn't say so. During the snail's trip toward the point of land where the old lighthouse stood, the keen mind of The Shadow was at work, analyzing Jerry's status.

It might not be a question of how much Jerry knew. It might be a case of how little.

So far the fellow had played the perfect stooge. His connection with murder in Seaview City could be an unconscious one, originating from nothing more than an effort to pick up some easy money driving company cars on his own time.

Though Jerry had brought along a brace of thugs when he took Cranston as a passenger in the blue cab, no threat had resulted during that trip. Maybe Jerry had been in on the frame when those car-lights had blinked a signal outside the Hotel Neptune, but The Shadow wasn't entirely certain that Jerry's vehicle was the one involved.

Today, Jerry had brought Gaudry from the depot, but again his part was minor and could be considered such until The Shadow knew definitely that Jerry had heard of Gaudry's death.

In any event, Jerry was a future prospect where The Shadow was concerned and it would be unwise to spoil him now. However much Jerry knew - or how little - The Shadow could use him as effectively as someone else. And someone else was definitely using Jerry, whether the cabby-chauffeur understood all the details.

That someone was a double murderer.

So far, two names stood out in The Shadow's mind. One was that of Doctor Dee, bearded master of the occult, whose ways were as mysterious as the arts in which he specialized. The other was Montague Bankhill, head of the House that bore his name. There was a solid reason why The Shadow gave them precedence over others.

That reason was the game.

Something huge was at stake, involving vast sums, otherwise unscrupulous but penurious persons like Trenkler and Gaudry wouldn't have received invites to come to Seaview City and lay fifty thousand dollars on the line. Having known Trenkler and having heard of Gaudry, The Shadow knew that both were persons who in life had expected a dollar to do a dime's work.

Silence was The Shadow's specialty. When he utilized it, even as Twambley, other minds became

restless, anxious to break the pall of quiet. Jerry was no exception; he felt he had to talk. While the things he said were commonplace, it was a good sign, having Jerry become voluble.

Halting the car on the Boulevard, Jerry gestured at a large, streamlined trolley that slicked across on a track that occupied a cross-street. The trolley was headed away from the beach.

"One of the Interurbans," explained Jerry. "They call that line the Surf Route. Cuts back across the Meadows and then down the coast to other resorts."

Twambley said nothing, which bothered Jerry all the more. As they drove along the Boulevard, Jerry continued:

"You wouldn't have noticed the Surf Route, coming in on the train, because they don't get close until they're right in town. The trolleys don't stop at the depot, they go up to the Boardwalk."

More silence from Twambley. Jerry wondered what he'd said to offend the old fool.

"Fast babies, those Interurbs," informed Jerry, just to keep up conversation. "You can pretty near hear them whistle when they whizz across the Meadows. Somebody said they were built to do two miles a minute, but I guess nobody ever opened them up to that."

Twambley didn't seem interested in Interurbans. Jerry was wondering if the old man had gone to sleep. There was a way of finding out.

"Say, Mr. Twambley." Jerry's tone became apologetic. "I didn't mean to be butting into your business when I took it for granted you came into town by train. Most everybody comes in on the streamliner, you know.

"Besides the Upper Causeway was washed out during the Hurricane and they haven't fixed it yet. So the only way to drive into town is by the Lower Causeway. Here it is right now."

Stopping for a big traffic light, Jerry indicated a straight, broad expanse of concrete that arched out across the Meadows.

"Goes straight back to the Mainland," described Jerry. "Not a traffic light for five miles. Then you come to where the Interurban cuts across. Makes its first stop there, the Surf Route does, at a station called Seaview Heights. Only there's no heights and there's no town. Just a hunk of ground cut up into building lots that nobody has been sucker enough to buy."

The light changed and the car continued its course. Soon they were past the outlying cottages that represented the lower outskirts of Seaview City, but they were still on the Boulevard, though it had narrowed somewhat.

Then the Boulevard itself ended to become an even narrower road, paved but rather badly. To the left, beyond some sand dunes, Jerry indicated some forlorn pilings that reared in the moonlight.

"What's left of the boardwalk," Jerry explained. "It used to end down here; now it ends a lot further up. The Hurricane did that too. Over there" - Jerry gestured to his right - "is the Channel. That's what all the drawbridges cross, like for the railroad, the trolley, and the Causeways."

They were closer to the ocean than the channel, though both showed the moonlight's glint. The land here was scarcely a quarter mile in width and becoming narrower. The channel view was clearer, though more distant, because it was unobstructed, whereas sand dunes marred the outlook toward the ocean.

Confident that Twambley - if still awake - had observed how the land narrowed, Jerry ventured more data.

"We're almost to the Point," he explained. "It isn't exactly a point, because there's sort of a creek called the Narrows that cuts it off. Too shallow, though, for boats, the Narrows. They have to go around the Point to get to the Channel."

For the first time, Twambley spoke, just when Jerry had fully decided he was asleep; hence the two-timing cabby was more or less jolted.

"All very interesting," remarked Twambley, crisply, "and how, may I ask, do we go across the Narrows that you mention?"

"Why, there's a bridge there," returned Jerry. "At least there should be a bridge" - he hesitated, as though worried that he was talking too much. "Well, here it is, the bridge, you can see it for yourself."

As the automobile stopped, Twambley saw the bridge or what there was of it. The structure had evidently suffered from the hurricane of the year before, but that didn't fully account for its present condition. Apparently the bridge had been repaired; now it was going to pieces again, because a group of workmen were busy fixing it.

"Guess we can't get across," apologized Jerry. "Maybe I should have remembered that they were putting in the new planking. Still, it ought to have been done by now."

Why it wasn't done was explained by sight of an old coupe that had apparently started across the planking that Jerry mentioned. The result was that the woodwork had caved and the car was half sunk in the debris. A brawny foreman came up to the big car to make sure Jerry didn't make the same mistake.

"It's going to take us half the night to haul that buggy out," the foreman grouched. "But if you don't make the same mistake, and just sit tight, we'll have a temporary job ready for you. Ought to be ready now" - the man increased his grumble - "except for those two clucks who don't know how to set planks in a line!"

By "clucks" the foreman meant two workers in overalls who were toiling in the light of strong lanterns and from the window of his car, The Shadow recognized them. They were the pair of riders who had accompanied Jerry when he drove the blue Green Cab!

Jerry didn't seem to notice his former pals, nor blow his horn to make them hurry up. But the discovery of these two men who fitted into The Shadow's pattern of crime analysis, was only a prelude to the next find.

It happened just after a raucous horn began to squawk impatiently from the other side of the Narrows, the horn incidentally serving as a tonic to the slow men who were probably better in a brawl than at building a bridge. They solved the riddle of the planks and set them straight so rapidly that the foreman almost forgot something.

He remembered it as Jerry was nosing the big car forward.

"Hey, wait!" called the foreman. "Here's the gent who bogged his car through the bridge. He's been waiting a couple of hours to get across and I told him I'd ask the first car to take him. You have room, haven't you?"

Looking back at Twambley to see if the latter thought there was room, Jerry received a nod from his crisp-faced employer. So the big car paused and the extra passenger stepped into it, profuse with

thanks.

Polite as well as profuse, this gentleman, for it was in his nature to act genteel. Even his narrowed eyes were as pleasant as his broad face, as he spoke to Isaac Twambley.

"Allow me to introduce myself, sir," the new passenger said. "I am Colonel Colgan, long a resident of Seaview City."

Whether Colgan rated the title of Colonel was unimportant. The real factor was that The Shadow, switched to the guise of Twambley instead of Cranston, had met up with an old acquaintance who didn't recognize him.

This was the gentleman with the wing-tip collar and the polka-dot necktie, who had shared the ride with Cranston and later figured in Margo's first visit to the House of Bankhill!

CHAPTER XII

AFTER giving his own name in response to Colgan's introduction, Isaac Twambley cackled nervously as the big car shimmied its way across the bridge. Immediately the colonel reassured him.

"The bridge is safe enough," he declared. "My mishap came about because I inadvertently disobeyed instructions not to cross. There's no cause for alarm now, none at all."

The Shadow knew there wasn't, even if it had been his habit to feel alarm. While the car was testing the bridge, he was doing the same with Twambley's guise and both were proving solid enough for future use.

At the far side of the bridge they met the car that had used the horn so noisily. It was a light truck that evidently hauled supplies to and from the point. Jerry paused to hold a brief argument with the truck driver, asking him why he had to be so impatient, and the trucker told Jerry that if he'd been waiting a couple of hours, he'd have done the same.

Of course they just didn't say it in those words, but that was the gist of it. Old Twambley seemed quite unperturbed by his chauffeur's exchange of profanities with the trucker. He was more interested in why Colgan had needed a car to take him over to the Point.

There were a couple of small rowboats hitched to the shore on this side of the bridge and there were people about who could have rowed them. A car wasn't necessary to go anywhere on the Point because it wasn't more than a dozen acres in size and its only buildings were within a stone's throw of the bridge.

One building was an oversized cottage that served as an undersized hotel, which was pretty well deserted, considering the lack of lights in its windows. Around it were tourist cabins, while off to the flank, Twambley saw a large, rambling structure that bore a smaller but equally rambling sign, with the legend:

COMMUNITY CONTRACTORS

HARDWARE, GROCERIES

BOATS, PAINTS STORAGE

MARVIN GLOOK, PROP.

Glook hadn't wasted any of his paint either on the store or the sign, for the building was the grayish hue of dried boards and the letters on the sign were scarcely legible in the glow of the bare electric light bulbs

that ran along it.

Nevertheless, there were samples of his workmanship in the form of some freshly painted automobiles standing outside what looked like a garage. Beyond was a ragged boathouse built over an equally frayed pier that jutted into the Channel. Hauled up beside the pier were some squatty cabin cruisers of the stocky, plugger type used by fishermen and these were undergoing a paint treatment too.

The blue Green Cab wasn't among the cars, but it was probably in the garage, getting a preliminary scrape.

Towering above this batch of shoddy buildings was the Point's famed landmark, the old lighthouse. It was a tall, hollow structure, the kind that had once sent its gleam far to sea, warning navigators against a hazard that was now sufficiently protected by modern buoys off shore. Beyond that, the Point had its quota of sand dunes, that gave it an irregular appearance. These hillocks looked like the bunkers of a golf course, except that their setting was green, not gray.

The contours of the dunes showed that they were shifty and their present leaning, inward from the Point proper, was obviously a relic of the hurricane which had struck from that direction. The dunes were useful as well as picturesque; unquestionably they had buffered Glook's ramshackle buildings against the fury of last year's storm, otherwise the buildings would not have survived.

Alighting from his car, Isaac Twambley entered the general store and looked around. Over in one corner was a door marked OFFICE and in response to the dingle of a bell, a man came from that door and leaned promptly on a counter to learn what the visitor wanted.

This man was Marvin Glook and he looked as weather-beaten as his premises, as crablike in action as the crustaceans that crawled the banks of the Channel, and quite as stoopish as the leaning dunes that were his constant panorama.

Glook's face was gray, like his sleek hair, but his eyes had a quick, bluish flash that belonged to the man who tended store as a regular routine.

"Anything you'd like to buy, sir?" wheezed Glook. "We're always glad to please a customer - when we get one! Heh!"

The "Heh" that Glook added was a cross between a chuckle and a cough.

"I would like to buy a boat," specified Twambley. "A large boat, with all the necessary fittings. Something more ample than those I saw outside. I would want something closer to the size of a yacht."

Glook's eyes exhibited an increasing gleam as Twambley built up these specifications. Then, with a gesture of one hand, the other being necessary to support him against the counter, Glook spoke depreciatingly.

"I have nothing suitable here," said Glook. "Nor could I build anything of the sort you want."

Twambley started to turn away and Glook's tune changed hastily.

"Of course I might find a yacht," he declared. "and convert it to your requirements. I could outfit it completely."

Now Twambley was becoming hard to convince.

"I doubt that you have the facilities," said Twambley, his crisp tone becoming blunt. "I am sorry that I

bothered you. I shall have to make other inquiries."

"Other inquiries?" Glook's tone was troubled. "Where?"

"In Seaview City. People there seemed to think you wanted to do business."

"Which I do!"

"So I understood. I heard that you painted taxicabs; that you repaired and stored antiques. Some of the amusement places have bought equipment from you."

Glook was nodding, very eagerly since it seemed the best way to impress this type of customer.

"I buy and sell anything," declared Glook, "providing I can put into better shape the things I buy, before I sell them. I work on a small profit margin, but why not?" Glook unlimbered himself to deliver an arm gesture that included the premises. "I have very little overhead here."

"That is why I came," acknowledged Twambley, cannily. "Suppose you show me around, so I can judge for myself how much you might accomplish for me."

More eager than ever, Glook showed Twambley around. They went through the various sections of his old buildings, Glook turning on lights as they went along. It didn't take long to prove why Glook had become a sort of general supply man for various industries in Seaview City.

Glook's place was like a glorified junk shop. In one room was a herd of merry-go-round animals that Glook said he had bought from an amusement park. Maybe one of the piers would need a carousel some day. If so, Glook would provide the steeds.

In a larger and much higher room hung curtains, suitable for theaters, along with side-show banners that Glook had bought from some defunct carnival. These too were waiting until some concession might want them in Seaview City.

What interested Twambley chiefly were the store rooms. One of these held old and junky furniture, another was filled with a lot that looked much better. Glook termed both brands "antiques" and added that the improved variety had undergone a treatment in his repair shop.

Similarly, there was a storage room containing gee-gaws, bric-a-brac, and garish tapestries. Glook was very proud of certain glossy hangings and some stacks of chinaware that had a gold finish.

"We do all that in the shop," explained Glook. "It gives the stuff flash and that's what sells it. The auction houses call for a lot of it."

"Good business," complimented Twambley. "At least you must make an excellent profit on such goods."

"Not much," returned Glook, glumly. "They know the cost price too. They're close buyers because they pay high rentals and their license fee is five thousand dollars a year. I have no overhead, no license."

Glook sounded as though he was sorry for himself. He conducted Twambley through the repair and manufacturing department where a few men were doing night work. In addition, Glook had a small printing press, which he used only for job work, turning out posters, price lists, and similar work.

They came to the dock beside the boat house and there, in the dark, Glook pointed out the white shapes of the squatty fishing boats.

"Come around any day," insisted Glook, "and you'll see for yourself what a fine job I've done on those.

Yes, Mr. Twambley, if you want a yacht bought, refinished, and equipped, Glook is your man."

Somebody was calling Glook from the main store. As Glook turned to call back, Twambley spoke into the darkness between two of the fishing boats. Only his tone was no longer Twambley's; it was the whisper of The Shadow, that strange, concentrated voice that could confine itself in a given quarter.

The voice said:

"Report."

"You were the first arrival," came a low reply. The tone belonged to Harry Vincent. "A car went out just before the road men closed the bridge. It didn't come back."

"Who was in it -"

"I don't know. Probably one of Glook's customers. I was over by the sand dunes then. I waited until dusk to come here."

"You saw no boats arrive -"

"None. Not even a row boat. The blue cab is in the garage, but if anybody is worrying about it, they haven't shown their hand today."

"You talked to Glook -"

"No. I kept away from the store. I didn't want to even see Glook until the bridge was clear. I'd rather have him think I'd just arrived."

A good enough notion on Harry's part, but it was getting too late for that now. Seeing Glook turning to come toward the boats, The Shadow gave a low-toned order.

"Meet me at the car," he told Harry. "Act like a stranger asking for a ride back to town."

Ten minutes later, Twambley had said good-night to Glook and was about to get into his hired car, when a young man stepped from the darkness and asked for a lift. Much to the surprise of Jerry, Twambley granted the request. After crossing the bridge, Twambley waved to Colonel Colgan, who was waiting for his coupe to be hauled up from the broken planking. The colonel called a cheery good-night in return.

There were two silent passengers during the ride back to Seaview City; old Twambley and the young man he had befriended. Since they didn't talk, Jerry did a lot of thinking, which was precisely what The Shadow wanted.

As Isaac Twambley, The Shadow was progressing nicely in his analysis of crime, but he was planning to make crooks show their hand again, and more fully.

By tomorrow, perhaps The Shadow might have added evidence that would enable him to begin thrusts of his own!

CHAPTER XIII

THE light of a new day, far from clearing the riddle of the Gaudry murder, only served to deepen it.

There were findings though, that intrigued The Shadow.

Very conveniently, The Shadow received an invitation to a special reconstruction of the scene of crime,

but he did not appear there as Isaac Twambley. Instead, he was forced to resume the guise of Lamont Cranston.

The reason was the arrival of Inspector Joe Cardona, from New York. Cardona was an important cog in the Manhattan force and knew Cranston personally, as a friend of New York's police commissioner. Therefore it was only natural that Cranston should drop around and welcome Cardona to Seaview City or vice versa.

Why Cardona had been summoned to Seaview City was rapidly made plain and Joe was glad to have Cranston hear about it.

"Seth Gaudry was a smart apple," defined Cardona. "He handled the sale of art treasures and on a big scale, only he never advertised the fact. Bought here and there, then sold to individual collectors. Did he ever try to sell you anything, Mr. Cranston?"

Pondering, Cranston gave a headshake.

"I'm not surprised," said Cardona. "You wouldn't be the type."

"I take it then," returned Cranston, blandly, "that you credit me with sufficient judgment to recognize spurious art objects."

"That isn't it," stated Cardona. "Gaudry didn't peddle phoney stuff. I wasn't complimenting you on being smart, Mr. Cranston, though I don't deny you are. I was meaning you were honest."

Cranston acknowledged the better compliment with a bow.

"Now that fellow Trenkler, who died a few days back," added Cardona, "he was the sort who would have played at Gaudry's game. I wouldn't have been surprised to see him show up somewhere with fifty grand, aiming to drive a bargain with it."

Cardona might have been surprised if he'd known that Cranston had come to Seaview City as Trenkler's proxy, hoping to uncover the mechanics of just such a deal.

They were in room 920 at the Coral House and Margo Lane was among the persons present. Others included the local police chief and the two detectives who had quizzed Doctor Dee the day before.

All around was evidence of murder which Cardona was about to analyze with due appreciation from the local representatives of the law, for Joe had made it plain that he'd let credit go to the Seaview City force. Maybe Cardona had learned such courtesy from The Shadow, that mysterious crime solver who had so often dropped evidence into Joe's own lap.

"When Gaudry arrived in town," related Cardona, "he checked in at the Hotel Waterloo. He stopped off at a phony auction, bought himself a chunk of junk, and then switched to this room that he'd reserved in another name, here at the Coral House."

Cranston's eyebrows lifted in query, whereat Cardona smiled.

"You're asking how those facts came out?" queried Joe. "Simple enough. Gaudry forgot himself and brought the wrong hotel key here. It's there on the table."

Seeing the key, Cranston examined it. The key bore the number 512 and a letter W, which evidently meant Waterloo, the only Seaview City hotel that had a name beginning with that letter.

"The murderer must have gone to the Waterloo," explained Cardona, "and found this key." Joe showed a key with the number 920 above a crest with the initials C.H. for Coral House. "That's how he tracked Gaudry down."

Margo almost said something, but Cranston's keen gaze stopped her. It wasn't the murderer, but The Shadow, who had gone to the Waterloo and there learned Gaudry's whereabouts from the clue of the wrong key!

"There was somewhere else Gaudry stopped off," resumed Cardona, emphatically. "Maybe he was looking for luck; anyway, he picked up an astrological chart from a certain Doctor Dee. It was lying on the floor beside the body. Certain paragraphs were marked, and they were appropriate."

Cardona passed Cranston the chart in question. It covered persons born under the sign of "Libra, the Scales," and the eleventh was listed as an unlucky day. There was a ring around that number, penciled there as a warning to Gaudry, but it was modified by the statement appearing later.

"Persons born under Libra," announced the chart, "should trust their own judgment, because they have a faculty for weighing decisions properly. Bad luck comes to them chiefly when they forget this rule. The scales are a symbol of justice, which though sometimes blind is more often right than wrong."

Cardona noted that Cranston, whatever his own birth sign, was carefully weighing this last sentence.

"You got it," nodded Cardona, "even though Gaudry didn't. He weighed his own decision and figured that would knock out any bad luck. He probably laughed at that stuff about justice. So he got it - and the wrong way."

Cranston looked up from the chart.

"You mean Gaudry double-crossed somebody?"

"I've practically said so all along," argued Cardona. "Somebody must have tipped him to a big art buy, here in Seaview City. Gaudry left a lot of equipment including an x-ray machine down at the Waterloo as a blind.

"Then he switched here, probably intending to swing the deal on his own, only his partner caught up with him and knocked him off, just like Klurg, who was probably a guy who knew too much about something. Anyway, there was a star forecast in Klurg's room too.

"But getting back to Gaudry. His going to the House of Bankhill was mostly bluff, since that place wouldn't sell the type of goods Gaudry really wanted. Look at that broken statuette" - Cardona gestured to the shattered pieces that were on the floor - "and figure for yourself if Gaudry thought it worth anything.

"Since the murderer didn't take Gaudry's cash, we know he killed him as a double-crosser, not for money. That brings us to the question of the murderer. How he disappeared is still a mystery, or will be until his body washes up somewhere along the beach."

Striding to the window, Cardona pointed out the scene of the mystery that had featured yesterday's dusk.

"The murderer dived under right out there," asserted Joe. "The life guards are sure they'd have spotted him if he'd come up. He couldn't have swum under water to the pier because his breath would have given out before he'd gone half way. Some of the life guards proved it by trying it this morning."

Turning from the window, Cardona suggested that they follow the murderer's route down the elevator that led to the bather's basement. During the ride, Cardona mused aloud upon a minor point.

"The murderer must have faked that phony call to the delivery boy," decided Cardona. "Wanted to make sure the kid didn't stick around. That's why he spread the word about an accident that didn't happen."

If Cranston had a different opinion, he didn't state it, but judging from his very calm expression, Margo had a notion that something special was in Lamont's mind. Then they were going through the basement to the doorway that bathers used beneath the Boardwalk. Cardona paused to point out another detail.

"The murderer must have thought somebody was after him," declared Cardona, "because he dumped everything in sight. That big towel container, for one thing, a couple of those double lockers, the pulmotor in the corner, and even the big oxygen tank that they've got here for emergencies."

Having been obstructed by this very debris, which was now back in place, Cranston could have detailed a few more items, but didn't. They reached the beach, where Cardona ruefully commented on the inability of sand to record foot marks.

"The stuff is too shifty for good prints," declared Cardona, "and besides, so many people tramp the beach that there's no telling one set from another. Whoever invented the saying 'Footprints on the sands of time' didn't know much about sand."

With that, Cardona turned to the two detectives, the strong silent men of the Seaview City force.

"Footprints on the sands of time," repeated Cardona. "Ever read that anywhere?"

Both dicks shook their heads.

"You ought to look at the fancy covers on those star readings you bought," rebuked Cardona. "That's where I read it, and in big type too. It's a quotation from somewhere, but maybe Doctor Dee took it seriously."

Joe Cardona was a stocky, swarthy man, who could nod emphatically when he came to a decision. He had come to a decision now and he spoke it while he nodded:

"We'll go and see Doctor Dee."

CHAPTER XIV

DOCTOR DEE had just concluded a convincing lecture when the visiting delegates arrived at his occult studio and he had sold so many of his astrological charts that he was too tired to put the pressure on Joe Cardona.

The office being too small for all the visitors, Dee closed the front door and gestured to a circle of chairs in the main room. Then, stroking his heavy beard, the master of the occult smiled pleasantly and inquired:

"What now?"

"We're looking into the past," Cardona informed him. "Let the present and the future ride a while. Another dead man showed up with one of your printed messages. Here it is, all marked."

Dee studied the Libra chart that Cardona handed him and shook his head wearily.

"Many people mark my charts," declared Dee. "If they would only take the advice to heart!"

"Somebody else did if they didn't," put in Cardona. "That applies to the person who murdered Klurg and Gaudry both."

"You have an analytical mind," complimented Dee. "Ordinarily that would indicate Virgo as your sign, but since you are a professional investigator, it might be a developed faculty. Now if you were born under Aries -"

"Never mind," interrupted Cardona. "What do you know about Klurg and Gaudry?"

"Nothing," replied Dee. "Absolutely nothing."

"Where were you the last two evenings, at the time they were murdered?"

"Having dinner. It's an off-hour."

"Bankhill doesn't think so. He throws an auction at that time."

Dee's eyes glinted when Cardona mentioned Bankhill's auctions. Cannily, the bearded doctor asked:

"Does Bankhill conduct those particular auctions personally?"

Pondering a moment, Cardona looked to Margo for the answer. The girl shook her head.

"No, Mr. Bankhill wasn't there," said Margo. "That is, he was only in and out."

"Very well, then," Dee told Cardona. "I would suggest that you quiz Bankhill."

Cardona voiced his earlier objection.

"Bankhill deals in gyp stuff," said Joe. "What we're looking into is a game involving genuine art treasures worth big money. Bankhill's business is an outright fake."

Thoughtfully, Dee stroked his bushy beard, then arose and turned to the rack where he kept his astrological charts.

"I can help you," Dee purred to Cardona, "if you will only tell me your birth sign. But first it will cost you one dollar -"

"Which you won't get," interrupted Joe. "Why should I be gypped, even for a buck, by buying something that I know is a fake?"

Doctor Dee had wheeled before Cardona finished.

"Gyp stuff," repeated Dee. "An outright fake. You're putting my business in the same class as Bankhill's. By the same token that excludes me from investigation."

Before Cardona could answer that argument, Dee clinched it with his persuasive purr.

"But the fact still stands," reminded Dee, "that Bankhill deals in goods that go to the highest bidder, whereas I do not. So of the two of us, your proper choice is Bankhill."

Rising, Cardona turned to his companions and suggested that they come along. They left, and in glancing back at Doctor Dee, Margo Lane felt quite sure that the occult master was laughing through his beard.

The next stop was the House of Bankhill.

An auction was going on there, but the visitors didn't disturb it. They went in the back way and interrupted Montague Bankhill in the process of talking to a man who had bought a fifty dollar watch for twenty-five. Bankhill was generously trying to persuade the customer to trade in his purchase as part payment for a hundred dollar watch that he could have for fifty.

Sight of the local law and order caused Bankhill to drop that plan and bow the customer out. Then:

"If you want to see the guarantee on that watch," declared Bankhill, "I'll prove that the customer actually gained a fifty dollar value for only twenty-five. We sell reliable watches -"

"Speaking of reliable watches," broke in Cardona, shoving himself forward, "do you carry one?"

"Why, certainly -"

"Do you use it often enough to know where you were at certain hours?"

"Of course."

"Then where were you last night," demanded Cardona, "and the night before, at the time those murders were committed?"

That really wilted Bankhill.

"I swear that Klurg wasn't working for me," he insisted, "and I never expected a customer like Gaudry. I've read the newspapers and I know only what they told me. The man you should question is Doctor Dee."

"We've done that," returned Cardona, cryptically. "We find he has an alibi. What's yours?"

"Why - Why, I go out to eat -"

"That's all we wanted to know." Cardona turned to the group. "Suppose we go along."

Their last glance at Bankhill proved him to be a very troubled man and the fact suited Cardona. To the local crime-hunters, Cardona therewith gave a suggestion.

"You saw how Bankhill took it when he thought Dee was in the clear," stated Cardona. "We'll go back and give Dee the same dose. I'll bet his beard curls when we tell him that we found Bankhill had an alibi."

Good psychology on Cardona's part, but Cranston and Margo didn't go along to witness it. Being part way to the Coral House, they continued there. On the way, Margo asked:

"Do you think Dee will wilt like Bankhill did?"

"Probably not," replied Cranston. "Bankhill was on the spot because they caught him working the watch switch. He's his own fob."

"Fob?" queried Margo. "There wasn't a fob on that watch."

Cranston gave an indulgent laugh.

"In jam auction parlance," he explained. "a fob is the name applied to the switchman. That is, he's the chap who remedies any errors out front in the auction room."

"Errors?"

"Yes. Sometimes they do give a customer a bargain. The man we saw today really bought a fifty dollar watch for half the price. As the fob, Bankhill was staging a switch."

"But he was offering a hundred dollar watch for the first one, at a total of only fifty dollars."

"Right. But with the hundred dollar watch, the customer wouldn't have received a guarantee."

"But the hundred dollar watch had the maker's name on it. Wouldn't that suffice?"

"You'd be a chump yourself, Margo," stated Cranston. "That second watch was a rebuilt job, worth only about twenty dollars. Such a watch is known as a "lumpie" and a fob just loves to peddle one. Instead of making eighty dollars, Bankhill just lost twenty-five. No wonder he was out of sangfroid."

Margo was silent as they walked across the huge lobby of the Coral House. As they neared the elevator, Cranston reminded:

"Speaking of chumps, Margo you really may be one."

"I know," agreed Margo. "I'd have been gypped on that statuette if Mr. Ferth hadn't let me have it for nothing. By the way, why did he?"

"Because you were a future prospect. You'll find out why, when you go back there. Just follow Ferth's advice and see what happens next. Meanwhile, I wouldn't say you were a chump."

"And why not?"

"Because that statuette of Alcyone may be just what the doctor ordered and I don't mean Doctor Dee."

That was all, but Margo was quite sure that the next move in this investigation would involve the first of the Seven Pleiades, surnamed Alcyone.

CHAPTER XV

MARGO LANE was just half right.

When they reached the ninth floor, Lamont Cranston produced what looked like a pass key and was. He went to 920, Gaudry's room, and undertoned for Margo to go and get her statuette and join him there.

By the time Margo brought Alcyone to 920, Cranston had done marvels with Electra. He had assembled the fragments of the statuette purchased by Gaudry, and in the process had left a lot of pennies lying on the floor to indicate the exact spots where the pieces had been.

Setting two large ash-trays on the ends of a ruler which automatically enabled him to measure the positions equally, Cranston included the broken pieces of Electra in one tray and stood Alcyone upon the other. Bringing a wire coat-hanger from the closet, he rested it upright on the table and told Margo to hold the hook so the hanger didn't fall.

Carefully, Cranston pushed the ruler through the open space of the hanger, sending Electra's ash-tray ahead, since the broken pieces were in a heap low enough to pass under the bridge. The ruler was eighteen inches long, so Cranston set the nine inch mark directly upon the crosswire of the hanger.

When Cranston gestured for Margo to lift, she did. The ruler came up lopsided, bringing the fragments of Electra, while the statuette of Alcyone toppled over the table edge, to be caught by Cranston before it

could crash.

"You misjudged that one," remarked Margo. "I thought that was Alcyone's finish!"

"Not yet," declared Cranston. "What's more, I didn't misgauge it. That set-up formed an excellent pair of scales, improvised though it was."

"Then my statuette was heavier than Gaudry's?"

"A great deal heavier." Taking the chunks of Electra, Cranston pieced several of them together. "Look at this, Margo."

"Why, that statuette is hollow!"

"So hollow that it's not much more than a shell. Take Alcyone back to your room and break her, rather quietly."

Margo left while Cranston was replacing the Electra fragments and gathering up his pennies from the floor. When he reached Margo's room, Cranston heard the dull crash of Alcyone meeting the tiled bathroom floor. Margo appeared with the remains.

"Practically solid," stated Margo. "You can see for yourself. No wonder Alcyone was heavier than Electra!"

"And so were the rest of the Pleiades," assured Cranston. "That explains why the delivery boy was hoaxed."

"So he wouldn't go back to Bankhill's?"

"That's the reason. He'd have noticed the difference in weight. The statuette that went in Gaudry's package was so much heavier that anybody would have wondered."

"But Electra was lighter -"

"What's left of the statuette was. I'm including the original contents. Gaudry bought something more than just a chinaware ornament. I'd say he bought a smaller statuette of gold, studded with jewels, hidden in a crockery casing."

Margo drew a long breath; then queried:

"How come the jewels?"

"Because," replied Cranston, "what Gaudry bought must have been a terrific bargain at fifty thousand dollars."

"But he only paid five hundred."

"At Bankhill's, yes, but the rest was to be handed over later. Gaudry brought along his x-ray to indicate that he intended to keep the statuette unbroken in its china form. In fact, that might have been part of the deal; if so, the x-ray was needed."

The truth broke on Margo, with a mental rush like the pound of the breakers outside the window.

"Then somebody really has a million dollar racket!" Margo exclaimed. "Whoever the brain is, he's selling off priceless treasures camouflaged as junk!"

"Through the best front in the world," acknowledged Cranston. "The first place any investigator would normally pass up is the House of Bankhill. Nobody ever heard of a jam auction giving its customers anything resembling a genuine piece of art, at least never until now!"

The full significance of this discovery left Margo positively breathless. She could only wait for Cranston to come to more conclusions, which he did.

"The source is obvious," declared Cranston. "Many European art treasures stolen by the Nazis still remain untraced. It was to be expected that some would be shipped to America to be unloaded through unscrupulous dealers or collectors."

Margo found her breath.

"In two words," she said, "you mean men like Gaudry and Trenkler."

"And a great many more," affirmed Cranston. "This game is probably scheduled to continue throughout the summer season. Customers like Trenkler and Gaudry will bring in large sums to buy even-larger bargains in the blackest of the black markets."

"Can't you spot some of them before they arrive?"

"It will be easier afterward. What's more, it won't tip off the brain behind the game. If we locate him, we can find his hoard of treasures."

"How do you suppose that hoard was smuggled here?"

"Probably from a Nazi submarine, before the coastal blackout ended. Seaview City was the perfect spot."

"But it's the most populated place along this stretch of coast -"

"Which is what made it perfect," interposed Cranston. "It was harder to watch than a barren beach. But the game is strictly local now. Therefore we'll treat it from that angle."

Staring from the window, Cranston studied the breaker-ruffled beach and finally turned to Margo.

"If I know Cardona," declared Cranston, "he'll keep the see-saw going between Dee and Bankhill until one end of the teeter bumps hard."

"The way ours did," suggested Margo, "with Alcyone and Electra playing see-saw."

"Except that our game is over," reminded Cranston. "We'll keep that secret to ourselves. Meanwhile you have another auction appointment at the House of Bankhill, to watch what goes out at those sales."

Tightening her lips, Margo nodded.

"If another customer arrives today," continued Cranston, "we may be able to identify him on arrival. That would prove important in case the game has changed. But if the game is still young, as I believe it is, I see no reason to expect an immediate change."

Cranston was at the door, turning just as he was about to step into the hallway.

"So don't forget the auction," said Cranston, in parting. "Take plenty of money, Margo; buy whatever you want; and most of all, keep tally of the highest bidder. But don't worry, you may have a few friends close by."

As the door closed, Margo Lane found herself hoping that one of those few friends would be The Shadow!

CHAPTER XVI

THIS day proved itself tempestuous. By late afternoon, great storm clouds were racing over Seaview City and the ocean was pounding high upon the beach, with a menacing might that drove away all but the most daring bathers.

Even back in town, shop-keepers were battening down their windows against the "blow" as they termed it. Faint-hearted summer visitors were swarming to the depot, hoping to get away ahead of what they thought might be another hurricane.

Such people just wouldn't be convinced that this wasn't the hurricane season and that when such tropical storms did arrive, they came from the opposite direction.

At least this would prove a break for more daring visitors who might arrive in Seaview City. They'd find accommodations vacated by the others and probably would enjoy it here. For according to the weather reports that the fainthearted wouldn't read, this scurrying storm would probably blow over before the next morning.

Among the daring visitors expected in Seaview City was one that Harry Vincent hoped to spot when the streamliner arrived. Harry was at the depot on the lookout for another buyer of camouflaged Nazi goods.

So far a big car containing a gentleman named Isaac Twambley hadn't put in an appearance and Harry could understand why. Twambley's chauffeur, the shifty chap called Jerry, was still the best lead to strangers. Twambley was using the car this afternoon, but in keeping with The Shadow's style, he was giving Jerry leeway for excuses. If Jerry found a way of taking time off and getting to the station, Harry would get word through Hawkeye.

Meanwhile, other agents of The Shadow were assembling in Seaview City. Clyde Burke, a reporter, had arrived from New York this morning, to cover the Gaudry murder. Clyde was trooping along with Joe Cardona, keeping tabs on developments that concerned Doctor Dee and Montague Bankhill.

Whichever way the balance went, The Shadow would know promptly through Clyde Burke. So for all Harry Vincent could guess, crime's whole case might be cracking up this very instant. Dee and Bankhill might be smart at peddling their respective wares, but in Harry's estimate, each was the type who would be prone to play a game too strong.

Therefore, whichever proved to be the master mind, would be likely to give himself away, possibly through the other's ability to efface himself from the picture. Clever gentlemen like Dee and Bankhill could deal in negatives as well as positives; hence the innocent side of the balance might declare itself, leaving only the guilty.

Slithering suddenly from the cloud-induced dusk, the streamliner arrived to conclude Harry's speculations. From that moment on, Harry was watching the train gate, along with the cars and cabs parked near it.

Then luck struck.

Harry couldn't help but recognize Brewster Broy, when the big man strode muffled from the train gate. For Broy, though he didn't realize it, was identifying himself in the most conspicuous of manners,

provided anyone was on the lookout for someone of his sort.

Brewster Broy was a big money man who held the modern record as a dodger of indictments. Within the past few months he'd been hauled to court so often that judges had begun to feel neglected when they didn't see Broy around.

So many charges had been made against Broy that he'd just about used up the book. Fraud, extortion, conspiracy, evasion - the list went on and on, but ended nowhere. Broy's finger was in everything, but no more of him. Every count had fallen by the wayside where Broy was concerned.

Since Broy hated the public eye, he had a habit of muffling his face or covering it with his hat, every time a camera turned his way. Snapping Broy's picture was a routine pastime with newspaper photographers and they'd begun to individualize those shots. Harry had seen Broy's picture so often, depicted when Broy was descending court house steps, that he'd come to regard Broy as a faceless man.

So right now, Harry recognized Broy more promptly than he otherwise would have; indeed, if he'd seen Broy's face, he might not have recognized him at all. Broy just didn't realize that he was playing ostrich, laying himself open for identification, by assuming what was now his best-known pose.

Ideas clicked home to Harry Vincent.

However successfully Broy had counteracted criminal charges, his shady enterprises must have suffered huge losses. Broy was the sort who would want to recuperate financially through even shadier and more rapid tactics. As much as Trenkler or Gaudry - perhaps even more - Broy was a customer on the preferred list when it came to the selling of Nazi loot.

Therefore Broy was worth trailing.

Another thought occurred to Harry as he moved after the muffled man. There wouldn't be any murder where Broy was concerned, for he was the sort who would go through with his end of the deal. Therefore, it wouldn't do just to watch some hotel room, expecting it to turn into a death trap. So Harry clung closely to Broy's trail.

Apparently following set instructions, Broy turned away from the throng that was heading toward parked cars and cabs. Harry did the same, but not so quickly that he wasn't spotted. In this case it was all right, for Hawkeye was the spotter; then, with a wise smile, Hawkeye studied the crowd from the train again.

There were faces that Hawkeye recognized, for they belonged to The Shadow's strong-arm crew: Cliff Marsland, Miles Crofton and Chance LeBrue, a stout and formidable trio. Having recognized the extent of crime's stakes, The Shadow was quite sure that a hidden mob would evidence itself, once crime's master needed such assistance. Therefore The Shadow had brought in his own combat crew.

That first ride of Cranston's from the depot had been the indicator. Now the journey of the blue Green Cab was proving itself a mere forerunner of something more subtle. Only it was Harry Vincent who was encountering the present experience.

Over across the side-tracks, Harry was witnessing a meeting between Brewster Broy and another man who proved to be none other than Colonel Colgan. The stuffed-shirt colonel was inviting Broy into the coupe that had blocked traffic at the bridge across the Narrows, the night before.

Tabbing Colgan was simple. The self-styled colonel was a front man for the treasure peddling ring, but he'd been forced to play safe after the death trap had failed to bag Lamont Cranston. Now Colgan was being delegated to a job that Jerry couldn't handle, since Jerry was playing safe too - or thought he was -

by chauffeuring for Twambley.

These underlings like Colgan and Jerry were getting a real run-around from The Shadow, though they didn't know it any more than did their chief. To Harry it was just a question of time before either the bearded Doctor Dee or pompous Montague Bankhill found that he'd been getting the run-around too.

Which would be the funnier, Harry wasn't sure, but he was confident that there would be a showdown with the murderous big shot very soon. Being confident, Harry decided that trailing Colgan and Broy would prove quite easy. Noting the way the couple would have to travel to leave its present parking spot, Harry hurried back to where he had left a car of his own.

In his hurry, Harry overlooked two things.

First, he was noticed by some men who came around the side of the extensive station; next, after he started his car to pick up Colgan's trail, another car eased out from an obscure parking place. If he'd seen both incidents, Harry might have connected them; seeing neither, he didn't even consider them.

Colgan's trail was as shifty as the windy dusk which seemed to rise and fall in ratio to the scudding of the clouds. Maybe Colgan and Broy were having trouble figuring where they intended to go, but eventually the coupe headed into a short street that ended in a circle.

Realizing suddenly that he'd been outwitted, Harry hauled his car to the side of the street and clicked off the lights. Swinging around the circle, Colgan was due to meet Harry coming back, or in other terms was using a device to learn if someone happened to be trailing him.

Figuring that he might bluff it out, Harry slid low behind the wheel and as his head slipped down from sight, two others rose beside his car. Hands tugged the doors open on each side and a moment later Harry was flanked by two gun muzzles.

Despite the dusk, Harry recognized the surly faces behind those revolvers.

They belonged to two workmen that Harry had seen down at the Narrows Bridge.

The same pair who had accompanied Cranston on his welcoming ride in Seaview City, but in Harry's case, they intended to take over, and did.

Within a few brief minutes, Harry Vincent was seated bound and gagged between this pair of captors, as they drove his car along behind Colgan's coupe. How long the ride would prove and where it would lead, Harry wasn't sure. But he recognized its purpose.

Harry Vincent was scheduled to meet crime's supermind before The Shadow had that privilege. If Harry didn't talk, there would be another murder and he would be the victim.

The Shadow's first move, with Harry as the pawn, had become a play into the opposition's hands!

CHAPTER XVII

OF all people and of all places, only Margo Lane would have picked the end of Long Pier for a sojourn on a day like this. Yet there was a reason for it.

Not that Margo cared for stormy weather. It was just that she'd heard so much about a calm coming before a storm, that she hoped the role would work the other way about. Plenty of storm on Long Pier might result in calm at Bankhill's auction, Margo hoped against hope.

Waves were hoisting high at the pier end, where Margo stood under the shelter of the projecting roof of the outermost pavilion. The model submarine, a captive in its basin, was rising and falling with the sea's lift, but taking it quite serenely.

A sign was flapping, advertising trips down in the model sub, during daylight only, since there was nothing subaqueous observable after dark. Only the sub trips weren't being made at all today. Nobody except Margo had found the pier end inviting.

At least the storm was abating. It had become all waves and no wind. Overhead the clouds had become solid; maybe an all night drizzle would follow. To test it, Margo went to the outer rail, only to find that the sea spray made it difficult to tell. So Margo turned away from what breeze remained and looked straight up.

Above the pavilion a big light flickered.

Odd, that light. Margo had never noticed its blinks from shore, although she had looked toward the Long Pier often. Remembering that it was time now to be getting ashore, Margo started around the pavilion, paused when she reached the other side and looked up toward the light again.

No longer was it visible, yet Margo could catch a slight reflection from the roof. Staring hard, she made out what appeared to be a semicircular shield that cut off all view of those flickers from the shore side. Margo was still far enough out on the pier to trace just the edge of the glimmers.

Somebody was using that light as a signal!

Continuing shoreward, Margo stopped again. In the haze below the pier, she saw answering glints. Another light was talking to this one, though where the message came from, Margo couldn't guess. In that cloudy dusk, all distances were lost.

Perhaps somebody was flashing signals from one of the hotels, but certainly not the Coral House because it was too close at hand, about a hundred yards below the Long Pier and therefore more toward shore.

The Neptune and the Waterloo were possibilities and when Margo recalled that they too had figured in crime, she began to worry badly.

Hurrying on toward shore, Margo stopped at the half way mark and looked for the far light again. Now it wasn't visible any longer, which made her decide that it was shielded too.

Methodically. Margo was trying to reason this out, when she nearly stumbled into a first-class pitfall.

It was the cut-out sector that had once housed the wave motors. The sea was really smashing up through that big gap, soaking the boards on which Margo had almost slipped through a stretch of broken rail. Hurrying around this hazard, Margo passed the lion cages, where hungry howls now sounded tame in contrast to the roar of the ocean.

Through the great gates of the Long Pier, Margo reached the boardwalk and rapidly paced the hundred yards that brought her to the Coral House. Instead of stopping there, she continued along the spray-drenched boardwalk toward the House of Bankhill.

If the usual auction began early, as it might, Margo wouldn't have many minutes to spare before its start.

Arriving in time, Margo found the attentive Mr. Ferth at the doorway. About to usher her to a chair, Ferth confided:

"I'm putting you beside Mrs. Tarleton. She likes you, but don't let that influence your bidding. Mrs. Tarleton enjoys competition and she will appreciate value more if she has to pay somewhere near it."

Margo nodded, trying to accomplish it in a dumb way. This was a new angle, getting one customer to stooge against another's bids. Ferth's way, perhaps, of getting some of the fifty dollars that Margo hadn't paid for the Alcyone statuette.

"Of course if you overbid," added Ferth, "don't let it worry you. Watch for my signal to stop. We wouldn't want Mrs. Tarleton to go beyond a proper price."

Actually, Ferth meant that he didn't want the bidding to top Mrs. Tarleton's maximum offer. Reaching the place where Mrs. Tarleton was, Ferth bowed Margo to a seat beside the portly lady. Then, urged by the arrival of some extra customers who blew in like the last vestiges of the storm, the auction was off to a start, with Mr. S at the helm.

Paintings were the leaders at this sale and Mr. S liked to sell them. He proved it by pushing bids as high as the two hundred dollar mark with sticks boosting heavily and sometimes becoming the buyers.

So far, Mrs. Tarleton hadn't offered a peep, except to side-tone to Margo:

"I'm waiting to see the nightscapes. They really should be elegant and highly valuable."

By "nightscapes" Mrs. Tarleton referred to pictures of night scenes, which were coming later; in fact they were the particular type of chromo reserved for her. But just as Mr. S was about to begin with them, he spotted a larger painting that he had overlooked and called on Mr. L to help display it.

"One of the Old Masters," declared Mr. S, "a genuine copy of an authentic Rembrandt. The priceless originals of many of these paintings have disappeared, which will give you some idea of the value of these guaranteed replicas."

To Margo, the painting looked like a remnant rather than a Rembrandt, but its scene at least was Dutch. What marred it were the gaudy colors, the crudity of the detail. To Margo it looked like a child's attempt to imitate something, for it had all the stiffness of a tracing.

But the colors, plus the build-up, impressed Mrs. Tarleton. She thought the Dutch windmill just lovely, the old stone-house quaint, the canal in the background thrilling, while the figures in the painting were in her estimate historic. Amid all that gush, Mrs. Tarleton started the bidding at two hundred and fifty.

Somebody shilled the bid to three hundred before Ferth could hurry up front to hold a consultation with Mr. S and Mr. L, who finally called a brief recess.

"It's out of our hands now," conceded Ferth, casting a worried look toward the door, "but the bidding should have started at a thousand dollars. This bona fide replica is unique, of that let me assure you."

He gave a motion of his hands which Margo took for a high sign and raised the bid to three fifty. Mrs. Tarleton went to four hundred and the jumps became spirited, thanks to the "go" signals that Ferth kept giving Margo, while on his way back to the door.

When the bid hit an even thousand, Margo thought that Ferth would call quits, but he didn't. It was foolish, thought Margo, because Mrs. Tarleton was probably at the limit of her budget. Then it dawned on Margo that Ferth for some reason was trying to keep the bidding moving on and on.

The reason showed itself, just when Margo forced Mrs. Tarleton to twenty-two hundred and received a daggy look from the dowager. Looking hopelessly toward Ferth, Margo caught one last "up" just as a

man in a muffling coat came into the auction house.

Margo made it twenty-five hundred and Ferth gave the signal to lay off. Mrs. Tarleton settled back annoyed. The muffled man removed his hat and held it against his shoulder so it half concealed his face; then as the auctioneer said "Going - going -" the stranger boomed a bid:

"Thirty-five hundred dollars!"

This stranger was Brewster Broy and though Margo did not know who he was, she realized definitely that he must be a bidder of Gaudry's class. On that basis, Broy was after something more than a mere chromo and would probably get it.

Margo hadn't guessed the effect that real competition could have on Mrs. Tarleton. If she really wanted a genuine imitation of something, she'd go after it to the limit. Mrs. Tarleton did just that when she shouted:

"Five thousand dollars!"

Ten - fifteen - twenty-five - all in thousands went the bids with Mrs. Tarleton and Brewster Broy flinging their figures, like a conductor ringing up trolley fares. Mr. S and Mr. V stood gaping at each other across the broad expanse of the garish canvas that anybody but a Dutchman could have painted. At the door, Ferth stood worried, like somebody who had touched off a keg of dynamite and was viewing the result. Ferth's moment of relief came when Broy roared in a tone of finality:

"Fifty thousand dollars!"

Old Mrs. Tarleton didn't bat an eyelash. She just snapped "Fifty-five thousand" and Broy rose with a bellow, shoved his chair aside, to storm out through the door to the boardwalk, brushing off Ferth like a sand-fly.

Imperiously, Mrs. Tarleton arose and took over the proceedings. Waving her arm at Messrs. L and S, she included the painting as she ordered:

"Bring it to my hotel, you two. I shall pay you there, in cash. But I want prompt delivery, right now!"

The two auctioneers weren't in any mood to dispute such an offer. Nodding to Mrs. Tarleton, they waved their arms to indicate that the auction was ended. The skills were prompt to take the hint and served as a vanguard leading the rest of the customers out.

At the doorway, Margo paused, rather surprised to find that Ferth had disappeared. Probably he had rushed after Broy, though neither was in sight. Then came Mrs. Tarleton followed by the auctioneers who were lugging the big chromo which they had hastily wrapped in a large cloth.

"I shall see you at my hotel, my dear," Mrs. Tarleton told Margo. "I'm stopping at the Crescent, you know. Of course you will want to come up and admire my wonderful painting."

Maybe Mrs. Tarleton meant it cattily, maybe not. However, Margo had to go outside, so that the auctioneers could bring the painting through the doorway. They closed and locked the door behind them, but after they started up the Boardwalk with Mrs. Tarleton, Margo felt herself compelled to linger.

It was while she hesitated in the darkened doorway that Margo viewed the startling sequel to the surprising auction scene. A door opened near the back of the darkened auction house and out of it stepped a man who walked rapidly in the other direction, yet he was not too swift for Margo to fail to recognize him as Montague Bankhill.

Immediately, a figure stirred from another doorway across the ramp leading away from the boardwalk. Margo couldn't see his face, but it wasn't only the darkness that prevented her. The man's big beard helped obscure his visage. The man was Doctor Dee!

Which was on the other's trail, Margo wasn't certain, for both were in motion when she saw them. But, that wasn't as important as the matter of where the trail might lead.

Mrs. Tarleton wasn't the person who was supposed to buy the chromo that passed as a Rembrandt copy. It should have gone to the legitimate bidder, the muffled man who had arrived in time only because Ferth had stalled the auction. The muffled man had lost out, and now Ferth was gone, which could only mean one thing, namely that he had left to pass along certain information.

All of which summed itself in one word, which applied to Mrs. Tarleton, a word which Margo gasped as she scurried along the boardwalk toward the Hotel Crescent.

That word was:

"Murder!"

CHAPTER XVIII

THE lobby of the Hotel Crescent seemed a happy haven when Margo Lane reached it. In her last look back along the Boardwalk, she wondered how she'd come safely along such a sinister thoroughfare.

Torn awnings, flapping in gusts of wind; hanging shutters that creaked and swung, made the boardwalk seem populated with fantastic creatures which lived only as streaks of blackness, but were sufficient to fire the imagination.

Even here in the lighted hotel lobby, Margo shuddered as she heard a clang close by and turned to see something moving at her elbow. But it was only an elevator operator, closing that particular car, since others were in operation.

Which reminded Margo that she'd have to learn the number of Mrs. Tarleton's room. So Margo waited patiently at the information desk, hoping that someone would soon come. Meanwhile her eyes roved to a huge picture that adorned the wall of the lobby.

It was a great mural, representing Seaview City as viewed from several miles out to sea. For the first time, Margo realized that the extensive beach formed the inside of a crescent, stretching like a great curve down to the Point, which she identified by its lighthouse.

Like the various hotels. Long Pier was included in the mammoth mural and Margo was just studying the outer end when a clerk inquired what she wanted.

Asking for Mrs. Tarleton's room, Margo learned that it was 608 so she started up. As an elevator door opened, out stepped the two auctioneers on their way back to the House of Bankhill. Margo stepped aside so they wouldn't notice her, then entered the elevator and went up.

Number 608 proved to be a suite and in the living room, Margo found Mrs. Tarleton admiring her fifty-five thousand dollar purchase which looked even more atrocious when hung here by itself. But Mrs. Tarleton didn't feel that way about it.

"Isn't it just wonderful?" the dowager gushed. "And what do you suppose they told me! This isn't just an ordinary copy of a Rembrandt. It's a facsimile of a copy, just think of that! An actual facsimile of an authentic copy -"

"But you paid fifty-five thousand dollars for it!" Margo blurted. "That might make it valuable enough for someone to murder you for it!"

Mrs. Tarleton's face froze in horror and so completely that Margo felt shocked by her own words, until she saw that they were not the reason. Mrs. Tarleton was staring across the room toward a door which had just opened. There on the threshold stood Montague Bankhill, his face long and solemn above a leveled revolver.

"You are right," confirmed Bankhill in a crisp tone. "Somebody might be contemplating murder. Look around and you will see precisely what I mean."

Margo turned along with Mrs. Tarleton to face an opposite door through which protruded the bearded visage of Doctor Dee, also fronted by a gun. The beard was wagging as Dee spoke.

"Cleverly put, Bankhill," announced Dee. "A good speech for a murderer who finds himself trapped, your speech I mean. Don't try to retire from this scene. I intend to hold you here until the law arrives."

"A very good bluff," sneered Bankhill, "except that it won't work. The police will believe me, Dee."

"Perhaps. Especially when you tell them that you just swindled Mrs. Tarleton with a worthless chromo. Did your men collect the fifty-five thousand dollars?"

Mrs. Tarleton began to say that they had, but Margo hushed her and shoved her back away from the line of the guns. Of Bankhill and Dee one or the other was certainly not a murderer and Margo didn't want that particular man to be impeded.

"So they did collect," chuckled Dee. "How will you talk yourself out of that, Bankhill?"

"I run an auction house," retorted Bankhill. "It is the customer's privilege to decide the worth of all merchandise offered."

"Quite right," approved Mrs. Tarleton, haughtily. "My sister gave me a fine birthday present last week and I decided that I would spare no expense to give her something equally worthwhile. But how" - she turned angrily toward Dee - "how, may I ask, did you know what I paid?"

"I heard your broadcast clear out on the boardwalk," returned Dee. "I was outside of Bankhill's, trying to learn what went on inside and I did."

Tactfully, Margo was drawing Mrs. Tarleton toward the door, only to draw up suddenly as a knock sounded there. Then came a bell-boy's voice:

"Paper for you, Mrs. Tarleton. I'm leaving it."

It was Margo who opened the door and the newspaper fell from under the knob where the bell-boy had roosted it. As Margo lifted the newspaper, it spread open and something else dropped from within. Mrs. Tarleton scooped it and turned in surprise.

"Why, it's one of your astrological charts, Doctor Dee! It says 'Capricorn, the Goat' - but why should it be sent to me?"

"Dee always sends those to his victims," put in Bankhill, tartly. "See if some special paragraphs are marked."

"If they are, you marked them," retorted Dee. "Your skills must have been buying up my readings,

Bankhill, just so you could mark appropriate forecasts and send them yourself. Anyone with any sense would know I wasn't behind this game of murder, because -"

"You mean it's the other way about," interrupted Bankhill, before Dee could list his claims of innocence. "I'm the man with the clean slate. Why, if this was my racket, do you think I'd -"

Bankhill didn't finish. Things happened so suddenly and in such quantity that Margo couldn't keep them in chronological order. Her mind just took them in haphazard fashion.

In one instant it seemed, the lights of the room were suddenly extinguished while the balcony window overlooking the ocean crashed to the tune of two gun-shots. Both Dee and Bankhill could have fired at once, but Margo didn't think so.

One shot came from somewhere near the door, though the other was around the window. At the same time, the hallway lights seemed to blink half-out, then resume their level. Hard upon that came a challenging laugh from within the room itself, the strident mirth of The Shadow!

That was the reason for the dimming of the hall lights; The Shadow had swept in from that direction, his cloaked form temporarily blocking the glow. But in entering, The Shadow must have pressed the switch that controlled the room lights, for that switch was by the door.

The reason was The Shadow had seen murder in the making and had balked it with a sudden shot at the would-be killer, who in turn had fired wide at whatever target he wanted. That target must have been Mrs. Tarleton, for Margo, spilled suddenly by The Shadow's sweeping figure, found herself under the dowager's shrieking bulk as The Shadow heaved Mrs. Tarleton in the same direction.

Gun-stabs were illuminating the room with momentary flashes, for everybody was in it now and Margo decided The Shadow must be using two guns, because she counted four blasts in quick succession. The fact that all four jabs were well apart in distance could have meant that The Shadow was changing position with lightning speed.

Useless shots all these, because the marksmen were merely aiming blindly at each other as they dodged about the room. The man who had started it hadn't bargained for The Shadow's instantaneous arrival; therefore the thwarted killer changed tactics.

Waiting neither to find Mrs. Tarleton as a victim nor to snatch the doubtful picture that the spendthrift lady had acquired, the murderer took off through one of the side doors and Margo could hear the pound of other footsteps pursuing him, accompanied by The Shadow's trailing laugh.

It seemed a balance still between Dee and Bankhill, for both were gone with The Shadow and Margo reasoned therefore that whichever was innocent intended to take a hand in trapping his guilty rival. From the door to the hallway, Margo heard the chase go clattering down the fire tower, accompanied by spasmodic gun-shots and that strange laugh that symbolized The Shadow.

Turning on the room lights, Margo helped Mrs. Tarleton to her feet, found that the dowager was as unhurt as her precious chromo that was still hanging on the wall. Telling Mrs. Tarleton to stay where she was, Margo raced to an elevator intent on witnessing the finish down below.

If Margo Lane thought that The Shadow had reached the end of his campaign, she was far wrong. This was just the start of what was to prove a campaign in itself, rapid though its sequences might prove.

All this was something The Shadow knew and was about to demonstrate!

CHAPTER XIX

NEVER would Seaview City forget the madness of that night.

The alarm began with a running gun fight that poured from an obscure side door of the Hotel Crescent, zigzagged down the boardwalk and across to the Long Pier, which was only a short romp down from the hotel.

Some roller chairs were on the boardwalk, carrying passengers who had come out to enjoy a sudden treat of scraggly but unexpected moonlight. The chairs went hither and thither, deserted by their dodging pushers, and became a sort of traffic jam that added to the confusion.

Into this patchy picture came Inspector Cardona, with the two local detectives who were working on the case. Accompanying them was Clyde Burke; he'd received a mysterious phone call saying to bring Cardona to the Hotel Crescent. The tip was proving good.

Only now Long Pier had become the focal spot. Cardona and his companions saw a path clear among the roller chairs that had taken refuge at the pier entrance. Figures went flying through and some attendants tried to stop them. Guns responded, shooting up in the air.

Last to drive through the scattering attendants was The Shadow. Seeing the cloaked battler, Cardona followed at full speed, urging his companions along. The chase led out along the pier where the figures ahead were only briefly visible. Cardona thought he could count three and mentally added The Shadow, on the basis that the cloaked pursuer would not be visible at all in that gloom.

Half way out, a deluge broke in human form. Up from unexpected places around a bulging pavilion rose snipers whose purpose was to cover the flight of one lone man, a hunted murderer, by cutting off all pursuers.

It was The Shadow who stopped the damage that these snipers might have done to the sizeable crowd that was now on a killer's trail. Headlong, he flung himself into the hole where the wave motors once belonged, landed on the slimy steps and began raking the pier ahead with the skill of a revolving turret.

Snipers dodged back to shelter, dragging those that The Shadow sprawled. The Shadow's guns kept them at bay while Cardona was ordering back the excited but unarmed crowd that had joined in the chase. One thing at least was accomplished; the mad crowd, in out-running itself, had grabbed both Montague Bankhill and Doctor Dee.

Each in turn was shouting his innocence and gesticulating beyond the pavilion, claiming that the other had escaped beyond him and should be pursued and captured. Since neither Bankhill nor Dee knew that the other had been captured, each could have been playing a cute game to cover himself. But the crowd knew that both were in hand and therefore gave no heed to their arguments.

His bullets spent, The Shadow came suddenly from his watery foxhole and headed back in the direction of the boardwalk. That was a signal for the snipers to start a drive, those that were left of them, which happened to be too many.

From amid the milling throng that was hauling Dee and Bankhill, Cardona looked outward along the pier to see the massed enemy coming in their wild, dangerous charge. Urging the crowd shoreward, Cardona couldn't hope to get people out through the big gates before the vicious squad arrived and began an indiscriminate slaughter.

All Joe could hope was that The Shadow, even with empty guns, could find a way to halt the drive.

The Shadow did.

He was flinging wide the lion cages. The cramped beasts didn't lose the opportunity to leave their unsavory quarters. They came out roaring and took the right direction, thanks to The Shadow. From a concession booth that was lighted with two fancy kerosene torches, he plucked the firebrands in question and waved them at the lions.

That sent the lions in the right direction, which was outward. They met the charging gunners, who turned about and went rushing for the far end of the pier, some leaping the rails into the raging ocean in order to escape the bounding lions.

Last through the big gate, The Shadow helped to clang it, so as to keep the lions on the pier until the police found time to stalk them. With that, The Shadow disappeared uncannily.

Looking around for the cloaked master of this show. Cardona saw him one moment; the next, The Shadow was gone. Yet it really wasn't so uncanny.

A roller chair pusher was simply responding to the impatient cackle of a passenger who occupied his vehicle. Old Isaac Twambley, a cloak draped around his knees like a lap-robe, was ordering the pusher to wheel him back to the Hotel Neptune.

Among the distant witnesses of the confusion that reigned around the pier was Margo Lane. She was near the Coral House and odd thoughts were brooding through her brain.

Of a sudden, one struck home: the memory of that picture in the Hotel Crescent.

Not Mrs. Tarleton's chromo, but the downstairs mural in the lobby that showed the whole beach as a crescent. Now Margo realized why the light on the outermost pavilion was half-shielded and why the same applied to the other beam that had responded to its signals.

Due to the concave formation of the beach, there were just two spots from which such lights could flicker each to each, without being seen from any other spot. One was the end of Long Pier, the other the old lighthouse far down on the Point!

Dashing up to her own room, Margo helped herself to her bathing suit and rushed down again, carrying the slim outfit in what looked like a regulation hand-bag. She found a taxicab and told the driver to take her to the Point. It was a Green Cab, but Margo first made sure it wasn't blue.

"Sorry," the driver said, "but I understand the bridge over the Narrows is closed."

"I'm not going clear to the Point," Margo explained. "There's a beach cottage just a short way this side. I have friends living there."

"Funny, I never saw a cottage down there."

"It's hidden by the sand dunes. I'll tell you when we get near to it."

Impatience ruled Margo during that ride. The driver wouldn't take the bad road hurriedly and she couldn't insist that he did. Finally though the lights of the bridge workers came into sight and Margo called for a quick halt.

"It's right here," said Margo. Sliding two dollar bills from a pocket of her dress, she pretended to take them from her bag. "Thanks driver, and keep the change."

It was windy among the sand dunes; they had shifted greatly from storms and were something like white caps, the way their tops came fluffing down like foam. Losing herself among a group of dunes that came head high, Margo began a quick change from clothes to bathing outfit, except it wasn't as quick as she had hoped.

The wind started to pluck her clothes away as fast as Margo removed them, and her shoes were hardly adequate as anchors so she added the weight of the bathing bag, until it came time to bring the bathing suit out of it. Then the bag lost weight and one of Margo's stockings took off across a sand dune. Making a mad effort to recover it, Margo came head and shoulders above a dune, then remembered that the bathing suit was fluttery too, and she couldn't take chances on having it sail to windward.

What was more, there was no time to lose. The dunes were too close to the road and a car had been going slowly past when Margo unwisely started to come into sight over the dune. So Margo slid into the bathing suit and skirted the dunes to reach the lower end of the Narrows, hoping the rest of her clothes would stay where she had left them.

At the bridge across the Narrows, Jerry Lanthrop was inquiring how long it would be before he could chauffeur his car across. He was told that the bridge traffic would be opened very soon, since a steadier planking was being shoved in place.

Going back to the car, the freckle-faced chauffeur saw something fluttering against the rear fender of his car. Detaching the object, Jerry discovered that it was a nylon stocking. Speculatively, Jerry wondered where that had blown from; then, keen-eyed, he began to look around, wondering if he could find the other of the pair.

Oddly, Margo's unintended gift proved helpful. With stockings on his mind, he didn't bother to look into the car to see how Isaac Twambley was sleeping. Therefore Jerry didn't learn that the car was empty.

Old Twambley had silent ways of going where he wanted and when he wanted; ways that could prove invisible, too.

Down below the bridge an old row-boat was navigating the Narrows, its occupant a cloaked figure too huddled to be seen. The boat, if spotted, would be taken for one that had simply gone adrift, the way row-boats did after a heavy wind.

In her turn, Margo Lane was further down the Narrows, in fact around a bend, where that thoroughfare widened and became choppy as it received the incoming surf. The swim, though, was too short to really be a problem and when Margo reached the other side, she felt herself secure.

The Point had its share of friendly dunes and beyond them the lighthouse spired into the feeble moonlight as a marker. Margo's goal was that cluster of buildings belonging to Marvin Glook and specifically the wharf below the boat house that jutted into the channel.

For Margo had gained a solid idea that she could learn something there that would give The Shadow the final answer to all his problems; but she intended to approach the wharf with all caution.

That resolution became imperative sooner than Margo expected. Zigzagging among the dunes, she became suddenly conscious that other persons were about. Once she was sure a hunchy figure went across a gap; again, she was positive that a man had just turned a dune when she approached it.

Quite a devastating effect, this feeling of being stalked by unknown prowlers!

If anyone had found those clothes on the other shore, they'd know that Margo had swum the Narrows.

That was something she hadn't thought about until now and it made her wish she was back in Seaview City, wearing those same clothes, instead of sneaking in among the sand dunes of the Point in a soaked bathing suit that was too scanty to protect her from the chilly wind that insisted on lashing her back with biting sand from the dune tops.

Crawling on hands and knees, Margo picked a passage where the dunes were close together. There she sat down and rested, because the wind had lessened. Odd, the way these dunes loomed toward each other; and the one on the right seemed less sandy than the other, so Margo nestled close against its shelter.

That was a bad mistake. Before Margo could even gasp, the dune showed her how it should be done. Opening like the mouth of Jonah's whale, the sand dune swallowed Margo Lane and closed its jaws again, like some mammoth that had tasted a choice morsel and enjoyed it!

CHAPTER XX

FINISHING a somersaulting sprawl, Margo found herself in the grip of strong hands that bound her arms behind her and lashed a rope about her ankles. A few moments later, she was propped in a corner to find that she had a companion in this sort of misery.

Similarly bound, Harry Vincent was in the same corner. Despite himself Harry was forced to grin. He'd figured himself the world's worst sap to be bagged as he had, but he hadn't gone to the trouble of changing to a bathing suit in order to get captured.

Defiantly Margo looked around to see who her captors were. She recognized two familiar faces and one that was close to that category. The most familiar belonged to Ferth, the third auctioneer at Bankhill's, which didn't surprise Margo, considering Ferth's quick run out earlier.

Next was the gentleman of the polka-dot and wingtip, who called himself Colonel Colgan. Finally, the man whose heavy-jawed face was new to Margo, Brewster Broy made the third member of the contingent. His features were no longer muffled but Margo was certain he was the bidder who had lost out to Mrs. Tarleton.

Most amazing was this underground lair, which formed a veritable cavern, walled with concrete and set deep in the sand, with its false dune shaped like the dome of an Eskimo igloo. For the place was stocked with all the European loot that The Shadow had been seeking to uncover. Paintings, statuary of all sizes, ancient books of massive size, magnificent vases of inlaid pattern formed the chief items among such booty.

Noting Margo's fascinated stare, Ferth spoke with a sneer:

"I suppose you cracked that crockery statuette I sold you. But Alcyone didn't matter. Electra was the valuable one. What it held, the chief brought back."

From an inlaid table with spidery golden legs. Ferth plucked a small statuette of solid gold, beautifully decorated with rubies and sapphires that were worth a fortune in themselves.

"You wouldn't want a bargain for fifty thousand dollars, would you?" mocked Ferth. "Gaudry took it and tried to stage the double-cross, but I tipped off the boss that Gaudry was having it sent to the wrong hotel."

So that was it. Ferth had paved the murderer's path to Gaudry.

"Broy here thought he was being double-crossed," continued Ferth with a gesture. "That was because old lady Tarleton went haywire. I wanted her to push the bid up to a few thousand, to give the House of Bankhill a break. Only if Broy had taken the painting for fifty grand, he'd have swallowed all our profits too."

"I'm glad I didn't take it," boomed Broy. "Anyway, I did the right thing, coming down to the Point."

"You'll get your painting," promised Ferth. "The boss is on his way back with it."

Margo tightened her lips so as not to show a smile. She anticipated a surprise when the boss arrived here.

That surprise was now due.

Up a short runway, a portion of the false dune lifted, marking the door through which Margo had taken her tumble. In came a crablike figure, so swiftly that the lifting door closed almost instantly behind it. Crablike not only in gait, but in manner and features, the man's identity was immediately plain.

He was Marvin Glook, master of the Point, the Jack-of-all-trades who cried poor mouth. He was the brain behind this game of stolen treasures, whose profits from years of business had been invested in the world's biggest scheme of peddling pilfered pelf.

Glook snarled viciously at sight of the prisoners.

"You'll pay for this!" he spat. "You'll pay like Klurg did when he threatened to tell about the crew I had stationed on the pier, unless I came across with cash."

Pausing, Glook turned to Ferth and Colgan.

"The pier crew cracked," he told his henchmen. "The Shadow broke it up. But they held him off until I reached the model submarine."

Harry was staring now, but Margo was restraining a wise expression. She'd guessed the answer; the sub was Glook's way of getting to and from the Point, right to the center of Seaview City, when the road was closed and the Channel watched.

Colgan's face became troubled.

"Did anybody recognize you?"

"Not even The Shadow," scoffed Glook. "He switched off the lights when I cracked the window of Mrs. Tarleton's room. Dee and Bankhill were there, accusing each other of what they hadn't done, but I didn't expect The Shadow."

Bitter enough ordinarily, Glook's expression was something when he tried to make it more that way. Then, turning to Broy, Glook added:

"I intended to bring back your Rembrandt. Don't worry; we'll pick it up in due time. It's one job that will never be recognized for what it really is."

Now Glook reared upright. Arms akimbo, he gave the prisoners what he considered a parting stare. At the same time he couldn't restrain his sneer.

"Your friends, The Shadow's friends," declared Glook, "are blundering all over the Point. They've been through my store houses but haven't found a thing, since all that counts is here."

A hopeful glimmer came to Harry's eyes. He realized that The Shadow's trouble-shooters must have arrived and met with Hawkeye. But Glook's confidence continued.

"We'll wait them out," Glook scoffed. "Nobody could guess the nature of this hideaway, not even The Shadow!"

There was something fierce in the sibilance with which Glook pronounced the name. It brought echoing hisses from all around the cavern. For a moment, the hisses faded, then rose again, uncannily.

It was Harry who blinked. He'd seen what Margo hadn't, the trifling opening of the curved wall above the runway, its immediate closing, with no change in the blackness. Except that there had been a change!

It was a whisper now and it rose into a mirthful shudder that suddenly became a quivering crescendo, the beginning of a mighty, taunting challenge, hurled in the very midst of this secret place that Glook claimed to be unsolvable.

Men of crime wheeled with their leader, to see the figure that came lunging from the runway, two guns swinging from his mighty fists.

The Shadow had cracked crime's riddle. He was here to apply the same treatment to the skulls that housed the secret!

CHAPTER XXI

TWO guns to four, but The Shadow had the jump and used it in his whirlwind style. It was great to see the way he clunked down Colgan and Ferth before they could even draw their own weapons. The Shadow used a deflected system that turned his stunning strokes toward other heads.

Broy's turn came next. The clout he received sent him spilling with his drawn gun, his one shot nicking cement from the false dune's dome.

But Glook, the living crab, dodged the stroke that came his way. With a twist that seemed to turn him inside out, crime's master did a complete reverse and thrust a gun straight toward The Shadow.

A perfect aim, but too close. The back-swing of The Shadow's gun hand brought metal against metal.

A big automatic slashed Glook's revolver aside and downward, just as the chief crook fired. It was the floor that flattened that bullet.

Another amazing turnabout and Glook transformed himself from a human crab into an eel. Sneaking up the runway, he tripped the door catch and was out through the crack of the lifting entrance, which dropped to cup The Shadow's pursuing fire.

After Glook went The Shadow and this time the door stayed open. Hawkeye came darting in to take charge and seeing nothing but stunned foemen lying about, he took time to cut Margo and Harry loose.

Harry was needed here, but Margo wasn't. At least she so decided. Dashing out among the dunes, Margo forgot the lashing wind and scouring sand as she looked for The Shadow's followers. Clambering up a dune, she finally located them, over toward the bridge.

They were hard on Glook's trail but he was smart at short-cuts. His crabby mode of navigation enabled him to go over dunes as well as around them. Ahead of the long range shots that tried to stop him, Glook reached a truck parked beside the bridge.

It was the truck with the raucous horn, the one that became impatient only when Glook arrived back home, because its business was to let certain workers know that bridge could then be cleared, since Glook's alibi was set.

Only tonight, Glook no longer had an alibi. His game was lost, like his stolen treasures.

Yet Glook would not give up.

As the truck received Glook, it started over the bridge. A couple of men planted planks to receive it, then drew guns to fire a few shots at The Shadow's agents as they reached the bridge.

Bad business to give themselves away like this. Those men who came so swiftly to life were Glook's pet thugs, who ordinarily were the workmen who gave the foreman the most trouble. They were showing themselves to be phonies and their fellow-workers didn't like it.

The honest bridge crew piled on the two renegades. Wildly, the thugs broke loose, grabbed onto the passing truck and took to flight with their master. Another man had the same idea; he was Jerry, the crooked chauffeur. But first, Jerry hoped to put Twambley's car out of commission.

The trouble was, he thought of putting Twambley out of commission too. Yanking open the rear door and finding no one, Jerry lost valuable time through sheer astoundment. By the time he got back to the car hood and raised it, hoping to mess up the motor, shots were coming from the bridge.

With bullets singing like mosquitoes at the height of their season, Jerry ducked around in back of the car and snatched onto the truck when it came along. Therewith, the chase was on.

The bridge repair men saw The Shadow's agents, Marsland, Crofton and LeBrue, come dashing across to reach the big car. What they didn't see was The Shadow, close behind his crew. He was actually visible, though vaguely, in the moonlight, but the onlookers weren't interested.

What intrigued them was the final member of the party, a girl in a streamlined bathing suit who came popping right out of the sand dunes to dash after the group that had crossed the bridge. If Margo had been an actual mermaid, the men at the bridge couldn't have been much more surprised, and at that, she was a pretty fair equivalent.

Margo was in time to catch what she thought was the last and only car, to find out that it wasn't. Chance LeBrue was at the wheel instead of The Shadow. Miles Crofton was beside Chance, which put Margo in back with Cliff Marsland.

Looking out through the rear window. Margo saw another car wheel from among the sand dunes along the road. It was Harry's coupe and why The Shadow had chosen to use it, Margo couldn't understand, just yet.

Answers came after the chase reached the turn off to the Lower Causeway that led across the Meadows. The truck veered in that direction and Chance swung after it. The Shadow's car kept straight on, up the Main Boulevard.

The truck was gaining as it approached the draw-bridge across the Channel and in its turn, the draw was starting to swing open. Giving the car full speed, Chance took a chance. He caught the bridge in time, sliced over to the other half of the roadway, climbed the foot path and sheered off the wooden rail as he jumped the car across a dozen feet of space to hook the causeway beyond.

One car at least would follow the fugitive truck, even though some stooge of Glook's had opened the draw and would probably fix it that way. The police wouldn't be able to follow, but The Shadow's agents

should suffice.

Or would they?

That truck of Glook's was a speedy job. It was hitting close to eighty as it shot across the Meadows and the old car that the cab company had furnished Twambley could not begin to show that speed. Chance got it up to sixty-five, even though it strained the chassis and brought queer noises from the motor, but that wasn't enough.

With five miles to go, the truck was due to pile up better than a half-mile lead before it reached the main-land beyond the Meadows. With that margin it could lose itself among a maze of old back roads.

Settling back in the rear seat, Margo stared hopelessly from the window, only to pluck Cliff's arm and exclaim:

"Look!"

Overtaking the old car was about the fastest thing that they had ever seen on wheels. It was a long, racy Interurban trolley, unlighted, but visible in the moonlight. Slicking along with an ease as amazing as its speed, that Surf Route special was demonstrating that it could do close to the two miles a minute that no one had ever tried.

The chase had gained a considerable start before The Shadow had taken over his unusual vehicle, for it was obvious that The Shadow was the person in charge. But the lost ground was being gained, and fast.

From the helm of the racing Interurban, the Shadow studied the Causeway and intoned a laugh. His forecast gave him all the margin he required and more. Chance's car dropped behind like something out of a bag and The Shadow could have made Glook's truck look as silly, if he'd wanted. Instead, he let speed slacken as he spurred ahead of the truck.

Causeway and tracks were converging. From the truck it looked possible to beat the trolley to the crossing. The Shadow though was doing things with the brakes, things that Glook didn't guess. He was releasing them, timing them, allowing little spurts between.

Close to the crossing, the trolley nosed into sight from the tall grass with its brakes hitting tight. A blockade was what The Shadow intended; he was drawing an automatic to keep the truck occupied until Chance and the rest arrived to make the capture. Only Glook, for some mad reason, thought he could still make the crossing.

Hitting a big Interurban car amidships was a bad idea, even though the blow was slanted. To do the speed it could, the streamlined trolley needed a low center of gravity and had it. But Glook tried to bowl it right off the tracks, with his truck. He'd have been just about as smart if he'd attempted to knock down his favorite lighthouse by the same method.

The truck buckled, ricocheted, and careened into a crumpling mass of junk as its smashing body was deflected off into the Meadows where it finished with a triple somersault. When The Shadow's crew arrived, they found they could do nothing more than pick up pieces, which applied to Marvin Glook and his companions, as much as to their vehicle.

Later, back at the Hotel Crescent, the late Marvin Glook was the subject of much discussion.

Lamont Cranston was present, as was Joe Cardona, and they were talking in terms of The Shadow.

This was taking place in Mrs. Tarleton's living room, where Margo Lane soon arrived, after stopping at

her own hotel to pick up another set of clothes.

"You say those astrological charts eliminated Doctor Dee," declared Cardona. "How do you figure The Shadow decided that?"

"Because they were the wrong birth signs," replied Cranston. "I checked them myself from the police reports. Ask Mrs. Tarleton. She received a chart for Capricorn, a winter month, and her birthday was only last week. Dee wouldn't have been that dumb."

Cardona guessed that Dee wouldn't have, considering that astrology was his business. Then:

"But what about Montague Bankhill?"

"I suppose The Shadow eliminated him from the start," decided Cranston. "If he'd been behind the game, he could have collected the full cash right in his own auction house, instead of meeting the buyers and demanding the big take later."

That too made sense to Cardona.

"But when did The Shadow figure out the submarine business?" asked Joe.

"Right after Glook disappeared in the surf," calculated Cranston. "Immediately following the Gaudry murder. He must have known that the murderer swam to the pier."

"But that was impossible -"

"Not if you remember what was in the hotel cellar," interposed Cranston. "Do you recall the oxygen tank?"

Cardona nodded.

"A long whiff of pure oxygen," stated Cranston. "will double the time a man can stay under water, or more. Glook used that system and the method, as well as the result, were both leads to the model submarine at the end of Long Pier."

Right then, Margo Lane decided she was rather useless. Her clue of the blinking lights hadn't been necessary at all. By the time she'd gotten it, The Shadow had already picked Marvin Glook as the master mind.

One more thing and an important one, puzzled Joe Cardona. He gestured to Mrs. Tarleton's prize chromo.

"We've used Gaudry's x-ray on it," declared Cardona, "and it doesn't show a thing. Where's the Rembrandt?"

Cranston decided to find that for himself. He took down the picture, studied both sides, and began to remove the frame. That done, the picture literally peeled into two parts.

The chromo, the front layer, was a tracing, as it appeared to be. It was simply a garish, slap-dash outline of a fine old painting that appeared on the second sheet of canvas.

"The x-ray wouldn't show the identical lines," explained Cranston, "but if you'll examine the canvases you'll have the clue that Glook left without knowing it. The grain of the front canvas is crosswise; that of the back canvas, up and down."

Leaving Cardona to ponder over the fact that things could be simpler than they looked, Cranston strolled out with Margo. Impatiently, Margo waited until they reached the lobby before propounding her great question.

"Since you know so much," said Margo, "tell me this, Lamont. How did The Shadow pick out that cleverly faked sand dune down on the Point?"

"He was lucky," returned Cranston, indulgently. "The storm helped him."

"The storm? How?"

"Because Glook faked that dune to conform to the way last year's hurricane had piled the others. The big wind from the other direction twisted them around, or let us say, brought them back toward normal. That one dune stood out as conspicuously as the lighthouse, if you thought about it."

Margo hadn't thought about it until now. She felt very glad that The Shadow had thought of it before.

Thus did Lamont Cranston, as spokesman for The Shadow, clear the last vestige of mystery surrounding his singular duel with another forgotten man of crime, Marvin Glook.

THE END