



LINGO

by Maxwell Grant

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CHAPTER I. COUNCIL OF WAR

DRIZZLY night had gripped Manhattan. Swirling tentacles of gathering fog were suppressing the glow of the city's lights. In districts of lesser brilliance, an insidious gloom seemed creeping in to smother the artificial illumination that counteracted night. In places where lights were ordinarily feeble, this evening had brought an even heavier blanket of oppressiveness.

Such spots were prevalent on the lower East Side. There, one particular thoroughfare was heavily enshrouded. Moist sidewalks lay black beneath the sullen walls of unlighted buildings. An elevated railway, wedged within the confines of the narrow street, provided an overbearing pall.

Occasional stragglers appeared within the feebly lighted areas of infrequent street lamps. These were shambling denizens of the underworld—dips, hopheads and other small fry—who used this thoroughfare in their shifty travels. But none lingered in this secluded block.

The reason became apparent when a flashlight appeared with intermittent blinks, coming southward from

the spot where the elevated curved into view. A patrolman was covering his beat; he was inspecting isolated doorways and other lurking places.

The police had long since classed this block as a haven for suspicious characters. The law's policy was to keep it clear.

Approaching wayfarers spied the blinking light. Skulkers ducked off to other streets, choosing new courses for their travels. The bluecoat's inspection would be a double one: down one side of the street and up the other. While it was on, slinkers would stay away.

There was an exception. As the patrolman passed the mid-point of the block, a hunched figure chanced to arrive from a narrow alley. Quick eyes spied the blink of the flashlight. The stoop-shouldered owner of those optics crouched against the dingy front of an old building. He was on the near side of the street; the patrolman was across the way. Craftily, the newcomer waited.

The cop moved further down. The watching man shifted forward. Sliding through the drizzle, he reached an elevated pillar and lurked there. Then he made further progress, slinking over to the further curb. He was heading for another alleyway, opposite. He could make it, now that the flatfoot had passed.

The crafty wayfarer suppressed a chuckle as he lingered by a final pillar. Dodging patrolmen was a cinch for him. For this prowler was one who had a reputation in the bad lands. Many mobsters would have recognized the pasty, wizened face that showed against the blackness of the "el" pillar. Known as "Hawkeye" to his companions, this hunch-shouldered fellow was recognized as one of the smartest trailers in the underworld.

THE patrolman was crossing the street at the lower corner. The absence of flashlight blinks gave Hawkeye that cue. Quickly, the little man completed the last stage of his maneuver. Gaining the sidewalk, he did a perfect slink toward the yawning blackness of the alley.

Hawkeye stopped abruptly at his goal. With catlike speed, he flattened himself against a brick wall. Huddled in the edge of darkness, he cocked his head to one side and listened. His ear had caught the low buzz of voices. They were coming from a doorway only a few feet from where Hawkeye stood.

"All right, Dunny," came a gruff order, "spill it fast. What's come along the grapevine?"

"Nothin' much, Joe," was the whiny response, "cept that it looks worser for Rook Hollister. It's goin' aroun' that Rook's due to be rubbed out."

"How soon?"

"No tellin'."

A pause. Hawkeye grinned in darkness. He knew the owners of those voices. One of the men within the set-in doorway was Detective Joe Cardona, ace of the New York headquarters. The other was "Dunny" Sukes, a supposed hophead whom Hawkeye had long since branded as a stool pigeon.

Dunny had come down this street and sneaked into the doorway. The patrolman had purposely passed up that hiding place in making his inspection. For the harness bull had known that Dunny would be there. Traveling in the bluecoat's wake was Joe Cardona, on his way to a meeting with the stoolie.

The cleverness of the gag was the reason for Hawkeye's grin. The patrolman's inspection had driven prowlers from this terrain. None would return until after the bluecoat had finished.

Right now, the patrolman was dawdling across the street, prolonging his inspection. By the time he had

concluded it, Cardona would be gone. Afterward, Dunny would slink away, coming from this block like any other chance prowler.

“SO the finger's on Rook, eh?” Cardona's question caused Hawkeye to strain and listen further. “They want to chop him down like they did with the others that tried to be big shots?”

“That's the idea, Joe,” agreed Dunny. “Rook wants to be a big guy —head man. You know what he promised 'em. Said that when he got to the top he was goin' to bring back the rackets. End this business of one mob musclin' in on another. Well—he ain't doin' it. Somethin' went flooie when he tried to hook up with the dock wallopers. Then he flivved when he was supposed to get a new milk racket started.”

“And now he's gone sour with the laundry racket?”

“That's it, Joe. They say that Blitz Schumbert was all ready to start it. Had it as good as swung. Rook, bein' the big shot, sent a mob over to wreck that Brooklyn laundry. But they never got no chanct to heave their pineapples.

“Some other mob knocked 'em off on the way there. The job wasn't pulled. An' the laundry owners handed Blitz the Bronx cheer. On account of him tellin' 'em trouble was comin' when it didn't.”

Hawkeye heard Joe Cardona deliver a grunt of understanding. This was no news to the ace sleuth. Dunny must have recognized it, for he put another statement in a hurry.

“Listen, Joe”—the stoolie's voice was half a whisper—“there's some mugs say it wasn't no ordinary outfit that queered that job. They've been talkin' about it, sayin' maybe The Shadow was behind it.”

“Yeah?” Cardona's gruff question struck Hawkeye as a feeler for further information. It came.

“That's what they're sayin', Joe,” persisted Dunny. “But mostly, it's figured as a bum guess. It ain't The Shadow's way to go aroun' with a mob. An' this ain't the first time that some smart guys have knocked off Rook's torpedoes. When he sent that crew of gorillas out on the bank job—”

“I know all about it,” put in Cardona, impatiently. “It was queered by another mob. But we never pinned the evidence on Rook, about sending the crew out to rob the bank. Forget that, Dunny. Tell me what they're saying about The Shadow.”

“That's what I'm gettin' at, Joe. The bank job—the docks—the milk racket—now, this laundry job—well, it's all bad for Rook, if he wants to rule the city. But who's stoppin' him? The mobs that are doin' it ain't big. That's why the smart boys think they ain't no mobs at all.

“They figure The Shadow's crossin' the dope, see? Workin' with a picked crew. Makin' it look like Rook ain't got the mobs lined up, like he says he has. Makin' Rook a palooka instead of a big shot.”

“Which means that Rook's lieutenants want to get rid of him?”

“Sure! So they can put in a new big shot an' start all over again. An' the new guy will be another softy for The Shadow. The new guy won't get nowhere either.

“But listen, Joe. I ain't sayin' all this is so, I'm only tellin' what a few birds think. Most of 'em figure that Rook just ain't got the hold he says he has. That's all.”

THE patrolman's light was blinking from the opposite side of the street, near the upper corner. Cardona was noting its movements through the drizzle. He knew that the cop had stalled as long as he could.

“All right, Dunny,” commented Joe. “Keep finding out whatever else you can. It's time for me to leave.”

Hawkeye shrank into the alleyway, as the broad-shouldered figure of the detective came in view. Cardona started up the street, keeping close to the shelter of the blackened elevated. Hawkeye had heard all that was to be said. He edged through the alley.

Tensely, the little man repressed a chuckle as he continued on his course. Reaching the end of the alleyway, Hawkeye picked a new thoroughfare and headed deeper into darkened districts. All the while, he was thinking of the conversation that he had heard.

What Dunny had told Cardona concerning The Shadow was, as yet, no more than rumor. That was the way with affairs that concerned The Shadow. A master fighter, his identity unknown, The Shadow was a mystery to the underworld itself. Criminals dreaded his might; they shuddered when his name was mentioned. Rumors were ever rife concerning The Shadow.

This rumor, like others, failed to gain full credence; but it happened—so Hawkeye knew—to be a correct one. For Hawkeye, himself, was a member of the small but chosen crew that The Shadow was at present using to confuse the underworld and bring disaster to the aims of “Rook” Hollister.

After a period of enforced inactivity, men of crime had banded in hope of reviving obliterated rackets. Strong mobleaders had sought a suitable overlord. One after another, the czars whom they had chosen had failed. Now Rook Hollister was attempting to become the big shot —the overlord of all crime.

Though Hawkeye prided himself on his knowledge of the underworld and its ways, he knew that his own ability at spotting crime movements was trivial compared with that of The Shadow. Somehow, somewhere, The Shadow was managing to spot the coming activities of Rook and his lieutenants. So far, The Shadow had balked all of Rook's best schemes.

More than that, The Shadow had found out something that Dunny, the stool pigeon, had done no more than suspect. The grapevine inkled that Rook's lieutenants were chafing under the big shot's regime. The Shadow, however, had learned that they were actually ready to end it.

Hawkeye, tonight, was on his way to do spy duty for The Shadow. His mysterious chief had learned of a most secluded rendezvous wherein lieutenants of crime were to hold secret cabal. The Shadow had ordered Hawkeye to look in on that meeting and had also discovered a way whereby the spying could be done with ease.

How The Shadow had managed this was a total mystery to Hawkeye, and the little agent was eager to reach his destination.

Quickening his footsteps, Hawkeye turned into a narrow, curving street that extended away from an elevated structure. He continued on through blackness; then as the street took a final angle, he slowed his pace.

Half a minute later Hawkeye reached a corner from which he could see a lurid, misty glow that pierced the drizzle.

HAWKEYE had reached the fringe of Chinatown. Thirty yards down this street, in the direction of the brilliance, were the quaint signs of Oriental shops that marked the beginning of the Chinese business district.

Peering craftily as he moved in that direction, Hawkeye noted one placard that bore a silver dragon. He edged to the brick front of a building and stopped just before he reached the shop.

A secluded doorway was on the right. Hawkeye slipped into it and tried the barrier. It opened; The Shadow's agent stepped into a passage and closed the door behind him. The place was deserted; and Hawkeye found another door at the end of the passage. Looking about in the dim light of a single incandescent, Hawkeye made sure that no one was present, watching.

He pressed the lower hinge of the door. It joggled upward. He did the same with the other hinge. Then he tried the knob. The door opened; Hawkeye found a dim stone stairway and pulled the door shut behind him. He heard clicks as the hinges automatically relocked.

Descending the stairway, Hawkeye found a short passage that extended for a dozen yards. A single light guided him to the end, where he reached a narrow spiral stairway that seemed to spread upward like the leaves of a fan. These steps were blackened and Hawkeye had not taken a dozen upward before he was in complete gloom. The spiral shape of the stairway cut off the light from below.

Hawkeye was moving with the utmost caution, for this was to be his journey's end. He groped along the wall feeling his way through the darkness until he discerned thin, slitted lines of light.

Hands extended, Hawkeye reached the topmost step and stopped against a solid wall. He peered eagerly through two slits. He became tense at the sight before him.

Hawkeye was looking down into an oddly paneled room wherein bizarre hangings adorned the walls. The chamber was square and formed a perfect Oriental setting with its curious taborets that served as chairs and the carved teakwood table that occupied the center of the room.

A group was assembled in this rendezvous. But the members of the gathering were not Celestials. Hawkeye saw hardened faces that he recognized. The Shadow's agent was looking in on the meeting of Rook Hollister's lieutenants.

CHAPTER II. THE SECOND TRAIL

THERE were half a dozen men in the group which Hawkeye surveyed. Racketeers and mobleaders, The Shadow's agent knew the identity of every man present. Certain ones, however, impressed Hawkeye as being more important; yet all represented discontented elements in Rook Hollister's wavering underworld empire.

"Blitz" Schumbert was present. Staring through the slitted loopholes, Hawkeye viewed the rogue side-face and recognized Blitz's pug-nosed, sharp-jawed profile. Hawkeye had expected to find Blitz at this meeting. Blitz's budding laundry racket had been the latest to suffer by Rook Hollister's inability to back it up.

Opposite Blitz was a chunky square-faced rowdy whose face was expressionless but whose eyes were shifting constantly. Hawkeye knew this fellow as a toughened mobleader who commanded a picked corps of gorillas. His name was "Ping" Gradley; he and his mob had long been recognized as strongarm workers for Rook Hollister.

Directly facing Hawkeye was Louie Caparani, a wise-faced, dark-complexioned individual who was reputed to be linked with big-time gamblers. The other three members of the group were crooks whom Hawkeye regarded as of lesser importance.

Evidently the group expected arrivals. No business was under discussion; the six were joking while they waited. This was pleasing to Hawkeye because of a very definite reason; one that had considerable bearing on his mission.

Hawkeye had been tipped to this meeting through a telephone call from Burbank, The Shadow's contact agent, who forwarded all instructions to active workers. Briefly, Burbank had informed Hawkeye that The Shadow had learned of a rendezvous in the house of a Chinese named Koy Dow, which could be reached through the Chinese shop known as the "Silver Dragon."

The Shadow, acquainted with many of the secrets of the strange Chinese district, also knew that a secret passage existed in back of the meeting room. This was the route which Hawkeye had been instructed to follow; it was a varied course that had brought the little spotter to his present lookout.

Obviously, The Shadow had some business afoot that prevented him from taking this post which Hawkeye now occupied. The Shadow had delegated the duty to his agent, confident that the secret observation post would not be in use. It was Hawkeye's job to watch what went on at the meeting, and the agent had also been delegated to a further task.

He was to keep a special eye upon a mobleader named "Trip" Burley, whom, Burbank had assured, would be at the meeting. Trip Burley was the only crook whom Burbank had named.

The contact man had instructed Hawkeye to be ready to sneak from his lookout post whenever Trip left the meeting room. It would then be Hawkeye's job to pick up Trip's trail when the mobleader appeared outside the entrance to the Silver Dragon.

Evidently Trip Burley was playing some double part; a fact which The Shadow must have suspected. For Trip Burley, as an underworld character, could not be regarded as either important or formidable.

The fact that Trip was not in the meeting room was simply proof to Hawkeye that others might be expected. Looking across the room, Hawkeye noted what appeared to be a doorway between two hanging banners. As he watched, Hawkeye saw a panel move up; the man who stepped into view was Trip Burley.

THERE was something about Trip Burley that made him look suspicious. As hard-faced as the others, he had an air of affability that seemed at variance with the toughness. Trip's eyes were beady; his puffy lips carried a leering grin. The newcomer waved a greeting to the group about the table and seated himself upon a vacant taboret.

Hawkeye noticed that the paneled door remained up. Half a minute later, two more men entered. Both were attired in American clothes, but one was a Chinese. Hawkeye decided that the bland-faced Oriental must be Koy Dow.

The other was an individual whose presence puzzled Hawkeye; for although he was recognized in the underworld, he was not reputed to be a lieutenant of Rook Hollister's. Koy Dow's companion was named "Lingo" Queed. He was a tall, lanky fellow who walked in loose-limbed fashion.

Lingo Queed's face was recognizable by two predominant features. One was a flattened nose that spread over the whole center of his physiognomy. Apparently it had always been over-large; and its present appearance looked like the result of a powerful punch that Lingo had once failed to stop.

Lingo's chin was his other characteristic. He carried it with an outward thrust that looked like an invitation for future battlers to use it for a target instead of his crippled nose.

Standing within the doorway, Lingo looked around the group as though inquiring if all were present. He received a nod from Blitz Schumbert. Turning, Lingo babbled words of Chinese to Koy Dow. The Celestial went out through the door and closed the panel behind him.

The incident explained the situation to Hawkeye. Lingo Queed's nickname, like so many underworld monikers, was a deserved one. He was called "Lingo" because of his ability to handle various languages.

It was easy to see that Rook Hollister's lieutenants had wanted complete secrecy in their meeting. Chinatown had been a good bet. Lingo, familiar with the Chinese tongue, and therefore friendly with Celestials such as Koy Dow, had fixed the meeting place for them.

This had obviously worked excellently for The Shadow. He was as familiar with Chinatown as was Lingo Queed. Hawkeye figured that The Shadow must have learned of this meeting during one of his visits to Chinatown. That explained the tip that had come through Burbank.

Lingo Queed, as fixer, rated with Rook's lieutenants. He sat down with the others. It was Blitz Schumbert who started the proceedings. His opening comments came in a snarling basso that Hawkeye heard clearly.

"You birds know why we're here," commenced Blitz. "We've all been working straight with Rook Hollister. But we've been waiting for him to deliver, and he hasn't. My racket is queered because he muffed the deal. That hits the rest of you, because we're all supposed to be working together."

Blitz paused, his statement almost unfinished, in order that he might see the effect of his opening remarks. He was waiting for comments, and one came. From Louie Caparani.

"The way I look at it, Blitz," purred Louie. "You've got a good reason to want the skids greased for Rook—"

"I'm not saying that," interrupted Blitz quickly. "I'm not the guy to beef just because one bet goes sour. But I'm tellin' you this: Rook muffed a couple of good bets before this one; and he told me that when the racket was ripe he'd guarantee the pineapple mob would do their stuff. Well, they didn't, and my racket is shot. I'm just tellin' what happened, that's all."

"I know all that, Blitz"—Louie Caparani's purr was even more convincing than before—"and I'm sticking to what I just said. You've got a good reason to want the skids greased; and since you've got it, we've got it too."

"Then you're for greasing them?"

"More than that, Blitz."

"A rubout, Louie?"

"You've guessed it."

TENSE silence followed. This meeting had come to its point more quickly than even Blitz Schumbert, its instigator, had expected. Blitz himself was staring steadily at the group. Louie Caparani was extracting a cigarette from his pocket, a half smile on his thin dark lips.

Hawkeye studied the others. Ping Gradley's eyes were no longer on the move. They were fixed toward Louie. Lingo Queed appeared almost disinterested, as though the matter did not concern him.

Trip Burley, however, had shown a marked change of expression. His smirking grin was gone. His beady eyes were blinking as he leaned forward, fists half clenched upon the table. There was something in his attitude that renewed Hawkeye's suspicion that Trip was here with a conniving purpose.

"All right, Louie," affirmed Blitz suddenly, "you've put the proposition. Looks like we're all with you.

We'll listen some more. The finger's on Rook. How soon will we press it?"

"In a little while," returned Louie. "After the next time we come here. We'll have a chance to talk it over then."

"What's the good of stalling," queried Queed, in a harsh growl. "We've put the finger on Rook. The job is to rub him out."

"Unless we lift the finger," remarked Louie, still holding his half smile. "We might want to do that, Blitz."

"On account of what?"

"On account of my racket, Blitz. It's ripe. Rook Hollister is getting his chance to help it along tonight. If I let it ride until after we put Rook on the spot, I may lose out on a good bet."

"I get you, Louie. You're for giving Rook another break?"

"Yes; but get me straight. It's not on Rook's account. It's on my own. Listen, Blitz"—Louie leaned forward upon the table and wagged a wise finger—"I've got the night club bimbos sewed up the way I want them. Ready for a swell payoff—"

"You mean, if Rook comes through and makes them know you mean business?"

"That's right. Wait a minute, Blitz." Louie held up a hand as Blitz started to speak. "I know what you're going to say. Rook didn't swing it for you. But that's no reason he isn't going to swing it for me."

"Why not?"

"Because I know the guy he's sending out on tonight's job!"

"Yeah? Who?"

Louie made a nudge with his thumb. Blitz's eyes followed the direction. Louie was indicating Ping Gradley, whose eyes were still steady. Blitz met Ping's gaze; Ping nodded.

"Louie's right, Blitz," assured Ping. "I'm working for Rook tonight. And it's no hooey this time. Rook's picked the spot that counts. You know Karl Durmsted? Fellow that runs the Casino Rouge?"

Blitz nodded.

"Well, I'm slated to talk business with Durmsted tonight." Ping laughed roughly. "And if Durmsted don't listen to me, he won't be listening to nobody about nothing else!"

"Rook's told you to bump him?"

"You bet he has! What's more, he's picked the best way to do it. No fireworks around the night club. Durmsted goes out by his own private exit, with nobody knowing he's left. After that, he takes a ride."

"And listen to this, Blitz," added Louie Caparani. "I'm telling you that if Durmsted gets his one-way trip, I'll have every other night club owner begging for the proposition that I've offered them. We'll mop up the softest big dough that we've counted on yet!"

Grunts of agreement came from listeners. This crowd knew something about Caparani's racket. The man's persuasive argument had done the rest. Cold-bloodedly, Louie had first recommended death for Rook Hollister. Still as cold as before, he was advocating a respite. His whole attitude was one of

business.

“Sounds good, Louie,” decided Blitz. Eyes were fixed on him as he spoke. “I’m for holding off, the way you’ve put it. We’ve got to have a guy at the head of the works. Rook’s as good as anybody. I’ve got nothing against him, so long as he delivers.

“What’s more, we can count on Ping here.” Blitz turned to Gradley. “If things gum up tonight, Ping, we won’t be blaming you. We’ll take it out on Rook. All right, that’s settled.”

Blitz arose. The others followed suit. The meeting had ended in short order. The plotters had completed their plans. Hawkeye saw Lingo stroll over and tap at the paneled door. A signal to bring Koy Dow.

While the group was waiting, Blitz beckoned to Lingo.

“I’ll tip you off, Lingo,” informed Blitz, “when we’re ready to pull in here again. Then you can come down and fix it with the chink. This is a swell spot. We’ll keep it.”

Lingo nodded.

Louie Caparani entered the conversation. Hawkeye heard him speak to Lingo. Louie wanted to know if Lingo spoke Greek, adding that he thought certain restaurant proprietors would listen to offers of “protection,” if persuaded in their native tongue.

Lingo nodded again; this time a broad grin appeared between his flattened nose and his projecting chin. Lingo could talk Greek; he could speak Italian also, as he proceeded to demonstrate, by using that language in a voluble reply to Louie.

But Hawkeye had no desire to linger, listening to a new conversation in a language that he did not understand. The panel had risen; Koy Dow was standing beyond it, beckoning to the exit. Only Blitz, Louie and Lingo were remaining. The others were on their way out; with them was Trip Burley.

HAWKEYE had not forgotten his second mission. Quickly, The Shadow’s agent slid back from his lookout post. He moved down the spiral stairway, used the passage to the next building and reached the door at the head of the stairs. It opened at his touch; the tricky knob was not latched on the inside.

Hawkeye gained the street. Huddled in the shelter of his doorway, he watched figures coming from the Silver Dragon. He recognized Ping Gradley leaving the shop. The mobleader was heading forth to prepare for tonight’s job at the Casino Rouge.

Then came two others; following them was Trip Burley. They separated as soon as they reached the street. As luck had it, Trip took a course that led him into the darkened area in front of Hawkeye’s doorway.

Hawkeye gave Trip a thirty-yard start. Then the little trailer ventured forth. With sharp eyes peering through the drizzle, Hawkeye took up the trail. Five minutes later, he was following Trip up the steps of an elevated station.

He saw Trip leave the train at Forty-second Street. Hawkeye stepped off and resumed his trail. Trip was continuing afoot, threading his way through West Side streets and avenues, on a course that would have baffled an ordinary trailer.

At times, the drizzle hampered Hawkeye; again, it aided him when he used its blurred covering to close in and check up on his quarry. In fact, it was that very process that helped Hawkeye at the final point of the trail.

Hawkeye was close to Trip when they reached an isolated street. Closing in, Hawkeye saw a fringe of lamplight. He stopped short, watching. He saw Trip shift his pace to the right. Then the man was gone.

Hurrying up, Hawkeye found himself by a doorway that led into a garage. He entered, knowing that Trip must have taken that direction.

Along in back of a row of stored cars, Hawkeye spied Trip turning into an inner doorway. Moving up, Hawkeye expected to find a stairway. Instead, he stepped into a dimly lighted space that looked like nothing more than an airshaft.

Listening, Hawkeye caught a slight sound from the wall ahead. Advancing toward the sound, he stopped at a tin-sheathed barrier that looked like a fireproof lining of the compartment. But Hawkeye knew the cause of the sound that he could barely hear.

That rough wall was actually the doorway to a small elevator shaft. Trip had entered the elevator and was ascending to some destination above.

The slight rumble ceased. Hawkeye knew that it would be dangerous to follow further. He had at least learned the vicinity of Trip's goal.

SNEAKING from the compartment, Hawkeye noticed a closer exit at the rear of the garage. He went through it and came into an alleyway that led him into the next street.

This was a quiet, secluded thoroughfare; but among older buildings were some modern ones. The nearest was an apartment house. Upon the drizzle-soaked awning that served as a marquee, Hawkeye read the name:

HOTEL THURMONT

The Hotel Thurmont backed against the old garage in which Hawkeye had last seen Trip Burley. It was quite possible that the elevator which Trip had taken could have carried him to some spot in that hotel. Furthermore, there was every reason to suppose that such was actually the case. For Hawkeye—like many others concerned in underworld affairs—knew that the Hotel Thurmont was the apartment house where Rook Hollister lived.

Hawkeye's second trail had told him why The Shadow had wanted him to follow Trip Burley. Of those lieutenants who had met in Chinatown tonight, one had been a traitor to the plotters themselves. That one was Trip Burley.

Hawkeye was positive that Trip had gone back to Rook; that already the tool was telling the big shot that his lieutenants had slated him for death. Hawkeye had learned more than facts concerning coming crime. He had gained the proof that confirmed The Shadow's suspicions of an understanding between Trip Burley and Rook Hollister.

And while Hawkeye was checking, The Shadow would be looking for more higher types of evidence.

CHAPTER III. THE DEATH WARRANT

PING GRADLEY had announced his plans at the Chinatown meeting. In so doing, he had let out information which he had hitherto confined to the members of his own mob. But since Ping was working under orders from Rook Hollister, he had deemed it wise to spill the news to the lieutenants who had accepted him as a fellow plotter.

Louie Caparani, of course, had known beforehand that Ping was scheduled to command a strong-arm

crew in his behalf. Louie as well as Ping were both in accord, so far as Rook Hollister was concerned. They would as soon work for one big shot as another; so they had no reason to undercut Rook's plan for tonight.

When Ping Gradley left the Chinatown meeting, he was already formulating his final plans. He intended to time his job at the Casino Rouge. He was looking forward to murder with a relish. The fact that his success would temporarily vindicate Rook Hollister in the eyes of his lieutenants was a matter to which Ping was comparatively indifferent.

The meeting had been held early. The proper time for a night club foray on the part of gangsters would be much later. Hence, every one at the meeting had understood that Ping would be in no hurry about putting Karl Durmsted on the spot.

Hawkeye, too, had recognized that fact. Hence The Shadow's agent had completed his appointed task of following Trip Burley before reporting matters which concerned Ping Gradley.

But Hawkeye's trail had been a short one. Within half an hour after he had left Chinatown, the little agent had reported to Burbank. The contact man, in turn, had communicated with The Shadow. He had done this by a call over the private wire to The Shadow's sanctum, that hidden abode where the master fighter planned his campaigns against men of evil.

Burbank frequently encountered delay in reaching The Shadow, for his chief visited the sanctum only at intervals. Tonight The Shadow had had important business of his own, and it been taken Burbank more than fifteen minutes to reach him after receiving Hawkeye's report.

But all this had meant less than an actual hour before The Shadow had learned the news that Hawkeye had sent him. With ample time ahead, he had given Burbank definite instructions for Hawkeye and other agents.

MIDNIGHT had brought a lessening in the drizzle that was falling on Manhattan. Ping Gradley, riding in a taxicab, wore a pleased smile as he approached the uptown night club known as the Casino Rouge. The clearing sky meant more customers at the night club.

As Ping had hoped, the Casino Rouge was crowded. A floor show was on and the patrons had chosen all the closest tables. The overflow extended almost to the walls; hence Ping, of necessity, was forced to take a table against the wall itself. This, too, was in keeping with his scheme.

Ping had passed the check room without leaving his hat and coat. He laid the garments on one chair of the two at the table and took the other for himself. Waiters were busy; it would be some minutes before any happened to notice the newcomer.

Ping was counting upon acting before a waiter showed up. Hunched at his table, he was watching the night club with shifty eyes; but his gaze kept focusing at one definite point—a doorway on the near side of a pillar some twenty feet away.

Five minutes passed. No waiter had appeared. Ping's shifting eyes caught sight of a tall man in tuxedo, walking toward the doorway—an elderly face; a bald head fringed with gray hair. Ping recognized Karl Durmsted, the night club proprietor. He watched. Durmsted passed through the doorway. Rising immediately, Ping picked up his hat and coat and strolled in the same direction.

Ping had been wearing street clothes on his visit to Chinatown. Since then, he had changed to tuxedo. His present attire enabled him to pass muster as a regular patron of the Casino Rouge. A passing waiter gave him no more than a glance. Ping's white shirt-front was an indication that he was a reputable guest.

Ping was at the doorway when the waiter passed. As soon as the man's gaze had turned, Ping stepped through a little arch, descended four steps and rapped politely at the door itself.

The doorknob turned; the portal opened and Ping stepped into a little office to find himself face to face with Karl Durmsted.

First noticing Ping's attire, the proprietor stepped back, thinking that he had admitted a friend.

Ping closed the door with his left hand. He thrust his right into the pocket of his tuxedo coat. An ugly bulge indicated that he had gripped a revolver.

"Sit down," growled Ping, indicating the chair by Durmsted's desk. "Sit down and listen. I want to talk to you!"

DURMSTED complied. His face showed a look that betokened puzzlement rather than fear. Ping moved to the front of the desk and rested the right side of his coat upon it. He did not remove his hand from his pocket; but the bulge showed more plainly. Durmsted could hear something metallic thud through the cloth as it contacted the surface of the table.

"Listen, you," began Ping. "I've got something I want to talk over. Just a little business deal that's going to be good for your health."

"Rather interesting," returned Durmsted dryly. "If you want the combination of the safe"—he nodded toward the corner—"you are welcome to it. Unfortunately—for you at least—it contains only a few dollars. Enough, though, to pay you for the rent of that tuxedo."

"Lay off the wisecracks," snarled Ping. "I told you I'm here to talk business, and that's what I'm going to do!"

"Very well," nodded Durmsted; "suppose you introduce yourself. I presume you already know who I am."

"And it won't do you no good," snorted Ping, "to know who I am. The proposition I'm goin' to talk about is one you've heard already. From a guy named Louie Caparani who gave you a good chance to pick up some soft dough."

"I recall Caparani," admitted Durmsted. "I also remember the proposal that he made. I told him I was not interested in it. That was final."

"Yeah?" returned Ping. "Well maybe you didn't hear Louie straight and maybe he didn't hear you straight. He told me you got the idea and that you liked it. Just wanted me to drop in and remind you."

"Caparani's proposition was this," declared Durmsted. He leaned forward in his swivel chair and rested his hands upon the edge of the desk. "First of all he wanted the checking privileges in this night club. I told him that they were already contracted for. I added that I would not be interested even if he offered a higher bid. Then he told me that he did not intend to make a bid at all; that he expected me to pay him for the favor of taking the check rooms off my hands."

Durmsted paused with a sour smile; he was staring straight at Ping. The mobleader, his eyes no longer shifty, was meeting the proprietor's gaze.

"Go on," ordered Ping. "I'll hear you out, just to see if you've got it straight the way Louie told you."

"CAPARANI felt"—Durmsted's tone was dry and sarcastic—"that the check rooms needed what he

termed 'protection'; namely, that patrons of this night club might suffer loss and damage to their belongings if I continued to entrust the check-room privileges to the present holders.”

“All right,” growled Ping. “And what did you say to that?”

“I told Caparani that he was running a racket,” retorted Durmsted, leaning further forward and tightening his hands on the desk edge.

“That's your idea,” snarled Ping, “but Louie thinks different! Listen to me, old bozo. I'm not here to listen to a stall. I've come to give you the works, and you're going to get it, unless you change your mind in a hurry. It's Louie that wants to be soft with you; but I don't! What's your answer? Are you in or out?”

Durmsted's right thumb was beneath the edge of the desk. It pressed, unseen by Ping. Meeting the vicious killer's gaze, Durmsted made a final stall for time. He began to nod; then spoke slowly:

“I guess I'm in—since you put it that way. Maybe—well, maybe it would be best to take on this Caparani proposition. Yes, I'm in.”

So speaking, Durmsted rose from his chair. His tall form relaxed. He looked weak and helpless.

Ping shifted back from the desk and drew his hand from his pocket. He eyed Durmsted and saw a smile appear upon the proprietor's lips.

“Take a look behind you,” suggested Durmsted.

Ping wheeled about. The door had opened. Into the small room had stepped two husky men in tuxedos. They were trouncers whom Durmsted had summoned by pressure of the button on his desk.

“I provided for an occasion such as this,” remarked the proprietor to Ping. “I thought it best to hire two men who could deal with visitors of your type.” Then to the bouncers the proprietor ordered:

“Take this fellow's gun away from him and eject him by my private exit.” Still smiling, Durmsted pointed to a door at the right of the room. “Don't give him opportunity to make any trouble. That is why I want you to use the private exit. No need to disturb the customers if you have to be violent.”

“So you've ticketed me for a slugging, hey?” jeered Ping. “Well, you made a bum guess this trip. Didn't have much trouble getting a pair of tough bimbos on your pay roll, did you? Well I didn't have any trouble fixing them to work for me!”

AS he spoke, Ping stepped forward unmolested by the bouncers. Yanking a stub-nosed revolver from his pocket, Ping jabbed it against Durmsted's ribs.

The truth dawned on the gaping proprietor. His newly hired bouncers were mobsters. Ping had signed them up to work against their employer. This time, the fear that Durmsted showed was real. Frightened, he began to stammer protests.

Ping silenced them with a jab of the gun.

“Snatch him,” ordered the mobleader. “We're taking him out through that private exit of his. The mob's waiting to give him the ride he's going to get. He had his chance to come through and he didn't take it.”

As the bouncers seized Durmsted, Ping stepped over, placed his hand upon the knob of the private exit. Turning it, he snarled new jeers as he looked back toward the night club owner. He began to draw the door open so his henchmen could lug Durmsted, helpless, through the passage that led to an outer street.

But as the door came ajar, the unexpected happened.

A terrific jolt came from the other side of the barrier. The door snapped inward; its sweeping edge cracked the side of Ping's head and shoulder. The mobleader went sprawling to the floor.

As Ping uttered a surprised snarl, his two gorillas let go of Durmsted and yanked guns from their pockets. Sensing an unexpected menace, they came up on the draw together.

They never had a chance to fire at the blackness that loomed in from the passage. As their startled eyes discerned a forming figure garbed in inky cloak and hat; as their forefingers sought to snap at gun triggers, two bursts of tonguing flame spat forward, accompanied by a roar that sounded thunderous in the passage.

The traitorous bouncers sprawled. As they toppled, their hands lost their useless guns. Durmsted stood petrified. His amazed eyes saw his would-be assassins fall. He had caught no more than a glimpse of the figure in the doorway.

Ping Gradley, in sprawling, had not lost his gun. Coming to hands and knees, the mobleader, close to the door, caught full view of the black-garbed avenger who had dropped the gorillas. In that swift instant, Ping recognized The Shadow.

Ominous in his guise of blackness, the grim avenger had acted with promptitude. He had timed his shots to the draw of the guns that the gorillas had produced, letting Durmsted back clear of them. Thus had he rescued the honest proprietor; but in that deed The Shadow had allowed a dangerous interval.

He had come to deal with one enemy. He had encountered three. His thrust of the door had been the necessary step to eliminate Ping Gradley, while he handled those who held Karl Durmsted. The bouncers disposed of, Ping was The Shadow's quarry. Ping, in turn, was seeking to make the most of his opportunity to down The Shadow.

THE mobleader had the edge. His fall had come to a lucky ending; he was halfway to his feet as he saw The Shadow turn. Had Ping fired promptly, firmly, with his stub-nosed gun, he might have beaten his cloaked foe to the shot that counted.

But Ping, as he caught the glare of burning eyes; as he saw swinging automatics beneath those blazing optics, made a double move. He sprang for the shelter of the opened door as he pointed his revolver and pressed the trigger.

Like Ping, The Shadow performed a double move. He whirled backward into the doorway, sidewise against the door itself. Only his left hand swung into the room, coming from the very edge of the half-opened barrier.

Ping's shot sizzled through the fold of The Shadow's cloak. With the bark of the mobleader's blunt revolver came the report of The Shadow's left-hand automatic. A bullet winged Ping's shoulder. The snarling crook rolled to the floor.

Durmsted, coming to life, had grabbed a bouncer's gun. Hearing the new shots, the proprietor swung about to see Ping sprawling. Coming up on one knee, Ping saw Durmsted aiming. Forgetting The Shadow, he snapped his revolver upward toward this man whose death he had first sought.

An automatic roared! Ping wavered; his arm sagged. Then Durmsted loosed a volley of frantic shots. Unrealizing that The Shadow had done the necessary job, the night club proprietor riddled Ping's slipping frame with the entire contents of the gun that he had gained.

The Shadow had turned. He was sweeping out through the passage to the street. He knew that people would be coming from the night club itself. But he also knew that it was not that direction that had to be considered. Those in the club would bring aid. Outside were other foemen.

THE SHADOW was right. As he reached the street, he saw men leaping out of two parked cars. Ping's waiting henchmen had heard tokens of the fray. They were coming to aid their dead leader. Like Ping, they encountered a surprise.

The Shadow's guns swept into action. Withered by volleys from the exit, the mobsters scattered, expecting to attack from shelter. Then came new confusion. Automatics blazed strategic shots from across the street.

Hawkeye, Cliff Marsland, Harry Vincent—three agents of The Shadow —were posted there to serve their chief. Mobsters floundered and fled. The parked cars shot away, guided by frantic drivers mad with desire for escape.

As echoes died in the secluded street, a weird laugh sounded in muffled whisper. It reached no living ears save those of The Shadow himself. Killers close by were dead. Those who had scattered were too far away to hear.

A taxicab pulled out after the fleeing cars. The Shadow's agents were departing. The Shadow, himself, needed no conveyance. Police whistles were shrilling; cries were coming from within the night club. The Shadow ignored these tokens of excitement about the Casino Rouge.

Swinging the folds of his cloak about his tall form, he glided forth with long, swift strides. His silent paces carried him along the vacated street, into darkness that gathered him into its own enshrouding folds.

Again the soft, taunting laugh that marked another victory against men of crime. The vague mirth faded. From then on, The Shadow's course was untraceable. Heading toward byways, the being of blackness was lost in blackness. The Shadow was master of the night.

Murder had been arranged, to put teeth in the racket run by Louie Caparani. Ping Gradley had come to the Casino Rouge to deliver death to Karl Durmsted. Ping had failed; death had boomeranged back to him.

Louie Caparani's racket was broken. Ping Gradley's failure and death would be cause for the rubout of the big shot, Rook Hollister. The Shadow had done more than conquer minions of crime. He had signed the death warrant for Rook Hollister!

Little men of crime came easy for the master fighter. It was the big shots The Shadow was after, those who attempted to rule the crime kingdom.

CHAPTER IV. THE BIG SHOT PLANS

TO The Shadow, the victory at the Casino Rouge had become a past event. To Rook Hollister, the big shot, news of the affray would be a future occurrence. For while The Shadow was departing from the field of battle, Rook was anxiously awaiting a report from Ping Gradley, the lieutenant whom he had delegated to take Karl Durmsted for "a ride."

In his apartment at the Hotel Thurmont, Rook Hollister stood alone amid sumptuous surroundings. His quarters took up the entire rear portion of the third floor. Through a thick-paned window, bolted and equipped with bulletproof glass, Rook could look out over the roof of the back-street garage.

This was a corner room of the large apartment. One window opened toward the nearest avenue. The

shade was drawn on that window; it cut off view of an elevated structure, a dozen feet below and thirty yards away. As Rook paced his living room, he wore the expression of an anxious candidate awaiting news of an election. As he paused at intervals, he could hear the grinding, clattering rumble of passing elevated trains.

In facial appearance, Rook Hollister was the superior of his crude-visaged lieutenants. Save for a certain coarseness of features, the big shot was a handsome man. His countenance was square and well-molded. Straight lips, prominent cheek bones and well-shaped nose showed beneath his broad, prominent forehead. His hair was dark, with slightly curly trend.

Attired in a tuxedo, Rook had the definite appearance of a well-groomed man about town.

The big shot was alone in his apartment. That did not mean that he was unprotected. Rook had bodyguards posted outside of his apartment. Any one trying to crash the gate of his apartment in the Hotel Thurmont would have run into immediate trouble.

Off from Rook's living room was a small compartment of the dressing room type. It was in that direction that Rook gazed as he heard a faint sound that he recognized. Stepping to the dressing room, Rook reached into an opened table drawer and brought out a revolver. He listened to the faint noise of the rising elevator in the wall beyond. When it ceased, Rook was ready with the gun.

The rumble stopped. A paneled wall slid open and a light clicked automatically within the elevator shaft. The occupant of the car was in plain view. Rook smiled suavely as he surveyed the visitor, a big, broad-shouldered fellow with heavy-jowled face.

“Hello, Bart,” greeted Rook. “I thought it was you coming up. Let's go in the living room.”

The broad-shouldered man closed the paneled entrance of the shaft. He accompanied the big shot into the living room. There the two sat down.

THEY formed an odd contrast as they faced each other. The difference between this pair was not limited to their facial expressions. In their occupations, Rook and Bart were two of different ilks. Rook Hollister's career was one in which he ordered crime. Bart Koplín, his visitor, was one whose reputed work was crime prevention.

For Bart's ostensible vocation was that of a private detective. Specializing in jobs of investigation, the heavy-jowled man had gained a high reputation for his ability. Among his clients were several well-known corporations.

No one had ever connected Bart Koplín with crime. That was not surprising, for Bart stayed away from crooks—with one exception. Bart's only contact with the underworld lay through Rook Hollister. The private dick was a secret lieutenant of the big shot.

An elevated train rumbled heavily while Rook and Bart were lighting their cigars. The room vibrated slightly; then, as the roar of the train diminished, Rook eased back in his easy-chair and began to talk.

“Trip Burley was here tonight, Bart,” informed the big shot.

“Bringing bad news?” queried the dick.

“Sort of,” replied Rook. “The boys have slated me for the spot. Schumbert—Caparani—Gradley—you know the rest of them. They think Trip is their pal. That's how he mooched in on the meeting.”

“Who sprang it? Blitz Schumbert?”

“Sure. He's sore because my pineapple squad went sour.”

“Where did he bring the crowd together?”

“At a joint in Chinatown. So nobody would spot them and bring the news back to me.”

“I didn't know Blitz stood in with the chinks, Rook.”

“He doesn't. But he got hold of a guy that did. Lingo Queed, the bloke they've been using as an interpreter. Lingo fixed the meeting place with a chink named Koy Dow.”

BART nodded. He remembered that Rook, working through a lieutenant, had recently used Lingo to conduct some negotiations in Little Italy. Inasmuch as Lingo's contact lay with lieutenants and not with the big shot, it was not surprising that he had gone over to the plotters.

“How soon do they figure on rubbing you out, Rook?” queried Bart, in a matter-of-fact tone. “Did Trip give you the data?”

“They may pass it up,” chuckled Rook, dryly. “Louie Caparani was all for bumping me; but he said it would be good business to wait and see if his racket went over.”

“And if it does?”

“There'll be no rubout. Not until something else goes flooie.”

“Whew!” Bart shook his head. “It's like I told you, Rook. You're sitting on top of a volcano. The lid's going to blow off some day.”

“Not for a while yet, Bart. Ping Gradley is taking Karl Durmsted for a ride tonight. That means Caparani's racket will be O.K.”

“Ping Gradley! Say—he's one of the guys that's trying to put the skids under you! Say—you aren't counting on him—”

“Sure I am, Bart.” Rook smiled as he paused to puff his cigar. “Listen. You've got to get this layout straight. None of these mugs have anything against me personally. I don't blame them for talking things over.

“First off, Bart, this big shot business is a tough one. King Sickler tried it. They rubbed him out when he flivved. Then Al Loshter stepped in. I was one of Al's lieutenants. When he muffed, I met with a bunch that put the finger on him. We bumped Al. That's how I stepped in.”

Bart nodded in recollection.

“We were all for Al,” reminded Rook. “All for him, while he was good. All against him when he was lousy. Well, I'm in the same spot Al was. You can't blame the boys for wanting me out. But they'll work for me—like Ping is doing tonight—right up until the last minute.”

“Then things look all right.”

“Yes—if Ping puts through his job tonight. But if he doesn't—well, it means I'm through. That's why I wanted to talk to you, Bart.”

Sudden interest showed on Bart's bluff face.

“You mean you'll take my proposition?” queried the private dick eagerly. “The one I've been holding back for you? In case you wanted to duck from under?”

“That's right, Bart—if the proposition is still good.”

“It's good, all right. A cinch, too. Give me two days—maybe three —and I can spring it. All I've got to do is have Waylock scud out those telegrams he's been holding. And hand him the five grand.”

“You'll get the dough pronto, Bart. That is, if I have to go through with the deal.”

Bart smiled bluffly. He seemed pleased at Rook's decision. Then a look of puzzlement came upon the private dick's thick face.

“Only one thing, Rook,” recalled Bart. “Last time I talked with you, you didn't like the idea of ducking from under and hiding out. You said —”

“I've changed my mind,” snapped Rook. “And I've got a good reason for it, Bart. I told you. I didn't worry about these birds like Schumbert and Caparani. I don't worry about them and I never will. But it's not them I'm thinking about.

“What's biting me is the way every job has gone sour. It's not a bunch of musclers that's queered things. It's somebody that's worth worrying about.”

“Who?” queried Bart, puzzled.

“The Shadow!” resumed Rook, promptly.

BART'S hand stopped short as the dick was about to place a cigar between his lips. For an instant Bart's heavy jaw quivered. His hand trembled. Then he steadied and tried to puff his cigar in casual fashion.

“The Shadow!” repeated Rook. He hissed the name venomously. “Nobody but him could have muscled in on my mobs. I'm tellin' you this, Bart. Every racket will be blooey until we've got The Shadow. That's why I'm ducking under if tonight's job don't come off.”

“I get it.” Bart nodded wisely. “If you slide out you can start from scratch. Somebody else will take your place—some dummy who will get lopped off—and you'll be sitting where you can carve in on The Shadow himself.”

“That's just it, Bart,” agreed Rook. “But I can't turn yellow or take it on the lam. That would do so far as the mugs are concerned; but it would leave The Shadow still watching for me to stage a comeback. I've got to fool The Shadow, Bart.”

“My stunt will do it,” chuckled the dick, “and it will bluff the mugs at the same time.”

“I know it, Bart,” agreed Rook. “That's why I'm ready for it. I'm only waiting till I hear from Ping. If he sent Durmsted on that ride tonight the night club racket will be sweet. Inside of a week all the proprietors will be listening to Louie Caparani. Business will be running so big that even The Shadow won't have a chance to gum it. If Ping—”

An interruption came. It was a telephone bell, ringing in the dressing room. Bart watched Rook rise and go to answer the call.

Three seconds later, the big shot was back in the living room.

“Ping got his!” informed Rook, tensely. “Up at Durmsted's. He took the bump along with a couple of

gorillas who were working as bouncers at the Casino Rouge.”

“Who got him?” questioned Bart.

“They don't know,” returned Rook. “The guy that just called me up was one of the torpedoes that Ping had waiting outside. He says some mob queered Ping's game. The trouble started in Durmsted's office; then a bunch of musclers started shooting things up outside.”

“Do you think it was The Shadow?” demanded Bart anxiously.

“That's just what I do think,” snapped Rook. “That settles it, Bart. This means the finger is on me and it's pointing straight. Get busy with the gag of yours and do it quick. Meanwhile, I'm going to call up some of the guys that have it in for me and stall them off long enough. I can bluff them for a few days anyway.”

Rook came to his feet. Bart did likewise. The big shot ushered the private dick to the secret elevator. Bart entered the car; the light went out as soon as he closed the door. Descending, the dick reached the garage and made his exit to the street.

FIVE minutes after Bart's departure, strange blackness showed on the concrete floor behind the row of stored cars. An uncanny shape came into the light of the air chamber. The Shadow, spectral in the glow, began an examination of the tin-sheathed wall.

Gloved fingers found a catch. The sheathed barrier slid upward. The Shadow saw the darkened car in the elevator shaft. He laughed soft-toned mirth as he lowered the barrier. A gliding form, The Shadow departed to the street.

The master sleuth had come here to check on Hawkeye's findings. He had found the secret entrance to Rook Hollister's apartment but he had not chosen to use it for the present. The Shadow knew that the big shot had learned that the finger was pointing in his direction. It would be Rook's cue—thanks to Trip Burley's information—to keep secluded in his bulletproof apartment.

A soft laugh sounded from the darkness beneath the elevated structure as The Shadow glided across the nearest avenue. The mirth arose with sudden loudness as a roaring train sped above and drowned its tones. The Shadow's present campaign had reached its conclusion.

But The Shadow, though he could foresee a future trend in crime, had missed one point that was to hold a most important bearing in events to come. He had gained no inkling of the alliance between Rook Hollister and Bart Koplín.

Unbeknown to The Shadow, big shot and private dick had produced a coming scheme that was destined to tax the master fighter to the limit. The Shadow was on the verge of new adventure that would force him into strategies that even he had never used before.

CHAPTER V. CARDONA TAKES ORDERS

“OUR troubles have ended, inspector.”

“And we're due for new ones, commissioner.”

Both speakers were emphatic as they faced each other across a polished desk top. Challenge and rebuke were apparent in their tones; and their use of titles was an evidence of mutually veiled sarcasm.

Deputy Commissioner Wainwright Barth was in conference with Detective Joe Cardona. This was the third day following The Shadow's battle at the Casino Rouge. Cardona had come to Barth's office to

discuss methods of new crime prevention.

The actual police commissioner, Ralph Weston, was at present absent from New York. Wainwright Barth, once commissioner and now a deputy, was acting in Weston's place. Barth had addressed Joe Cardona as "inspector" because Joe had been made acting inspector by Weston. Barth's emphasis on the word "inspector" indicated that Joe's acting capacity might soon be ended.

So Cardona had given his dig in return. Addressing Barth as "commissioner," Joe had given intimation that he hoped Ralph Weston's absence would not be a prolonged one. Cardona liked to work with Weston; he was counting on the real commissioner's return.

"Why speak folderol, inspector?" queried Barth, in testy fashion. "You are presenting a hypothesis that has no ground for assumption. Why should the cessation of crime indicate a new beginning of it? I can see no facts that warrant a resumption."

"It's simply this, commissioner," argued Joe. "One lucky break don't mean we're going to get another. Instead, the chances are we won't land another. Look at it that way and you'll see where I'm right.

"Ever since Commissioner Weston started on that long vacation of his, the racketeers have been trying to start up again. I've wanted to step in and smear them every time they've begun. When mouthpieces showed up at the docks; when they tried to sew up the milk business, I recommended grabbing them. But you said hands off."

"Agreed," chuckled Barth. "But in each of the cases that you have mentioned, the rackets have broken because of jealousy among the criminals themselves. The same was true of the attempt to begin a laundry racket. To top it off, three nights ago crooks themselves ruined their own chances of dominating the night clubs.

"Hands off should be our policy, Cardona. Let the criminals continue to wage war among themselves. Should they fail to spoil their own games, the law can then take action. But I shall always be reluctant to intervene until we have positive proof that a specific racket is in the making."

CARDONA shook his head. The detective was annoyed. Time and again he had tried to press this point with Barth. Always, the deputy commissioner had been adamant.

"Take the laundry racket," suggested Cardona, suddenly. "A bird named Blitz Schumbert was in back of it. He had it greased. A dozen laundry owners had put in a complaint. A blowoff was due. The only question was who was going to take it.

"An actual crew of pineapple men went out on a job, commissioner. They were headed to wreck a laundry, to destroy property and maybe lives. They got stopped by what looked like a gang fight. Blitz Schumbert's racket went sour. But it wasn't thanks to us."

"Why be perturbed?" smiled Barth. "The laundry racket died, did it not?"

"It did," snorted Joe, "but it died hard! Then the night club racket showed up. Louie Caparani was promoting it. Three nights ago, a strong-arm mobleader named Ping Gradley went around to murder Karl Durmsted, proprietor of the Casino Rouge—"

"And again," interposed Barth, "a mob war prevented the act. Gradley was slain. The teeth were extracted from Caparani's game. The night club racket died at birth."

"But there will be others," assured Cardona. "What's more, some of those that failed to start will bob up again."

“Let them materialize. Then we shall offset them.”

“Yes—after they have begun. With property destruction. With murder. I tell you, commissioner, each new one is coming closer. All the underworld is organized. So well that although we know who's back of it, we can't pin it on him. Rook Hollister holds the underworld like that.”

Cardona made a gesture with his fist.

“An odd theory, Cardona,” rebuked Barth. “If Hollister is actually a big shot, controlling an invisible empire, how do you account for these numerous mob battles? It is obvious that no one man controls the underworld. Otherwise this fierce factionalism would not be existent.”

“It's not rival mobs, commissioner”—Cardona leaned forward with the air of a card player delivering a trump—“because what I've told you goes. Rook Hollister runs the works. Crooks aren't fighting him—but The Shadow is.”

BARTH almost glared as he heard Cardona's comment. The commissioner leaned back in his chair and removed his pince-nez. Tilting his head forward, he peered upward, rebukingly, as he began to polish the lenses of his spectacles.

“Your statement is an absurdity,” declared Barth. “Coming from one of your reputed ability, Cardona, it is almost unbelievable. This matter of The Shadow has always been your pet mania.”

“But you yourself have evidence of The Shadow's work—”

“I know that an unidentified person has occasionally appeared masked in black, to participate in action against crime. But his appearances have been few, not legion. Furthermore, they have been lone ventures. The Shadow, in my opinion, acts but seldom. And invariably on his own.”

“That's just it commissioner,” blurted Cardona. “Don't you see what The Shadow's doing? He's crossing the dope. Making it look like mobs are smearing mobs. Damaging Rook Hollister's rep. It's time we stepped into it, commissioner. The Shadow can't be everywhere. He's put crooks on the run; it's our job to follow it up!”

“Your trouble, inspector”—Barth's tone assumed a kindliness—“is that you are overzealous. You chafe at inactivity, and are apt to act unwisely when idleness is forced upon you. So to keep you occupied”—Barth reached into a desk drawer and produced a file of papers—“I shall ask you to conduct a different sort of investigation. These documents have been presented to me by certain motion picture exhibitors. They have raised an objection to the conduct of a contest which is being operated by a man named Fergus Waylock.

“You will find the address of Waylock's office in this file. Go there and investigate his business. If the man is a swindler we must certainly apprehend him. Bring me a prompt report upon this case.”

CARDONA took the file. Without another word, he turned on his heel and left the commissioner's office. He was fuming, muttering to himself as he passed through a corridor and descended a flight of stairs. When he had reached the street Joe's mumbles had become a growl. They ended suddenly as someone clapped him on the shoulder.

Cardona swung about angrily; then delivered a reluctant grin as he recognized Clyde Burke, a reporter from the New York Classic.

“Hello, Joe!” greeted Clyde cheerily. “Looks like you've been up to see his nibs. Well, what's his verdict this time? Handing out more lollipops?”

“That's about the size of it,” grumbled Joe. “You know what I've been after, Burke. I want to take a slam at these racketeers. I know they'll welsh if we put the screws on them.”

“But Barth says 'Tut Tut'?”

“That's it. Says to lay back except when I find a chance to smear a mob that's on the move. You know what that means. I'll need tipoffs —and good ones. Well, I haven't been getting them and it don't look like I will be.”

Clyde grinned sympathetically; then he noted the file that Cardona was carrying. Joe saw that the reporter had observed the documents that were protruding from the edges of the folder.

“This is something else,” stated the detective. “Barth's put me on a good old gumshoe job. Cracking down a phony movie contest. Come along with me if you want and you'll find out Barth's idea of big-time crime.”

“Going to make a pinch?” queried Clyde.

“I might,” vouchsafed Cardona. “In fact I guess I will just to make Barth feel good. Sometimes you can get somewhere with that bird by playing in with his crack-pot notions.”

Clyde Burke decided to come along. He had every reason to accompany Joe Cardona. Clyde was more than a reporter; he was a secret agent of The Shadow. While The Shadow worked elsewhere, Burke had been assigned to the duty of finding out just what moves the law might be planning.

Detective and reporter started on their way. Both thought that they were following a trail far distant from any which might concern Rook Hollister and his regime of crime. Neither had the slightest inkling that they were bound toward a goal that had much to do with the big shot's coming schemes.

CHAPTER VI. THE MISSED TRAIL

FERGUS WAYLOCK'S office was distant from the police commissioner's headquarters. It was located on the second floor of a narrow dilapidated building that stood on a side street close to Broadway. The frosted-glass panel in the office door bore the legend:

FERGUS WAYLOCK

HOLLYWOOD SYSTEM INC.

The office beyond the door was plainly furnished. It contained a desk, a few chairs and a filing cabinet. The floor was uncarpeted, and it was evident that the office served chiefly as a headquarters for a mail order enterprise.

At the very time when Joe Cardona and Clyde Burke were starting on their journey, two men were beginning a conference in Waylock's office. One was Fergus Waylock himself, a wizened man of middle age whose face though crafty appeared troubled. The other occupant of the office was Bart Koplín the private dick.

“He hasn't shown up yet, Bart,” Waylock was saying in a troubled tone. “There was a dozen of them came in yesterday and about eight more this morning; but Manthell wasn't one of the bunch.”

“You say he's coming in from Ohio?” queried Bart.

Waylock nodded.

“Then I’ll wait around a while,” decided Bart. “The sooner I see Manthell the better. I can slip him a good stall about representing Enterprise Exhibitors. I had a theft case that I handled for them recently and I know everybody over there.”

“I’ve got these fellows registering when they come in,” declared Waylock, “but I’ve been remembering what you told me about keeping Manthell’s name off the list. The whole thing has got me worried though, Bart.”

“Why should it?” queried the dick. “You’re to pick a winner for this contest aren’t you? That reminds me”—he reached into his pocket —“here’s the five grand that you’ve got to have. It’ll cover the money for the prizes and the transportation for the hicks when you ship them to Hollywood.”

“That don’t help me, Bart,” returned Waylock, as he took the cash. “It looks like I may be in for it, if some of these exhibitors go through with their threat. They don’t like this mail-order contest that I’ve been running. I’ve stalled off too long picking the male movie stars from those thousands of photographs that they sent in. The worst of it is that if the exhibitors get tough they can land me coming or going.”

“How’s that?”

“Well, I’ve promised prize money and railroad tickets to the winners. If I don’t pay it to them, I’ll be pinched for fraud. Of course, I’ve known that all along but I knew you’ll come through with the mazuma, so I thought I had the laugh on the exhibitors.

“But now I’ve heard that they’ve got another gag up their sleeve. If I do pay out the cash they can grab me for running a lottery. That’s why I’ve been steering these hick contestants out to hotels. I want to keep them waiting until I decide what to do.”

“The five grand is yours, Waylock,” assured Bart. “I don’t care what you do with it. If you want to take it on the lam that’s up to you. All I want is to get hold of this fellow Donald Manthell, once he lands in New York.”

“He’s on his way,” declared Waylock. “I sent him a telegram along with the rest. He ought to be here—”

The telephone bell began to ring. The phone itself was on the floor beside the desk. Waylock grabbed the instrument and placed the receiver to his ear. He held a short, hasty conversation. Finished, he stared at Bart Koplín.

“THAT’S the word I have been worrying about,” declared Waylock in a tense tone. “A pal of mine—fellow at an exhibitor’s office—was on the wire. He just wised me up! Some of the exhibitors have made a complaint to the police commissioner. He’s promised to give them prompt action. Maybe there’s a cop on his way up here now, Bart.”

Waylock rose, half trembling as he spoke. It was plain that the promoter was anxious to get out, now that he had received his money. Bart Koplín eyed him suspiciously. Waylock noted the private dick’s look and mouthed a protest.

“I’m not double-crossing you, Bart,” he assured. “Honest, I’m on the level! I ought to take it on the lam—if I don’t, it may queer the works for you. Suppose they pinched me before Manthell showed up. It would queer the works for you, Bart.”

“I guess you’re right,” admitted the dick. “Where’re Manthell’s photographs and the data on him?”

“In the filing cabinet.”

“Get it for me.”

Waylock went to the filing cabinet. He produced a large envelope and brought it to Bart. The detective began to examine the contents. With the contestant's records were some theatrical photographs. Bart had seen them before but he examined them again. They were pictures of a man named Donald Manthell, but they could have passed as actual photographs of Rook Hollister.

The big shot and the movie contestant were doubles. By working with Fergus Waylock, Bart Koplín had, in the past few months, gained a chance to examine the photographs of several thousand men, all of whom thought themselves suitable candidates for parts in films.

Among these, Bart had found a half dozen who might have passed for Rook Hollister; but he had rejected all except the one who most closely resembled the big shot; namely, Donald Manthell. This man was to play an important part in Bart's scheme.

“I'll keep this junk, Waylock,” decided Bart. Rising, he thrust the envelope beneath his coat. “You'd better beat it. Leave the rest to me. I'll take care of Manthell when he arrives.”

“That's great, Bart!” ejaculated Waylock, warmly. He went to a small closet and produced his hat and coat. “Here's the key to the office, if you want to stay here.”

“I'm coming downstairs with you,” informed Bart. “I'll wait there after you've left.”

THE two men left the office and closed the door behind them. They went down a flight of stairs and reached the street. There, Waylock scurried away toward Broadway. Bart decided to remain at the entrance to the office building. He was not worried about contestants who might come up and find the office empty. Manthell alone was to be his quarry.

A few minutes passed. Chancing suddenly to look down the street, Bart saw an approaching man whom he recognized. This was Joe Cardona, accompanied by Clyde Burke. Bart did not know the reporter. The private dick shifted back into the doorway of the little office building; then he realized that Cardona was coming to the same spot.

Bart acted promptly. He turned about and hurried up the stairs before Cardona arrived. Stopping at the top, he could hear Cardona entering below. Bart moved along to the door of Waylock's office. He began to hammer against the barrier.

Footsteps in the hallway. Bart turned about. Cardona and Burke had arrived. Bart pretended surprise as he noted the headquarters detective. Then he delivered a gruff laugh.

“Guess you're on the same job I am, Joe,” volunteered Bart. “Coming to look up this faker Waylock, aren't you?”

“That's what I'm here for,” returned Cardona briskly. “The police commissioner sent me up here. What brought you in on the case?”

“I've been working for Enterprise Exhibitors”—Bart, thinking quickly, bluffed with the name of the concern that he had aided in a different matter—“and they asked me to get a slant on Waylock. They said they thought some of the other exhibitors were making a complaint to the police; but they wanted a checkup of their own.”

“How long have you been here?” questioned Cardona.

“Just arrived,” replied Bart. “Looks like the place is locked.”

Cardona tried the knob. He found the door locked. He turned to Koplín and said: "I'm going in. Want to take a look around?"

"I don't want to butt in on your job, Joe," declared Bart. "Enterprise told me not to bother if the law was actually on the case. If they want any further information I'll drop down to see you at headquarters."

With that statement, Bart turned and walked along the corridor, leaving Cardona with the task of entering the closed office. Clyde Burke remained with Joe.

Bart Koplín's bluff had worked. Nevertheless, the private dick was none too serene as he descended the stairway to the street. Bart was glad that Cardona had decided to break into the closed office; but he could only hope that Joe would take a long time looking through Waylock's files.

For Bart, when he reached the street, took up the post that he had deserted at the time of Joe's arrival. He wanted to intercept Manthell when the out-of-towner arrived; but he knew that he would have to be ready to duck if Cardona came downstairs again.

Bart Koplín showed his nervousness as he waited. Chewing at the end of a fat cigar, the heavy-jowled man kept glancing toward Broadway, his impatience increasing. Then came the break he wanted. Stepping from a cluster of passers-by was a young man whose face brought a chuckle of satisfaction to liar's lips.

THE arrival resembled Rook Hollister so closely that Bart, had he not known him to be Donald Manthell, would have sworn that the fellow actually was Rook.

As Manthell reached the doorway, Bart came into action. Stepping forward, he blocked Manthell's path.

"Where are you going, young fellow?" quizzed Bart. "Up to the Hollywood System office?"

Manthell nodded, puzzled.

"I thought so," chuckled Bart. "You look like the chap whose picture I got." He drew the envelope from beneath his coat; then reached into a pocket and produced an engraved card which he handed to Manthell. "I've been waiting here to see you. This movie contest business is a phony. I'm investigating it."

"You're—you're a private detective?" stammered Manthell, looking at the card. "You—you mean that I've come all the way to New York just to find out that I've been duped?"

"That's about it," replied Bart, "but you're not out of luck just yet. Maybe you're in for some good fortune. Come along with me while we talk things over. I think I can fix it for you to make a nice piece of change."

"How?" queried Manthell, as they walked from the doorway.

"I am representing Enterprise Exhibitors," explained Bart, "and we'll need witnesses in this case. We've got to have evidence to show that Waylock actually swindled his customers. You'll make enough for a trip home, and maybe something besides. I'll promise you that, young fellow."

Bart was increasing the pace. Manthell, reassured by the private dick's talk, was highly anxious to accompany him. They reached the edge of the Broadway crowd. As they began to turn the corner, Bart shot a quick glance backward. He saw that luck was with him again.

Joe Cardona and Clyde Burke had just come out of the office building. Cardona had evidently decided there was no use in staying longer at Waylock's office. But he and Clyde Burke had arrived just too late

to spot Bart and Manthell turning into the crowd at the corner.

In fact, Joe Cardona was grumbling at the moment when Bart caught that last glimpse of him. Speaking to Clyde Burke, the ace sleuth was breaking into new criticism of Acting Commissioner Wainwright Barth.

“What did I get by going up there?” Joe was demanding. “Nothing but an empty office. Waylock has cleared out. If Barth had shoved somebody else up there in a hurry without waiting until he saw me, he might have gotten somewhere.”

“It might make a good story, though,” mused Clyde. “According to those papers you found there, some of the suckers have already come in. Maybe there’ll be more. Aren’t you going to look into it, Joe?”

“Sure,” growled Cardona. “I’ll put a couple of men on detail. One to stay up there at the office; the other to check up on the rubes who have already come to town. I’ll attend to that after I get back to headquarters. Barth will get the report he wants, and if you think you can make a story about Waylock, I’ll have the dope for you tonight.”

Cardona and Clyde parted company.

Both Joe and Clyde had missed the trail. They had found and lost a clue that could have proved of vast importance both to the law and to The Shadow. By their laxity, they had left open a path that was destined to bring murder, followed by new and insidious crimes—crimes that would bring The Shadow back into action.

CHAPTER VII. THE PLANT

EVENING had arrived. Rook Hollister was seated in the living room of his apartment. The big shot had a caller. His visitor was Trip Burley. The two were engaged in an important discussion.

“The word goes out tonight, Rook,” Trip was saying. “There can’t be no argument about it. The only guy that stood up for you was Louie Caparani. And Louie—”

“I know all about Louie,” interposed Rook. “He was for rubbing me out if the job went sour at the Casino Rouge. We know how the meeting’s coming out. We’ve talked that part of it.

“Your job, Trip, is to pull the gag I told you. Spring this business about who’s to be the big shot when I’m through.”

Trip nodded. Then he raised an objection.

“Only one trouble, Rook,” he said. “Suppose Blitz and Louie agree on a guy between them. If they do, they’ll turn down my proposition.”

“There’s no bird big enough to suit the rest of the bunch, Trip. Suppose Blitz and Louie do pick the guy. Every other gazebo will be peeved, even though he won’t show it. But if you spring your gag and stick to it, the majority will be with you.”

Trip grinned. This satisfied him.

“You’ll be sitting pretty, Trip,” declared Rook. “They’ll give you credit for the idea. And they won’t be sore when it turns out to your favor afterward. Because when you’ve come up here and staged the next act, they’re going to figure you are a big shot.”

Trip’s grin increased. Rook motioned to the door of the dressing room. It was time for Trip to be on his

way. The mobleader obeyed the big shot's injunction.

"You'll know how to reach me afterward," reminded Rook, as he accompanied Trip to the elevator. "See Prexy Storlick, up on the Hotel Moselle Roof. But use your bean about it.

"Forget this place. Pick your own headquarters. Act like you were a big shot. Any tips you need, you'll get from me. All right, Trip. Good luck."

Trip descended in the elevator. He came out into the garage and sidled to the street. He looked up and down as he made his exit. Seeing no one, he headed for a corner.

TRIP had gone scarcely more than a dozen yards before a figure moved out upon his trail. Hawkeye had followed Trip here. The crafty spotter had waited until Trip's sojourn at Rook's was ended. Hawkeye had resumed his trail.

Shortly after Hawkeye had started on Trip's trail, a block of blackness detached itself from a wall on the opposite side of the street. The dark stripe became a cloaked form. It glided away in the opposite direction.

The Shadow, too, had been on watch to make sure that Hawkeye took up Trip's path. Satisfied that his agent would not lose the trail, The Shadow was departing to manage business of his own.

More minutes passed in the secluded street. Then from the direction of the avenue two men put in an appearance. The light near the obscure entrance to the garage showed their faces.

One was Bart Koplín, the other Donald Manthell. As they reached the garage entrance, Bart motioned his companion through the opening. A bit puzzled, Manthell followed as Bart led the way to the secret elevator.

UP in his apartment, Rook Hollister had completed the packing of a large suitcase. He was standing in the lighted dressing room when he heard the slight buzz of the elevator. Instinctively Rook sprang toward the table where he kept the revolver. He stopped short grinning.

No need for that tonight. He knew who these visitors would be. But they were coming earlier than Rook had expected, and there was every reason why he should be out of sight when they arrived. Grabbing the suitcase Rook ducked into a closet in the corner of the dressing room.

The slight rumble stopped. The paneled door of the elevator came open. Bart and Manthell stepped out. The latter was looking curiously at the light which had appeared at the top of the shaft. Then Bart closed the door and led the way into the living room.

Manthell gazed about at the sumptuous surroundings. Bart waved him to a chair and offered a box of cigars. Manthell smiled as he lighted a perfecto.

"Swell place you've got here," remarked the man who looked like Rook Hollister. "But what's the idea of the tricky entrance and the funny elevator?"

"It used to be a service elevator," returned Bart. "The fellow who built the hotel lived in this apartment. He wanted a private way to his garage too. He rigged the elevator the way you saw it.

"I figured I might as well use it. It's a shortcut to the back street and that makes it quicker to the subway. That's why we came in this way instead of through the lobby."

"You've treated me like a prince," commented Manthell. "Giving me the lowdown on this fake contest

stuff. Handing me that swell dinner and bringing me here so I could meet Mr. Sargon, of Enterprise Exhibitors—”

“Forget it, Manthell,” broke in Bart. “I’m trying to give you a break that’s all. When you told me you were no rookie at the movie business I figured Sargon ought to meet you.”

“I only worked in a few shorts when I was out on the coast. That was more than a year ago. Minor parts too. Then I had to go back to Ohio—”

“And when you heard of the movie contest you thought you’d take a stab at it. Well, we’ll tell all that to Sargon. Say”—Bart paused to eye his companion—“I’ve got an idea that you ought to like.”

Bart arose and conducted Manthell into another room. He opened the drawer of a bureau to display a collection of stiff shirts. Swinging the door of a closet he brought out an expensive tuxedo on its hanger.

“Tog yourself in some of these glad rags,” suggested Bart. “There’s some dress shoes here in the closet. They’ll go well with the layout.”

“None of this is my size,” objected Manthell, looking dubiously at the detective’s bulk. “You’re a lot bigger than I am, Mr. Koplín.”

“These duds belong to a friend of mine,” explained Bart. “He’s about your build. Try them on, anyway.”

Manthell complied. The clothes fitted him almost exactly. The shoes were a trifle tight; but he managed to squeeze his feet into them remarking that he would not be doing any walking while here.

They strolled out into the living room. Bart nodded approvingly as he noted the new sartorial effect. His face showed pleasure but Manthell did not guess the reason. Bart was observing an added resemblance between Donald Manthell and Rook Hollister.

“Help yourself to a drink,” suggested Bart indicating bottles and glasses on a sideboard. “Then make yourself at home. I’m going out to meet Mr. Sargon. I’ll be back in half an hour.”

WHILE Manthell was pouring out a glass, Bart went back into the room that they had just left. Out of Manthell’s view the private detective pulled a suitcase from beneath the bed and piled Manthell’s clothes in it.

When he returned into the living room, Bart was carrying the bag. He made no comment regarding it. He merely waved good-by to his guest and walked into the dressing room to take the elevator.

As he opened the door of the lift, Bart dropped back. A man was standing there in the light. Bart’s startlement ended as he recognized Rook Hollister. Stepping in with the big shot, Bart closed the door. Rook pressed the lever. The car descended.

“I was still here when you came in,” remarked Rook as they descended in the darkness, “so I thought I’d better wait for you. Everything working right?”

“Great!” chuckled Bart. “Say—the guy’s a dead ringer for you Rook! When I shoved him into that tux you left in the bedroom closet, you’d have thought he was your own reflection, if you’d seen him.”

“All the better,” growled Rook as the car arrived at the ground level. “You’ve got his outfit in the bag all right?”

“Sure. And he’s waiting for me to come back with Sargon, the big guy with Enterprise. He fell for the

stall. All the better, because he'd worked in some shorts out in Hollywood. He thinks he'd have been a star if he'd stayed there.”

“Tough for him; he didn't stay,” Rook answered. “All right Bart. Take it easy when we move into the garage. I don't want anybody to spot me. We'll grab a cab over on the avenue.”

The two men moved out in silence. They reached the street unobserved and traced their course toward the avenue. Rook Hollister was making a secret getaway.

No eyes were here to view the big shot's departure. Both The Shadow and Hawkeye were gone, each to a new task. Neither had lingered long enough to view the arrival of Bart and Manthell.

So far the big shot's game lay undiscovered. Bart Koplín and Trip Burley alone knew its details. All others who knew Rook Hollister believed that the big shot was still in his apartment, awaiting mobland's verdict.

To all appearances Rook still was there. The occupant of Rook's suite looked exactly like the big shot. For Bart had left Donald Manthell there as a plant whose identity was calculated to deceive expected visitors.

CHAPTER VIII. GANGDOM'S DEAL

TRIP BURLEY had led Hawkeye a circuitous journey after his departure from the garage behind the Hotel Thurmont. But the trail had ended where Hawkeye had expected it to finish: in Chinatown.

There, Trip had gone into the shop called the Silver Dragon. Hawkeye, in turn, had ducked through the secret passage to take his place behind the slitted wall. Once more, The Shadow's agent was spying on the racketeers and mobleaders who had assembled at Koy Dow's.

Trip had been the last to arrive. He had just entered when Hawkeye took his post. All those who had been at the former meeting were here with one exception. Ping Gradley was not present. That was a matter of course. Ping's career had ended on the night he met The Shadow.

Blitz Schumbert was in charge of the meeting. The pug-nosed racketeer was rumbling in his accustomed basso. No hedging tonight. Blitz was calling for Rook Hollister's doom.

“We've given Rook his chance,” Hawkeye heard Blitz declare, “and we'd have done better if we hadn't. Maybe your racket would still be good, Louie. Maybe we'd have Ping here with us.”

Louie Caparani was sitting, his face toward Hawkeye. The Shadow's agent saw a hard smile flicker on Louie's lips. When Louie spoke, his words were blunt and harsh.

“Ping's dead,” affirmed the dark-visaged racketeer. “My game's as sour as yours, Blitz. It's even been bum business for me to go near the night club men that I had approached.

“Even the guys that had already lined up are going back on me. Phone calls—from Brooklyn, Harlem, yeah, and from Canarsie—telling me to drag out the coin machines before they chuck them in the alley.

“Karl Durmsted told everything he knew. The cops figure every coin machine in town must have been planted by me. Those machines are hot; and the birds that have them know it. They want to give me the go-by.”

“Like with my laundry racket,” put in Blitz, sourly. “I had some good lineups. All it needed was a blow-off to make them jump through the hoop—”

“And the blow-off didn't come. But it's worse with my racket, Blitz. I had things moving; little places were with me. I was building for the big ones. Now the works is wiped out.”

Louie paused. His eyes were glaring with a venom as they swept around the group. Mobleaders were restless as the racketeer's eyes met theirs. Hawkeye saw Trip Burley flinch.

It was almost that Louie was accusing someone present. His gesture was a dominating challenge to the entire group, Ping's death had made Louie vengeful; and these rogues knew it.

One man alone was indifferent to Louie's glare. That was Lingo Queed.

HAWKEYE, noting Lingo, observed a far-away gaze in the fellow's eyes. Louie Caparani spotted it also. There was harshness in his tone as he called Lingo to task for not listening.

“Well, dummy?” queried Louie, glaring at Lingo. “Did you hear what I've been saying? I mean you, Lingo.”

“I heard you!” Lingo swung his staring gaze toward Louie. “I know Ping's dead. I've been wondering why.”

It was Blitz Schumbert who snorted.

“Wondering why?” demanded the laundry racketeer. “I'll tell you why. Because Rook Hollister is a palooka. Because he let too many guys in on what he was doing. Spilled it that Ping was going up to the Casino Rouge.”

“Did he?” queried Lingo. “Say, Blitz, that's a rare one. Seems to me most of us here are pretty close to Rook. But it was news to all of us —except Louie—when Ping said that he was going up to the Casino Rouge.”

“Say—what are you getting at?” Blitz's tone carried a challenge this time. “You mean somebody pulled a double cross? Sent a mob in there to knock off Ping Gradley? Just to make it look extra bad for Rook?”

“I wouldn't doubt it,” replied Lingo, casually. “But I wouldn't call it a double cross, either. The skids were already under Rook. I wouldn't blame anybody for getting impatient.”

Sudden silence followed Lingo's statement. Mobleaders were nodding unconsciously. Trip Burley was fidgety; he was waiting for a chance to speak. Blitz Schumbert was glowering more fiercely than before. Louie Caparani alone was serene. It was he who broke the silence.

“There may be something in what Lingo says,” observed Louie suavely. “But I wouldn't call it a double cross, either. Just the same, nobody can figure that I pulled anything phony, because I'd have been a sap to queer my own racket when it was just about set to go through.”

Mumbles of approval. There was logic in Louie's statement. Only one man took it with ill grace. That was Blitz Schumbert. Rising, he drove a huge fist down upon the teakwood table. With scowling, furious lips he stormed at Louie Caparani.

“Arguing that way,” rumbled Blitz, “you're trying to pin it on me, Louie! By saying that you'd have laid off because your racket might be good, you're making it look like I'd have made trouble for Ping just because my racket was already sour.”

“I'm blaming nobody,” retorted Louie. “Ping's dead. Rook's through. That's all. We might just as well know where we stand for a start. We're going to pick a big shot to take Rook's place after we've rubbed

Rook out. And the guy we pick—”

“I get it,” snorted Blitz. He glared about the group, then centered finally on Louie. “I started this move against Rook and by rights I’d be the new big shot. But you’ve been waiting for a chance to make it look like I was framing things my way!”

“I didn’t bring this up,” remarked Louie, calmly. “It was Lingo here who mentioned it and you can’t blame him, because the idea was probably in everybody’s head. Ping was one of us. It was kind of tough on him to have to go out. He was too good a guy to be the goat for Rook. But it’s over now. Let’s forget it.”

BRIEF silence followed. Trip Burley was eager. Things had started the way he wanted without the necessity for a suggestion. It had proven unnecessary for Trip himself to start the rivalry between Blitz and Louie. Now that the argument was on, Trip’s cue was to push it. But before he had a chance to speak, another statement came from Blitz.

“Look’s like you’re trying to do me out of something, Louie,” rasped the pug-faced racketeer. “And the way the boys here look”—Blitz shot a glance about the group—“I’d probably lose out if it came to a vote. Well, I’m going to show you I’m on the level. I’ll step out of the running. I’ll stick to my racket instead of taking Rook’s place. And that leaves it up to you, Louie, to do the same.”

Louie was fox enough to take the situation with good grace.

“All right, Blitz,” he agreed, “we’re both out. Maybe we ought to pick some guy between us. Or, if you want, we can leave it to the crowd here. Let them vote for who’s to be big shot.”

“Yeah?” scoffed Blitz. “Well, who are we goin’ to pick? Who’s going to be voted on?” He was looking about the tense group as he made his query. “We’ve got a swell bunch here. Great guys, all of them. But there’s nobody in it as deep as you or me, Louie. It’s going to be tough to make a fair pick.”

Though blunt, Blitz could be diplomatic. He had proven it by his statement. It showed favor to none and friendliness to all. The crowd was all with Blitz; and Louie, also tactful in a different way, was prompt to seek the same good will by nodding his approval of Blitz’s words.

It was a perfect block. One that might have produced a breakup of the plotters; but which both Blitz and Louie had handled in neat fashion. On the surface, it looked as though they had given no special opportunity to any one of their confederates.

Actually, however, the two racketeers had unwittingly played straight into the hands of one man present. Trip Burley had come here with secret orders from Rook Hollister. Had Lingo Queed not chanced to assert himself, Trip would have had to do so. Saved of his trouble, Trip was now in an ideal position to spring the real gag that Rook had ordered.

So far out of the picture, Trip knew that everything was right for him. Blinking as he licked his lips, Trip half arose from his seat and waved for attention from the throng.

“Blitz is right,” commented Trip, “and so is Louie. Great guys, both of ‘em. They want to pick the right bird for Rook’s job, and I’ve got a way to help ‘em do it. They want a gink who’s done som’tthin’.

“Well, there ain’t none of us have. Leastwise, nobody’s done enough to make him look like a big shot. But there’s som’tthin’ any one of us can do that’ll make him the right guy for the job.

“I’ll tell you what it is. Supposin’ all of us would like that job. And only one of us can get it. All right, give the job to the bird that rubs out Rook Hollister!”

ASSEMBLED lieutenants had taken Trip's opening statement mildly. But Trip's final words were a payoff. For the first time at this meeting, all the plotters came through in enthusiastic unison. Growls of approval; buzzed tones of elated conversation—these were proof to Trip that his suggestion had struck home.

Blitz and Louie recognized it also. A grin showed on Blitz's ugly face as the big racketeer thrust his mammoth paw toward Louie. With a suave smile, Louie extended his own hand and received Blitz's grip. Cleverly, the tactful pair who dominated this meeting were stealing the limelight that Trip had momentarily occupied.

This sign of agreement between Blitz and Louie brought new enthusiasm from the outfit. Lingo Queed, whose suggestion had opened the discussion, was now forgotten in the rush.

Slouched forward on the table, Lingo was smiling sourly while he nodded his approval of the scheme.

Trip Burley, who had brought the matter to a head, was also forgotten. Trip, however, was smirking with the air of a child who had made a smart comment in the presence of elders. He watched while Blitz brought down a smashing fist that served as a speaker's gavel.

“Louie and I have settled it,” announced Blitz. “The bloke that gets Rook gets his job too. It's open for anybody—but the guy that does it has got to prove it. And get this: the sooner somebody knocks off Rook Hollister, the better.”

Lieutenants arose. Some were talking to each other. Others were grim and meditative, as though thinking how they might take steps to gain the coveted post that Rook Hollister still held.

It was plain that Blitz and Louie intended to hold the position that they had gained, no matter who might eventually become the big shot. The successor to Rook Hollister would always have the threat of a governing committee that would pass upon his actions.

HAWKEYE, in his lookout, had no chance to listen in further. Trip Burley was already going out. It was Hawkeye's task to find out if Trip intended to go directly back to Rook Hollister.

Hawkeye sneaked down the spiral stairway.

When he reached the street, Hawkeye had little time to wait. Trip came strolling past; The Shadow's agent followed. Tonight, Trip's course was more rapid and direct than before. Previously, Trip had been anxious to deceive any chance followers. This time he did not seem to care if any one spotted his destination.

The trail led to subway instead of elevated. Trip rode northward on an express while Hawkeye traveled in another car. Trip alighted at a station only a few blocks from the Hotel Thurmont. Leaving the subway, he started quickly in the direction of Rook Hollister's abode.

Hawkeye, following, saw Trip go into the garage that housed the secret elevator. Hawkeye decided that Trip's haste must have been inspired by the belief that Rook would be in immediate danger. Moving away from the garage, Hawkeye headed for a telephone to put in a call to Burbank.

After that, Hawkeye would come back to watch the garage. Thinking things over, Hawkeye believed that Trip had made his suggestion regarding the proposed murder of Rook Hollister in order to impress the other lieutenants that he was really with them. It looked like a clever stunt to cover his spying.

Hawkeye had another hunch; he believed that by returning promptly to the garage he would be in time to catch Rook Hollister making a get-away. It would then be Hawkeye's job to trail Rook.

Hawkeye was usually correct in his analyses of underworld activities. On this occasion he was totally wrong. Hawkeye had not gained a single inkling as to Rook Hollister's proposed plans and Trip Burley's part in them.

Already a startling scheme had reached its culmination—one that was as insidious as it was cunning. Not only had Rook Hollister's purpose baffled Hawkeye; to date it had deceived The Shadow as well.

But The Shadow was roaming the underworld. Evidence would turn up that he, only, could get to.

CHAPTER IX. DOUBLE DEATH

HAWKEYE'S trip to put in a report was one that would require no more than ten minutes. Yet in that short period, events were due to happen. The first occurred outside of the garage when a blackened, shrouded shape made momentary appearance in the lamplight.

The Shadow, independent of Hawkeye, had returned to this vicinity. He had as yet received no report concerning Trip Burley's journeying; but that, apparently, made no difference in his plans.

The Shadow's form glided from view. The cloaked arrival had entered the garage. He was making for the secret elevator, planning a surreptitious visit to Rook Hollister's apartment. Apparently, The Shadow had decided it was time to listen in on the big shot's coming plans.

UPSTAIRS, Trip Burley was crouching in the little dressing room. Coming up by elevator, Trip had alighted cautiously after opening the paneled door. Peering into the living room, Trip observed a man standing at the rear window.

It was Donald Manthell. Glass in one hand, cigar in the other, the would-be movie star was staring out toward the city's glow.

Trip was listening to a sound outside. The approaching rumble of an elevated train. A leer showed on the mobleader's face. Time for action had come. Drawing hand from pocket, Trip produced a glimmering revolver. With a vicious snarl, he sprang into the living room.

Manthell wheeled. Startled, he saw the threatening foe. His hands trembled. That action brought a grin to Trip's lips, a steadiness to his blinking, shifty eyes. For Trip, despite the fact that he was in the game, had been stopped cold by Manthell's striking resemblance to Rook Hollister.

In fact, Trip had thought for an instant that he was face to face with his real chief. He believed that plans had gone wrong. It was Manthell's quiver that told him this was the double; it was that same tremor that sealed Manthell's doom.

Trip hesitated no longer. The rumble from the elevated had become a roar. As Manthell stood transfixed, save for his shaking, Trip made another leap toward him. Jabbing the point of his revolver squarely against Manthell's breast, the mobleader fired.

The burst of Trip's stub-nosed gat was drowned by the window-rattling clatter of the elevated. Even to the murderer himself the gunshot was no more than an insignificant pop. But its work had been complete.

Manthell's collapse was automatic. As Trip stepped back, his victim rolled upon the floor. The glass bounded on a tufted rug, spilling its liquid contents. The cigar rolled to the bare floor and lay there, glowing.

Trip had been brutally efficient. His bullet, delivered from six-inch range, had found Manthell's heart. Rook Hollister's double had died almost instantly, with no more than a gasping murmur.

The fading roar of the elevated train was an aftermath of murder. Trip grinned viciously. Pocketing his revolver, he turned about and started for the little dressing room. His work was finished. It was time for prompt departure.

The living room was remote from the actual front of the apartment. Rook Hollister had always demanded seclusion and never admitted the gorillas who kept watch in the hotel. Hence Trip's timed shot had been heard by no one. That had been in accord with prearranged plans.

AS Trip neared the panel that hid the elevator shaft, he stopped short. His ears caught the murmur of a dying rumble, one that must have begun while he was slaying Manthell. Someone had opened the door at the bottom of the elevator shaft. That same person must have found and pressed a hidden button that served to bring the car down.

Trip listened. The sound of the mechanism began again. The elevator was coming up.

Trip stared blankly at the paneled door. This did not fit in with his plans. So far as Trip knew, only two men, besides himself were aware of the existence of this secret elevator. One was Rook Hollister; the other, Bart Koplín.

Neither was due to return. Yet it could be no one other than Rook or Bart—so, at least, Trip believed. Doubt seized the murderer. He stood back from the panel, revolver leveled in his hand.

The rumble ceased. The elevator had reached the top. Trip waited, tensely straining. The door did not open immediately.

Half a minute passed. While he waited, Trip could hear the approach of another train on the elevated. Its sound was increasing to a roar.

Of a sudden, the door slid open to reveal the lighted elevator. Caught in his strained attitude, Trip was momentarily paralyzed by the sight before him. Almost sure that it would be Rook or Bart, convinced that an intruder would certainly be someone of a slinking type, the killer was totally unprepared for the surprise that he received.

The occupant of the elevator was The Shadow. Cloaked form fully revealed in the light; eyes burning from beneath extended hat-brim, the grim avenger was clutching a leveled automatic in one fist, its muzzle ready to cover any one who might plan to block his way.

THE SHADOW had taken a dangerous trip. But in so doing, he had counted upon the chance that visitors other than Trip Burley might be users of this secret lift. He had come up with the belief that any blocker would be prepared to challenge as an opening.

The sudden click of the light switch at the top of the shaft had increased The Shadow's quicksteps. He had found the release for the door, he had held an automatic ready while his free hand had pressed the catch.

The Shadow was in light—an open target for Trip Burley. But the mobleader, himself, was also visible to The Shadow. Trip had relied upon the semi-gloom of the dressing room, forgetting that it was caused by the light from the living room; and that he was standing directly between the elevator and the living room door.

Where Trip saw a sinister, terrifying figure that even the bright light could not fully reveal, The Shadow saw a skulking outline framed against the light from the door of the living room. Where Trip faced a big automatic, The Shadow spotted the telltale glitter of a puny revolver.

The Shadow was prepared for the sight of some crouching foe. Trip, in turn, had foreseen the possibility of an enemy in the elevator. But where The Shadow's antagonist was the type he had expected, Trip's enemy was more formidable than he had anticipated.

In hand to hand encounter, The Shadow frequently relied upon the surprise which he created through his own appearance. Time and again, evil fighters had quailed at the crucial moment. Only the most notorious of mobland killers were competent to meet The Shadow without a flinch.

Trip Burley was a second-rater. Rook Hollister had chosen him as a tool because of that very fact. The big shot had known that Trip could do a job like the slaying of Donald Manthell; hence he had appointed him to that task.

But the sight of a foe who could strike back was enough to make Trip falter. The opening door had given him the advantage. Trip had the bead and was ready to use it; but his trigger finger lacked the quickness of response required for this moment.

Amid the roar of the second elevated train came the burst of a gun accompanied by long-tongued flame. The flash was from The Shadow's automatic. Delivered with split-second swiftness, it ended Trip's attempt. The mobleader sagged, his finger slipping from the trigger of his revolver.

In this crisis, The Shadow had fired to kill. He had known that his foe must be a desperado; he had also recognized that his own life depended upon swift and certain action.

As Trip wavered and sprawled sidewise on the floor, The Shadow sprang forward to the door of the living room, ready to meet other comers.

He stopped short on the threshold. Sprawled at the opposite side of the room he saw the figure of Donald Manthell.

APPROACHING, The Shadow studied the dead man. He recognized the features of Rook Hollister. A laugh came from The Shadow's hidden lips. Repressed, it sounded as an aftermath to the fading clatter of the second train.

The Shadow knew that he had eliminated a murderer. To all appearances, Trip Burley had double-crossed Rook Hollister. The tool had presumably killed his chief. That, to The Shadow, was incongruous.

Denizens of the underworld might have deemed Trip Burley capable of rubbing out Rook Hollister. In the bad lands Trip had built himself a reputation of a mobleader. But The Shadow knew the source of Trip's repute. Rook Hollister had deliberately aided Trip in his bluff by giving the second-rate mobleader an undeserved lieutenantancy.

The Shadow had recognized that fact long since Hawkeye's trailing had shown definitely that Trip was in league with Rook and had therefore substantiated The Shadow's assumptions.

Odd happenings were frequent in the affairs of the underworld. It was possible that Trip could have shown nerve enough to rub out Rook. On the contrary, it was probable that some other explanation could be found.

Searching the body that looked like Rook's, The Shadow found no traces of a gun. Turning, he went back into the room where Trip's form lay.

Trip's revolver lay close by the opening to the elevator. It was a .32; that fact gave The Shadow a new impression. Certain killers might have ventured forth with a weapon of such puny caliber, but not Trip

Burley if he had planned so momentous a task as the murder of Rook Hollister.

Turning on the light of the dressing room The Shadow looked about and spied the telephone that rested on a table. He lifted the instrument and dialed a number. A quiet voice came over the wire. It was Burbank.

In whispered tones The Shadow called for reports. He received one that Burbank had just gained from Hawkeye. The Shadow learned the details of the Chinatown meeting as Hawkeye had observed them. He completed his call.

One thing was certain. Trip Burley, by his act of murder had placed himself in line for appointment in Rook Hollister's stead. His haste hither could have been inspired by the belief that others of Rook's lieutenants might also know of the secret elevator and be contemplating murder on their own.

That, however did not nullify The Shadow's previous conclusions. Trip's .32 still impressed him as a weapon of too trivial proportions. The mobleader might have used it to slay a harmless victim; but not to deal with Rook.

Burns on the murdered man's shirt front showed a close-range shot. It was odd that Rook should have put up no fight while facing Trip at less than a yard's distance.

A TABLE drawer was partly opened. The Shadow pulled it out. Inside he saw the glimmer of a gun. He removed the weapon. It was an expensive automatic, of medium caliber, with inlaid handle bearing the initial "H."

Evidently a pistol that Rook had prized. One that he kept in readiness in case of intruders. The Shadow placed the loaded weapon beneath his cloak. His low-toned laugh indicated a new purpose.

The Shadow, like Trip Burley, had profited by a shot fired while a train was passing on the elevated. He had downed a murderer; but as circumstances now stood there was every indication that someone beside the two dead men had participated in gunfire.

The Shadow saw a reason to nullify that situation. He left Trip's .32 beside the dead mobleader's body. That remained as an indication that Trip had actually slain the man in the living room. Moving in to where Manthell's body lay, The Shadow performed two actions.

His first was to raise the dead man's hands, each in turn, and press thumb and fingers upon the surface of a waxed paper that he produced from beneath his cloak.

That done, The Shadow took his own automatic—the .45 with which he had felled Trip Burley—and pressed it into Manthell's right hand. Carefully folding the waxed paper, The Shadow placed it beneath his cloak along with the initialed pistol which he had removed from the table drawer.

Gliding swiftly into the dressing room, The Shadow extinguished the light. His sinister laugh sounded in a prophetic mirthless tone as he entered the secret elevator. Again The Shadow laughed.

The panel clicked shut as parting echoes faded in the hollowness of the dressing room. Then came the muffled grinding of the descending elevator. The Shadow had departed from this place where double death had struck.

CHAPTER X. THE NEW KING

HAWKEYE had returned to his post outside the garage. The Shadow's agent had arrived there while his chief was still upstairs in Rook's apartment; but even Hawkeye's keen, observing eyes failed to detect the

departure of the cloaked avenger.

Remaining at his post, Hawkeye kept wondering. He was sure that his brief trip to report to Burbank had not allowed time for either Rook Hollister or Trip Burley to come downstairs. Hawkeye decided that the two must have entered into a prolonged conference.

Twenty minutes passed. Hawkeye was getting impatient. Had Rook decided to remain in his apartment? Did the big shot think that he would be safe there from mobland's vengeance? Such might be the case; still that did not account for the fact that Trip had not emerged.

Analyzing Rook's situation. Hawkeye decided that the big shot's best bet was to send Trip back into the underworld as soon as possible. There Trip might learn of moves that others intended to make. Hawkeye, therefore, regarded Trip's long stay at Rook's as a piece of poor strategy.

Ten minutes more. Hawkeye peered steadily as he saw someone approaching the garage. This was something that the little trailer had not anticipated. Instead of people coming out, someone was going in.

The lanky figure that Hawkeye saw looked familiar. Lamplight gave a glimpse of a pasty face. Hawkeye recognized the new arrival by his overlarge, flattened nose and the protruding effect of his chin.

It was Lingo Queed. What was more, Lingo's goal was the garage. Hawkeye watched mobland's interpreter sidle in toward the entrance to the secret elevator. Here was news for The Shadow. Lingo must either know or suspect that the secret entrance existed to Rook Hollister's abode.

Hawkeye sneaked forward. He entered the garage and reached a spot where Lingo had turned from view. Peering into the little airshaft. Hawkeye spied Lingo at the tin wall.

As Hawkeye watched, Lingo gained success. The metal-covered barrier moved upward. Hawkeye saw Lingo step into an elevator. Hawkeye ducked away as Lingo turned about.

A few seconds later, there was the rumble of machinery. Taking another look, Hawkeye saw that Lingo had closed the opening behind him.

This meant another report to Burbank. Hawkeye hastened on his way wondering just what Lingo's visit meant. He felt sure that the gabby mobster could not be another tool of Rook's. Therefore there was but one other answer. Lingo with many contacts in the bad lands, must have been lucky enough to find out about Rook's secret elevator. It might be that he was on his way to take a chance on killing the big shot and thus usurp the kingship of the underworld.

HAWKEYE, had he followed Lingo, would have been treated to a strange sequence of events. Up in Rook's apartment the door of the elevator had opened. Lingo stepping forth, had come directly upon Trip Burley's body.

Standing in the gloom of the little dressing room, Lingo looked down at the dead form. Then he closed the door to the elevator and went into the living room. There he viewed Donald Manthell's prostrate body. Lingo's lips formed their sour smile.

The tuxedoed dead man looked like Rook Hollister. The .45 in his loose hand had every appearance of being the gun that had brought doom to Trip Burley. Turning, Lingo surveyed the distance between living room and dressing room. His gaze seemed expert.

An elevated train rumbled by. Lingo cocked his head to one side and listened as the windows rattled. Once more he smiled sourly. Then he paced across the living room and back again. From his pocket he drew an old revolver. It was a .38.

Drawing a grimy bandanna from his other pocket. Lingo began to polish the handle of the .38. While doing so he walked into the dressing room. There he laid his own gun on the floor and picked up Trip Burley's .32. He polished the handle of this weapon; then gripped it in his fist and smiled.

Like The Shadow, Lingo had altered circumstances of death. First, Donald Manthell had lain weaponless, slain by Trip Burley's .32. Trip had fallen, his gun beside him, downed by The Shadow's .45. The Shadow had made things look different simply by placing his big automatic in Manthell's hand.

Lingo's change of guns had added a new complexion. Trip's shirt front showed the gaping wound from the big automatic. Apparently he had been killed by Manthell. But beside Trip now lay a fully loaded .38, which indicated that Trip had failed to deliver a single shot.

It was Lingo Queed who held the .32 that was responsible for Manthell's death. Viewing that weapon like an important prize, Lingo transferred it to his left hand. Spying the telephone, he went to it, lifted the receiver and dialed.

“Hello...” Lingo's tone was casual. “That you, Louie?... Yeah, sure, this is Lingo... That's all right. I don't mind if Blitz is there. I've got news for him, too... Yeah, both of you.

“I'm up at Rook's. I want you up here... No. I didn't come in through the front way and you don't have to either. There's another way in... Yeah, a secret entrance, through an elevator from the garage in back of the Hotel Thurmont... You'll find it easy. It's through the wall in the airshaft. I'll be waiting for you...

“And listen, bring along anybody you can scare up... Yeah, I've got a surprise for you—a good one... All right Louie. Inside of fifteen minutes...”

LINGO pulled a nickel-plated watch from his pocket and noted the time. He stole into the living room, sat down in a chair and lighted one of Rook Hollister's expensive perfectos.

A dozen minutes passed while Lingo smoked; then the lanky intruder arose and went back to the elevator shaft. He descended to the ground level.

A few minutes passed while Lingo waited in the darkness of the elevator. Then came scraping sounds on the other side of the sheathed door. Lingo raised the barrier and grinned as he saw Louie Caparani and Blitz Schumbert. The racketeers were accompanied by two mobleaders. Lingo motioned them into the elevator.

While Blitz growled questions, the group rode upward. Lingo offered no reply until the light came on when he opened the door at the top. Then he pointed to Trip Burley's body and said:

“There's a guy that got his.”

“Trip Burley!” rumbled Blitz. “Who got him, Lingo?”

“I'll show you,” offered Lingo.

He led the way into the living room and pointed out the second body. It was Louie this time who uttered an ejaculation:

“Rook Hollister!”

“Take a look at the smoke-wagon,” suggested Lingo, indicating the automatic. “The one in Rook's mitt. He used that cannon to plug Trip. That was before I got here. I guess Trip never had a chance. He's got a loaded rod.”

The arrivals went to look at Trip's body. They nodded their agreement that Rook must have plugged the mobleader with the .45. Louie Caparani expressed the opinion that Trip had gotten his while sneaking in from the elevator.

"He was laying there when I blew in," declared Lingo calmly. "But I guess Rook wasn't figuring on a second customer. He was in the living room when I walked in on him and he still had hold of that hot smoke-wagon.

"But I never gave him a chance to use it on me." As he spoke, Lingo produced the stubby .32 that he had picked from beside Trip. "I gave him a slug from this and I did it in a hurry. Jabbed it right in his ribs while he was turning around."

"How come nobody heard the shot?" queried Blitz. "If you gave him the works in here some of those gorillas out front should have heard it."

"What do you think I brought this toy gun for?" demanded Lingo, flourishing the .32. "I had it with me so it wouldn't be heard so easy. What's more, I got a break. A train was goin' by on the "el." You can't hear much up here when they're rattling the windows."

In corroboration of Lingo's assertion his listeners heard the approach of another elevated local. The noise of the train became deafening; then diminished. Lingo pocketed the .32, grinning.

"I always had a hunch," he declared, "that there was a back way into this joint. There used to be a Japanese worked for Rook, and those gazebos are as smart as the chinks when it comes to tricks.

"Tonight, after I left Koy Dow's, I began thinking over what Trip had said. He was kind of quick, with that gag of his about giving credit to the guy who could get Rook. I had a hunch that he was coming up here to rub out Rook, and I knew if he did it would have to be by sneaking in.

"That Jap of Rook's had always been cagey when I talked to him, even if I used his own line of gab. I picked up my Japanee out in Frisco, like I did my Chinee. Anyway, I headed up here and took a squint inside the garage. I spotted that air chamber and found what I wanted."

LINGO looked about the group. His gaze was crafty. It was evident that he was studying the reaction of his fellows.

Louie Caparani was the first to give expression. The dark-faced racketeer extended his hand to Lingo.

"This makes you the big shot," acknowledged Louie. "Trip would have got it if he'd bumped Rook. But you pulled the rubout, Lingo, and that puts you up top."

"That suits me," added Blitz, also proffering his hand. "We made the deal and we're sticking by it. I'm glad it was you, Lingo, that pulled the rubout. Trip was springing a fast one on us, on account of knowing how he could act in here. But Trip flopped, which showed he didn't have the goods. You came through."

The group started for the elevator. As they stepped aboard Lingo stopped. He stooped and picked up the .38 that lay beside Trip's body. Polishing the handle of the .32, he laid it there instead.

"What's the big idea," queried Blitz.

"That's for the bulls," grinned Lingo, "so they'll get the wrong dope. You guys are the only ones that need to know I bumped Rook."

"Good stuff, Lingo," commended Louie with a chuckle. "Leave the hot rod on Trip. They can't make any

trouble for him.”

As they descended in the darkened elevator Lingo's companions were giving him credit for a smart idea. They did not know, nor even suspect, that Lingo had replaced weapons exactly as they had been when he had appeared upon the upstairs scene.

The present arrangement was the same as the one that had existed when The Shadow, cloaked in black, had departed from Rook Hollister's. Lingo Queed, through maneuvering that equaled The Shadow's craftiness, now stood acclaimed as Rook Hollister's successor in the underworld.

HAWKEYE, watching from outside the garage, saw the new big shot and his lieutenants make their final departure. Hawkeye had witnessed the arrival of the four whom Lingo had summoned. He had traveled away to inform Burbank of this new development; he had returned in time to find Lingo and the others on their way out.

After the group had gone, Hawkeye again left his post. He reached the telephone booth and made another call to Burbank. The contact man quietly ordered him off duty. Hawkeye looked puzzled as he shuffled from the drug store where he had made the call.

Tonight's developments had left Hawkeye bewildered. Yet the little agent had a hunch that The Shadow must have gleaned knowledge of his own. In this surmise Hawkeye was correct.

As the avenger who had ended the murderous career of Trip Burley, The Shadow had gained inklings of Rook Hollister's hidden scheme. To The Shadow, the subsequent actions of Lingo Queed could therefore present no new mystery.

CHAPTER XI. THE NEW CAMPAIGN

“UXTRY! Uxtry! Big shot murdered!”

Clyde Burke heard the newsboy's call as he issued from the kiosk of a downtown subway station. It was late in the afternoon. Bodies had been discovered that morning. A scoop for the evening newspapers which had, therefore, not concerned Clyde Burke. The Classic was a morning sheet.

Nevertheless, the reporter was at present seeking new facts for the Classic. Every mob killing had its follow-up; its supposed “inside story” which readers would devour with enthusiasm. Clyde Burke was on his way to interview Joe Cardona.

When he reached detective headquarters, Clyde found the acting inspector, Joe Cardona, in his office, surrounded by a group of reporters. They had come for a statement; Joe was ready to give one. Clyde had shown up just in time to get in on the proceeding.

“It was Trip Burley who bumped Rook Hollister,” stated Cardona. “We found both of them, lying dead, up in Rook's apartment. Nobody else could have been in there. We've grilled the mobsmen who were around the Hotel Thurmont.

“Just to clinch matters, we extracted the bullets and checked them with the guns. Want to see the tools? Here they are.”

Joe opened a desk drawer and the reporters crowded forward. “The big automatic belonged to Rook Hollister. The little revolver was Trip Burley's gat.”

“They bumped each other?” queried a reporter.

“Plain as day,” assured Cardona.

“Who got which first?” demanded another newshawk.

“Who's going to guess that?” returned Cardona. “We can't figure it to a dot. All we can do is reconstruct the case the way it looked to us. First off, Rook Hollister had the finger pointing at him. He knew some of his old pals were out to get him.”

“Pals like Trip Burley?”

“Yeah. And somehow, Trip got into Rook's place. How, we haven't figured, unless one of Rook's bodyguards sneaked him into the apartment. We haven't picked up all of the mugs who worked for Rook. Like as not, the one guy beat it.

“Anyway, Trip found his way in there early last night. He had this revolver—it's a .32—and he must have let Rook know what was coming, because the big shot had this iron in his mitt. Both must have cut loose pretty quick.

“We figure Rook got Trip while he was coming in. Because the bullet from the big automatic wasn't fired at such close range. Trip must have kept on coming, springing a pot-shot. He plugged Rook square with his little .32.

“Rook was lying by a window of his living room. Trip must have staggered about twenty feet, because he was laid out in a little dressing room that leads off from the big room. Nobody heard the shots.”

JOE CARDONA paused. He saw a newcomer stroll into the room and stare over the shoulders of the reporters. Joe recognized the heavy-jowled face of Bart Koplín. He waved a greeting to the private dick.

“Bodies found this morning,” concluded Cardona, briskly. “A lawyer named Scalwall came around to see Rook Hollister. On some case involving an auto smashup. One of Rook's men hammered at the apartment door. No reply, so Scalwall got suspicious and notified us.

“But that part of it was in the evening newspapers. I've given you all the new data. Don't ask me any more; you know as much about Rook's rep as I do.”

Reporters began to shuffle out. Photographers wanted pictures of the death guns. Clyde Burke idled in a corner while his fellow reporters departed. He strolled up when they were gone. The only other person who had remained was Bart Koplín.

“That's all you've got, Joe?” queried Clyde. “Nothing else? No fooling?”

“It's enough, isn't it?” growled Joe. “Police surgeon's report; bodies at the morgue; bullet tests—what else is there? Say—you'll be wondering next if we took fingerprints from the stiffs.”

“Did you?” asked Clyde, casually.

“Of course not!” snorted Cardona. “We knew who the guys were. Trip's mug was in the rogues' gallery; there wasn't any mistaking Rook. He was a fellow you didn't see often, I'll admit. He liked to be alone. But nobody would forget that face of his.

“We had plenty of persons to identify both of those stiffs. So that's that. You've got your story, Burke. Underworld vengeance. Mobland needs a new big shot.”

“And who'll he be?” demanded Clyde.

“We don't know yet,” returned Joe, “but there's some talk about Rook's lieutenants picking a bird called Lingo Queed. Why?—I don't know. Gang rivalry, maybe; or it's likely nobody else was dumb enough to take a hot spot like that one.”

Clyde was making a notation. Bart Koplín, standing by, had allowed his lips to form a wise smile. It faded as Joe Cardona turned in his direction.

“Well, Koplín,” queried the ace, “what's on your mind? Something about that phony movie contest?”

“That's it,” returned the private dick. “Enterprise Exhibitors want anything new if you've got it. Have you located Waylock?”

“No. He must have taken it on the lam. We found some of the hicks he kidded. They said he was around as late as yesterday noon. But that's all. Waylock didn't come back to his office.”

“I'll make a report on that.”

“If you want lists of names, files, all that sort of stuff, you'll find them up at Waylock's office. Take them over to Enterprise if they want them. Only give a receipt for anything you take. We might need them; but they're not important.”

“Thanks, Joe. Maybe I will. Who's up there at the office? Anybody I know?”

“Sergeant Markham. Know him?”

Bart nodded. He strolled from Cardona's office. Clyde Burke followed a few minutes afterward. He was heading out to report these new details to Burbank.

NOT for one moment had Clyde considered following Bart Koplín. The reporter saw no connection whatever between Bart and the double death at Rook Hollister's apartment. Thus Clyde missed an excellent bet, for Bart's course after leaving Cardona's office proved to be a most unusual one.

Traveling from headquarters, the private dick made toward the East Side. He reached a street free from traffic, where clusters of grimy gamins were playing noisily from curb to curb. Here Bart found the house he wanted.

Stepping up, he rang a doorbell with three short pushes; then a long one.

The door opened. A stocky, hard-faced man was standing in his shirtsleeves. This ruffian eyed Bart suspiciously. The private dick produced a calling card and handed it to him. Noting writing on the card, the man nodded. He admitted Bart and led him to a dingy rear room.

“Rook gave you this before they bumped him?” queried Bart's host. “How long ago?”

“Just this afternoon,” replied Bart.

“This afternoon!” ejaculated the interrogator. “Say—whatta you mean by that crack? Rook was rubbed out last night—”

“So they think.” Bart's tone was steady. “But I'm telling you different. Don't worry about Rook. He's still with us. And he's counting on you for what's coming. That's what he told me. He said: 'Listen, Bart, the one guy that's one hundred percent is Buzz Dongarth.' That's why I came here to see you.”

“Buzz” Dongarth's tough face showed double pleasure. First, because of the news that Rook was still alive; second on account of the big shot's expression of confidence. Bart followed up his opening.

“Here's the dope,” he informed, producing an envelope from his pocket, “straight from Rook. Read it over. Tell me what you think about it.”

Buzz opened the envelope. He took out the letter and read its contents, nodding as he did so. Then he looked at Bart, as though to learn if his visitor knew what Rook had written. Bart nodded.

“I'm in,” declared Buzz. “I'll line up the ginks we want and I'll take care of them. I've got it straight how we're to work. This code business will be easy. You're the guy I'll be seeing?”

“Sure,” replied Bart, “but nobody's going to know about it. That's part of the gag. The big part. But listen, Buzz: we figured on having Trip Burley in as the big shot. That went blooey. What about this guy Lingo Queed? Who is he?”

“Where'd you hear about him?”

“Down at headquarters. I was listening when Joe Cardona was talking to some reporters.”

“What'd you hear about him?”

“Nothing, except that he was in. Cardona didn't know why.”

“I'll tell you why.” Buzz leaned forward in his chair. “And listen, Bart, what I'm giving you is so tight it ain't even going along the grapevine. Which means no stoolie's even beginning to hear about it.

“But remember—we can't do nothing about it. I'm in with Louie Caparani. Mighty close, but not close enough for Louie to ring me in on the meetings that he and some other guys were holding. I want to keep in with Louie; that's why we've got to hold tight to what he told me. About Lingo Queed.

“LAST night a deal was made. The guy that rubbed out Rook was to be the big shot, see? Well, Louie got a call later from Lingo Queed. Louie and some others went up to Rook's place by a private elevator—one I didn't even know about. Lingo was there.”

“You mean he knew about the elevator?”

“You bet! And he was the guy that bumped Rook. So that's why he's the big shot.

“I mean”—Buzz grinned—“Lingo was the bird that bumped the guy they thought was Rook.”

“What about Trip?”

“He was dead already. This guy that looked like Rook had smeared him. So Lingo planted things to make it look like Rook and Trip had plugged each other. The boys are keeping it quiet so the bulls won't bother Lingo.”

“And Cardona fell for it.” Bart shrugged his shoulders. “Well, it looked right enough. Say, Buzz—if you're in with Louie Caparani, you ought to be able to get close to Lingo.”

“Sure thing! That's just what Louie told me. Figures I can build up a mob to work for Lingo. To take the place of Ping Gradley's outfit.”

“Good!” Bart arose and clapped a heavy paw to Buzz Dongarth's shoulder. “Say—Rook's going to feel swell when he hears this dope. You line up the right guys, like you said. Then get in with Lingo, so's to be ready when we need you. It'll work out just about as good as if we still had Trip. Better, maybe, as I see it.”

“Because if you don't like Lingo—”

“We can chop him down. That would have been tough with Trip. He would have been ready to squawk if he felt it coming.”

This concluded the conference. Bart Koplin made his departure from the dingy house. Buzz Dongarth remained and read over the letter that had come from Rook Hollister. The longer he digested its contents, the more pleased his grin became.

Buzz moved his lips, as if memorizing something. Then, with pencil, he began notations on the back of the letter. At times, he referred to the letter itself to see if his memory was correct. This process continued for a full half hour. Finally Buzz was satisfied.

He tore the letter to shreds and lighted the pieces with a match. He dropped the burning paper in a battered metal wastebasket and watched until Rook's message was entirely destroyed.

LUCK had come to Buzz Dongarth. He was a mobleader whose crew had run into trouble at the docks. At that time, criticism had been heavy toward Rook Hollister. The big shot, to save his face, had passed the buck to Buzz. But in so doing, Rook had removed the sting by promising future service.

Louie Caparani had known of the situation. He had classed Buzz as luke-warm, so far as a plot against Rook might be concerned; because Buzz had some future chance so long as Rook remained big shot. But since last night, Louie—as well as Blitz and other lieutenants—had been busy mollifying just such persons as Buzz Dongarth.

“Sure. Rook was a pal,” Louie had said. Buzz's hard mouth showed a fanglike grin at recollection of it. “A pal of yours Buzz, and a pal of mine. But he put you in the discard, didn't he, when you flivved a job? Well, the boys had to rub out Rook, and Lingo Queed's the big shot because he did it. Are you with us?”

Buzz had said yes. A logical reply, with Rook dead. But this news that Rook was still alive gave him a different impetus. The proposal that had come from the ex-big shot was one that promised huge return. It meant that for the present Buzz would be the visible head of an invisible chain working in behalf of a hidden campaign.

It meant the end of this squalor; this pretended disgrace that Buzz had borne in behalf of Rook. A chance to blow some of the dough that Rook had passed him, by pretending that new connections were proving profitable.

Buzz Dongarth began to pack a bag. He was leaving here to take up a new and more pretentious abode. Like Bart Koplin, he was sold on the idea of Rook Hollister's new campaign.

ELSEWHERE, Clyde had put in his report to Burbank. The contact man, in turn, had given it to The Shadow. In the seclusion of a strange black-walled room, the master fighter was reviewing the facts that Clyde had given.

The Shadow was in his hidden sanctum. Bluish light glowed upon the surface of a polished table. Long, white hands were fingering papers; then the right hand began to inscribe brief comments:

No impressions taken—

These words appeared in bluish ink. Then the inscription faded as was the way with The Shadow's written thoughts. A soft laugh sounded from outside the sphere of lamplight. The Shadow was referring to the fact that Joe Cardona had seen no necessity of taking fingerprints from the bodies found at Rook Hollister's.

A photostatic sheet came into view. This was from The Shadow's files. Records more extensive—so far as utility was concerned—than those of the police. This sheet showed full face and profile of Rook Hollister. Beneath the pictures were reproductions of Rook's thumb and finger impressions.

A waxed sheet slid on the table. This had undergone a change since The Shadow had folded it at Rook's. Donald Manthell's fingerprints had been brushed with a black powder. The Shadow compared them with the photostat of Rook's impressions.

Bluish light gave the answer. The prints were totally different! The Shadow knew that the man whom Trip Burley had slain was not the big shot. Rook Hollister, king of the underworld, still lived. Freed from the foment of the underworld, Rook would be trebly dangerous.

Papers rustled from the table. White hands plucked earphones from the wall. A tiny bulb glittered; Burbank's voice spoke over the wire. In return, The Shadow uttered whispered commands that were weird and sinister in tone.

Instructions to all agents. Full information that Rook Hollister was alive. New orders changing entirely the work that aids had been performing.

The Shadow, cognizant of the truth, had mapped a new campaign.

CHAPTER XII. VILLAINS DEDUCT

AT nine o'clock that evening, Bart Koplín strolled into a subway entrance at Times Square. Newsboys were selling early copies of tomorrow morning's newspapers. Bart bought one of the "bulldog" editions.

Passing through a turnstile, the heavy-jowled private dick followed the planking and boarded a waiting shuttle train. Seated in the half-empty car, he read new reports concerning the supposed death of Rook Hollister.

The front page carried a photograph of The Hotel Thurmont, with arrows marking the rear windows of Rook's apartment. Other pictures showed Rook, himself, in various poses. One when he had attended races on Long Island; another when he had left a courtroom after a squashed trial.

The shuttle train started and carried Bart clear to Grand Central before he had finished reading the padded accounts of gangdom's revolt against its wavering czar. Bart tossed the newspaper on a seat. He left the train and made his way out through Grand Central Station.

Choosing an avenue, Bart walked northward. After several blocks he began to look upward across the street. He was in a district of towering hotels, huge structures that rose many stories above the thoroughfare.

One, in particular, interested Bart as he approached it. In any city other than New York, this hostelry would have been a civic pride, for it reared twenty stories skyward, not counting a small tower that added a few floors more above the roof.

In Manhattan, however, the building was dwarfed by surrounding edifices. A nearer hotel was bulkier and thirty floors in height. One across the street had forty stories. Further along, Bart viewed a mighty shaft that boasted fifty lines of horizontal windows.

Bart's goal was the twenty-story building. A flashing electric sign gleamed the name "Hotel Moselle" in vertical lights of white. At top and bottom were short, horizontal words in red. These lights, unblinking, read:

ROOF CAFE

BART entered the lobby of the Moselle. He joined a small throng in an elevator. The car sped upward to the twentieth floor. Bart alighted, walked through a space that served as upstairs lobby and chose a short, thronged passage that led to an outdoor roof.

There the private dick chose a table. He ordered a drink and waited methodically until he saw a tall, dark-visaged man in evening dress, who was conducting a group of guests to a table by the parapet.

THIS was Prexy Storlick, the proprietor of the Moselle Roof Cafe. The cafe itself was a concession that Prexy had taken from the hotel management. Shrewd in business, genial in personality, Prexy had been making the place pay.

Prexy's past was a well-covered one. His geniality was a smooth mask, actually he had been guilty of cutthroat practices. Prexy had been the silent partner behind a chain of notorious speakeasies, each of which had boasted a dummy proprietor.

With the end of the speakeasy period, Prexy had seen a chance to step out into legitimate business. All his old "fixing" had been completely covered. The men who had served as "fronts" were in wrong with the law; but Prexy was not.

Bulging with cash, Prexy had bluffed the Hotel Moselle management into thinking that he was a legitimate restaurateur. Sole governor of the Roof Cafe, he had made the place into a bright spot that had attracted multitudes of patrons.

Turning from the new customers, Prexy caught a glance from Bart. In gracious fashion, the proprietor stepped over to speak to the heavy-faced patron, just as he might to any regular customer. But the words which Prexy uttered were out of the ordinary.

"All right, Bart," announced the tall man quietly, "you can go up. Rook told me to send you as soon as you came in."

Prexy walked away. Bart finished his drink. Then he arose and strolled back into the corridor that led to the elevators. Halfway along this corridor was a short passage. At the entrance was a table on which rested a telephone.

Beyond that, the passage terminated with the door of a little-used service elevator. But halfway along was another door in the side wall. This was the one that Bart chose. Hunching against the door, that passers-by in the corridor might not see him, he thrust a key into the lock.

Opening the door, Bart stepped directly to a stairway. He latched the door behind him and went upward through a gloom that was tempered only by a light from the top of the stairs. He came to a landing one flight up; there a closed door indicated an old storeroom. Bart continued to the second floor. He reached a little anteroom and knocked cautiously at a barrier.

The door opened. Bart Koplín was face to face with Rook Hollister.

THE big shot motioned Bart into the living room of an oddly arranged apartment. These quarters, twenty-two stories above the street, constituted Rook's hide-out.

This floor was like a cap stone that topped the Hotel Moselle. The tower itself was not central in the building. It reared from the south wall. A two-story structure, the first or storeroom floor was a solid hulk. This apartment, a sort of penthouse, was of smaller dimensions than the storeroom below it. Hence it was surrounded on all sides by a porchlike walk, edged with a cement rail.

The windows of the living room were shuttered; straight across, at the south side of the room, was a grilled double door that afforded access to the promenade that flanked all four sides of the penthouse.

Prexy Storlick, when he had rented the concession from the Hotel Moselle, had taken the roof and the two floors above it. This penthouse was his reputed residence; that fact was a perfect blind that protected Rook Hollister.

It was plain that Rook had been anxiously awaiting Bart's arrival. The big shot wanted to know what Bart had learned. As they sat down, the dick lost no time in slipping the news.

"I have fixed Buzz Dongarth," he declared. "It worked out just the way you said it would. What's more, Buzz handed me a piece of info that's going to knock you for a loop!"

"Bad news?" inquired Rook anxiously.

"No, no," assured Bart, "it's all right; but before I come to it let me give you the layout from headquarters. I breezed in on Joe Cardona. Pulled a stall about that movie contest of Waylock's. I heard Cardona talking to some reporters.

"First off Cardona muffed his chance just like you thought he would. One look at Manthell's mug made him sure the guy was you. He knew Trip Burley, so he shipped his body to the morgue along with Manthell's.

"We hadn't figured on him finding two corpses. So I don't blame you for being worried by those afternoon newspapers. But it's all right. Cardona muffed; and I guess his identification of Trip helped instead of hurting."

"But who got Trip?" queried Rook. "Did Manthell find that rod of mine that I left in the dressing room?"

"No," replied Bart. "He had an automatic on him, but it wasn't yours. It was a .45—and what a cannon it was! Cardona was showing it to some newshounds."

"How do you explain that?" demanded Rook.

"I'm getting to it," affirmed Bart. "First off, Cardona has heard that a bloke named Lingo Queed is to be the new big shot."

"LINGO QUEED?" quizzed Rook savagely. "Why he's nothin' but a go-between! A smart guy, right enough, who knows a lot; but he hasn't even got a rep as a first-class torpedo."

"He's got one now," assured Bart, "and Buzz Dongarth told me the answer. Lingo Queed was in on that plot down in Chinatown, wasn't he?"

"Sure. Trip told me that Lingo was the mug who arranged the meeting place. He knows the chinks and their talkee-talkee."

"Well, Buzz says Lingo took credit for bumping you; but only those on the inside know it. Even the grapevine hasn't got it."

"You mean Lingo found out about that secret elevator of mine?"

"That's it, Rook. I don't know how he did it, though."

"I do"—Rook was musing—"because I remember Lingo talking to that Jap who used to work for me."

“Did the Jap know about the elevator?”

“Of course. It was the Jap who fixed it for me. But I didn't suspect nothing wrong when Lingo talked to him in Japanese.”

Bart chuckled.

“It's plain enough,” asserted Rook. “When Trip sprang that gag at the meeting, he gave Lingo a break that we didn't know about. Lingo must have beaten Trip getting up to my place. He rubbed out Manthell and then plugged Trip.”

“It don't fit, Rook,” declared Bart with a solemn shake of his head. “No it don't fit.”

“Why not?” questioned Rook.

“Because Manthell and Trip were plugged with different rods. Here was the layout. Manthell had the big .45 on him, and the bullet in Trip came from that howitzer. Trip had a little .32; and the slug in Manthell fitted it.”

“You say that Trip had a .32? Stub-nosed?”

“Sure, I saw the rod myself.”

Rook nodded. His molded face was meditative.

“That was Trip's rod,” asserted the big shot, musingly. “I told him to use a .32 because it wouldn't make too much noise. I figured Manthell was a setup.”

“Then Trip really got Manthell?”

“Sure. And Lingo got Trip. Say, Bart—I see it! Here's the way Lingo must have worked it! He got in there after Trip had bumped Manthell. He blasted Trip with the .45. Then he planted the big cannon on Manthell to make it look like the hick finished off Trip.”

“Sounds right, Rook. Only one thing though: Buzz says Lingo called the boys up there to look it over. How did he handle that? He had to make it look like he'd humped Manthell.”

“That would have been easy. Lingo could have switched rods around to make it look like he had plugged Manthell after Manthell got Trip. Lingo must have swiped that rod of mine out of the table drawer. Then, after bluffing the boys, he rigged the setup that Cardona found. The .45 on Manthell and the .32 on Trip.”

“A .45 is a pretty big wagon, Rook. It's funny they fell for it, there in Manthell's mitt.”

“What was funny about it?” Rook's tone was scornful. “They all thought Manthell was me, didn't they? I've got a rep, haven't I? Wouldn't I be a logical guy to have a .45 on hand? Especially when there was no other rod around the place?”

BART pondered; then he nodded.

“Lingo Queed is a smart gazebo,” decided the private dick. “A mighty smart gazebo, even if he isn't a hot gunner. He was good enough to beat Trip to the shot. But that wasn't tough, I don't think. It was brain work helped him out after that. I'd like to figure out just how he did switch things around. Let's see: first off, he came in with that .45—”

“Wait a minute!” Rook came to his feet with an excited interruption. “Say, Bart, we're all wet! Lingo

wouldn't have had a .45! I've told you he has no rep as a gunner. It wasn't Lingo that bumped Trip! Lingo just used his noodle—that's all."

"Who got Trip then?" queried Bart. "Answer that one, Rook."

"I'll give you a question of my own," proposed the big shot. "Answer it for me. Who is it that they say always handles a .45 automatic? Not just one gun but two—maybe more when he needs 'em?"

"The Shadow!"

Bart's ejaculation came spontaneously. It was delivered in an almost frightened gasp. Rook nodded, and grunted a calloused laugh.

"That's it, Bart," growled the big shot. "I've figured out the whole lay. We've known that The Shadow was in back of these phony mobs that have been making trouble every time I tried to swing a racket. Sooner or later, The Shadow was due to pay me a visit. What's more, The Shadow was smart enough to have trailed Trip without our knowing it.

"The Shadow must have walked in there right after Trip. He got Trip making a get-away, Bart. It was quick curtains for Trip, being up against The Shadow. Then The Shadow found Manthell, thought the hick was me, and planted his big smoke-wagon on the body.

"So as to fool everybody, see? That's The Shadow's way. He knew the bulls would figure that I might handle a .45; and he took my regular gat along with him, out of the table drawer."

Bart nodded; but he remained a trifle dubious. Rook grunted inquiringly. Bart spoke.

"How does Lingo figure in it then?" queried the private dick.

"EASY," responded the big shot. "Perfect. He came in later. Knew about that elevator, or guessed it was there, and decided to rub me out on his own. He breezed in and found things the way The Shadow had left them.

"The setup was a beaut. It ought to have been since The Shadow had framed it. Lingo fell for it, like anybody would that thought Manthell was me. Lingo saw it would do for the bulls. A swell find—Rook Hollister and Trip Burley, each wiped out by the other.

"But Lingo wanted credit for getting me. That was a cinch. He could leave the .45 on Manthell, to make it look like I got Trip. That part was great. Then all Lingo had to do was plant his own rod—a .38 probably—on Trip, while he took the .32 for himself."

"And then," inquired Bart, "he called the boys in?"

"Sure," acknowledged Rook. "He let them take a look. They saw Trip with a loaded rod. The bunch thought I'd bumped Trip and that Lingo had got me. So they gave Lingo credit. He didn't have to use any imagination after that.

"All he had to do was set things back the way that The Shadow had planted them. So's the bulls would be guessing. And they are. Joe Cardona fell for it, like the boob he is. You can't blame him, though.

"Nobody could have doped all this out but us. On account of our knowing that Manthell wasn't me. Say, Bart—you burned up those photos you got from Waylock, didn't you?"

Bart nodded. His expression was followed by a long pause, while he and Rook chewed the ends of

half-smoked cigars. At last, Rook chuckled with satisfaction.

"I'm lucky to be out of it," decided the big shot. "And Lingo is a sap to be in it. I wanted Trip to be the fall guy, running things while I was under cover. Lingo muscling in didn't sound so good when you first told me.

"But it looks great now. I'll tell you why, Bart. The Shadow was on my trail. That means he'll be on Lingo's later. If The Shadow gets Lingo, fine. If he doesn't, we'll rub Lingo after we get The Shadow. Then put a stooge in Lingo's place."

"But getting The Shadow's no cinch," put in Bart, ruefully. "It's going to take a long time, any way you look at it. We've only got one way to pull it."

"We have two, Bart. First, the system I intended to use. Through Buzz Dongarth. He'll tip the real fellows in the bad lands to check on every mob. Sooner or later, they're going to spot some of these mugs who are working with The Shadow.

"Get The Shadow's agents, and we'll have a lead on him. We're hitting The Shadow where he's weak, Bart. But that's only one system. With what we've figured out tonight, we've got another way. Through Buzz himself."

"How's that, Rook?"

"Buzz will get close to Lingo. When The Shadow begins to put the heat on Lingo, maybe Buzz will be lucky enough to spot it. But grabbing The Shadow's agents will be our first break.

"No matter how good The Shadow is, he can't be everywhere. He was at the Casino Rouge the night Ping Gradley went to take Karl Durmsted for a ride. But there were others there, outside.

"Those are the ginks we'll get for a starter. All the while, we'll have Buzz keeping tabs on Lingo. We're sitting pretty, Bart. I'm dead" —Rook laughed scornfully—"so they think; and that puts me at the top of the heap!"

ROOK HOLLISTER leaned back and puffed his cigar in satisfaction. Bart Koplín shared his chief's elation. Big shot and lieutenant felt that their position was secure.

Both would have been concerned had they known of The Shadow's own deductions, that the invisible scourge of the underworld was sure that Rook Hollister was still at large.

Yet, even with that situation existing, Rook Hollister held a powerful position. Untrammelled by the worries of kingship, this former ruler of the underworld was planning crafty measures from under perfect cover.

From the security of this hide-out, Rook Hollister could strike as no foe of The Shadow had ever struck before. For the present, The Shadow could do no more than nullify Rook's strategy.

Well had Rook planned this dive into obscurity. Through Bart Koplín and Buzz Dongarth, the big shot still retained a powerful grip upon formidable forces in the underworld.

Hidden conflict was in the making. Thrusts and counter-thrusts would come in the dark. The Shadow, by learning that Rook still lived, had merely lessened the odds upon which the big shot had counted.

All considered, the best was an even break for The Shadow. Rook Hollister, hidden ruler of crimedom, had reached the coveted position from which he could battle The Shadow upon equal terms!

CHAPTER XIII. UNDER COVER

A FEW days had passed. Crime lay latent in New York. The underworld had not yet adjusted itself to the regime of Lingo Queed. Alliances were being made; lieutenants were strengthening their forces.

Rook Hollister had counted upon such a lull. He had believed that The Shadow would make use of it to implant workers more firmly in the ranks of underworld groups. This would prove of advantage later, when spies passed reports through Buzz Dongarth.

The Shadow, unknown to Rook, was crossing the dope. His agents were busy; but in a manner that would leave Rook guessing. For The Shadow, recognizing the hidden big shot's scheme, had withdrawn his aids from all activities that might betray their identity.

Moreover, he had put them on a task which might prove damaging to Rook's own position. To a man, The Shadow's agents were engaged in a hunt for the big shot himself. This course was as safe as it was crafty, since Rook dwelt in ignorance of the fact that The Shadow knew him to be alive.

Clyde Burke, enterprising reporter on the staff of the Classic, had gained a vacation. He was using it in and about Manhattan, strolling into mobster hangouts, visiting the water fronts, cruising everywhere in free-lance journalistic fashion. Always with one purpose: to listen for any mention of Rook Hollister.

Harry Vincent, a keen-cut chap who had long served The Shadow, was watching lobbies of the large hotels, always on the lookout for any one who might resemble Rook. Harry was also ready for special orders.

Aiding in the search through the better districts of Manhattan was a shrewd-faced cab driver who was prepared to recognize Rook on sight. This was Moe Shrevnitz, an independent taxi man whose cab was actually owned by The Shadow. Moe was a clever hand in searches of this sort.

In the underworld, a stalwart agent was on the lookout. This was Cliff Marsland, who ranked as ace of The Shadow's sharp-shooters. Cliff was to be off the firing line. The Shadow had another plan for dealing with crime when it arose. Cliff, like the other agents, was trying to spot Rook Hollister.

ONE alone had gained a unique duty. This was Hawkeye, the little trailer who had so often shown his worth. Hawkeye had been delegated to the special task of implanting himself in the select group of thugs who constituted the court of the new king, Lingo Queed.

Hawkeye's duty, however, was leading to the same goal that the other agents were seeking. The Shadow had recognized that Rook Hollister would find it profitable to keep tabs on Lingo Queed. Among Lingo's associates would be one who would know that Rook still lived. That individual discovered, Hawkeye would be useful in trailing him.

It was later afternoon. Hawkeye was shuffling along an East Side street, toward an old apartment building. It was on the fourth floor of that structure that Lingo Queed had established headquarters. Unlike Rook, Lingo had no penchant for luxury.

Hawkeye felt qualms as he approached his destination. From Burbank, the little agent had gained explicit instructions. He was versed in the method that he was to use with Lingo. The Shadow had planned a good way for his aid to make an impression upon the new big shot and his lieutenants.

Shuffling up to the entrance of the old apartment house, Hawkeye encountered a sweated guard. This mobster was a gorilla who belonged to one of the mobleaders serving Lingo. Hawkeye nodded to the fellow; then announced that he wanted to see Lingo.

The guard waved Hawkeye through. Entering a decrepit elevator, Hawkeye found another mobster serving as operator. This thug heard his request, agreed to it and took Hawkeye to the fourth floor. There Hawkeye was passed through by a third ruffian, who stood as guard of Lingo's apartment.

Nothing formal about meeting Lingo Queed, if a caller looked tough enough. Hawkeye found that out at once. He walked straight into a poorly furnished conference room to find Lingo engaged in a discussion with half a dozen lieutenants.

Louie Caparani was present. So was Blitz Schumbert. Outside of these racketeers, the others were mobleaders. One in particular caught Hawkeye's gaze. The fellow was Buzz Dongarth, a new acquisition to the list of lieutenants.

LINGO recognized Hawkeye. This was not surprising, since both had been roamers, in the bad lands. Lingo had come to the top of the heap, in one bound from obscurity. Hawkeye, on the contrary, was still an unimportant figure.

It was Lingo's policy, however, to be friendly with all. His glance showed that he considered Hawkeye to be all right. He waved the little spotter to a corner.

Hawkeye listened in on a prolonged conference which dealt with future activities. Lingo, his big-featured face indulging in occasional smiles, was quite attentive to the plans proposed by his lieutenants. The trend seemed equal. Some felt that immediate action would strengthen Lingo's status; while others claimed that delay would give opportunity for better organization.

Lingo finally decided with the latter group. All arguments heard, he summed matters with a brusque statement:

"You all know what happened to Rook Hollister. He got his because he was dumb. Shoved things through when he wasn't ready. Let 'em squawk if they don't like it because I'm holding back. That's better than starting off with some bum bet. Whatever I do is goin' to be right."

Emphatically, Lingo had ended the conference. Forgetting the lieutenants, he swung about to Hawkeye and queried:

"Well? What's biting you?"

Hawkeye grinned wisely. He looked at Lingo; then glanced at the big shot's lieutenants. He nodded before he spoke.

"Just wanted to put you wise to something, Lingo," declared Hawkeye. "I get around a few places. I hear what's going on; I thought maybe you'd like to know about it."

"Spring it," growled Lingo.

"Well"—Hawkeye looked warily at the lieutenants—"I sort of have a hunch that you're goin' to be in for trouble. Some birds that I've heard talking are wondering who got the idea of making you big shot to begin with."

Lingo glowered. Enraged utterances came from the lieutenants. Lingo waved his hand to silence the inappropriate epithets.

"Let's hear him out," suggested Lingo.

"You'd better," commented Hawkeye, boldly. "You're up against something, Lingo. It's not just keeping

yourself in right—it's the idea of getting started at all. Each new guy that stepped in where you are has found it hotter than the fellow who was ahead of him.”

“Don't I know it?” queried Lingo.

“Don't look like it,” returned Hawkeye.

“Why not?” quizzed Lingo.

“Just because,” answered Hawkeye, “you're starting off just the way the rest of 'em did. I looked over those mugs you've got for bodyguards.” He glanced across the room where a pair of gorillas were lounging in the corner. “I don't like the looks of them. How do you know they aren't working for somebody that's ready to knife you?”

“I know the guys that got them for me,” asserted Lingo. “They're all right.”

“Yeah?” queried Hawkeye. “But do you know where they came from? Listen, Lingo—”

“Say,” interrupted Lingo savagely, “where did you get all this hooey? If there's any heels that think they're going to get me, it looks like they've sent you around here to pull a stall for a starter.”

Guffaws of approval from the lieutenants. Mumbles about throwing Hawkeye out. The Shadow's agent felt that his spot was a tough one. He hastened to play his lone trump.

“TLL show you I'm on the level,” asserted Hawkeye, throwing a look of challenge toward the angered lieutenants. “I'll spring something that these pals of yours never thought of. I'm not telling you to bounce these gorillas you've got. Keep them for bodies. But use them outside like Rook used to do with his.”

“And keep nobody inside, huh?” snorted Lingo. “Make the same mistake Rook did. Say—what do you think you're getting away with?”

“Not a thing,” retorted Hawkeye. “I haven't told you not to keep a guy on the inside. Give me a chance to spill my idea before you get sore. Put a guy on the inside and keep him as a regular body. But take my tip and don't use a mug that somebody else tells you is O.K.”

“Maybe you could find one,” jeered Lingo.

“I wouldn't look for one,” retorted Hawkeye. “That would make it look like I was framing something. But I'm not. I'm all for you, Lingo—and I'm telling you what you can do in order to sit right where you are. If I was a big shot I wouldn't trust any regular gorilla.”

Hawkeye's bold persuasion had gained results. Lingo was musing; his lieutenants were silent. Only one doubt remained. Lingo expressed it.

“Sounds good,” he decided, “but where do you fit in on it? You aren't handing me this for nothing, are you?”

“Not a chance,” grinned Hawkeye. “I just sprang this so you'd know that I'm a guy that's got ideas. A good enough guy to have workin' for you. Moving round and picking out the high spots. Spotting some of these mugs that send phony gab along the grapevine. Looking for some of these screwies that think they're too smart to be spotted.”

HAWKEYE had spoken cunningly. His talk had followed the plan that The Shadow had suggested through Burbank. Apparently, Hawkeye had played it well; for although some of the lieutenants were still

dubious as to the little man's merits, Lingo appeared impressed.

"You're in," decreed the newly crowned big shot. "Go to it, Hawkeye. Bring in all the dope you can get; meanwhile, I'm going to use that idea of yours. Well, anyway there's no use worrying about any trouble right now. Nobody goin' to squawk much while we let things cool. I'm going uptown. Who's coming along?"

"Where're you heading," asked Louie Caparani. "Up to Brindle's?"

"Sure," returned Lingo. "Where else would I be goin'? I been up there every day, haven't I. Can't think of anywhere better, can you?"

Louie shook his head.

"All right," ended Lingo. "Come along, whoever's coming."

The whole assemblage started downstairs. Out front, they split up. Hawkeye watched Louie Caparani and Buzz Dongarth get aboard a cab with Lingo. Two gorillas joined them. The cab pulled away while the other lieutenants dispersed. Hawkeye grinned as he shuffled eastward.

The Shadow's plan had worked perfectly. Lingo Queed had accepted Hawkeye's suggestion regarding a bodyguard. Hawkeye had put himself in right with the big shot. More than that, two other objectives had been obtained.

First, Hawkeye had spotted a lieutenant who looked suspicious; one whose name he intended to report immediately to The Shadow. That was Buzz Dongarth. It would be easy to check up further on the new lieutenant. The other point that Hawkeye had gained was an odd one. It required a prompt report.

It was the fact that Lingo Queed was on his way to Brindle's restaurant, an eating place on Broadway. Coupled with Hawkeye's recent suggestion, Lingo's visit to Brindle's would prove an important factor in The Shadow's final plan.

For The Shadow had knowledge superior to that his agents had given him.

CHAPTER XIV. THE SHADOW'S PLANTS

HALF an hour after they had started their taxi trip, Lingo Queed and his companions arrived at Brindle's Restaurant. They entered the Broadway eating place and strolled toward booths at the rear, while gawk-eyed patrons watched them.

Brindle's was a popular place with gilt-edged mobsters. It had long been known as a rendezvous for big shots. At present, Lingo Queed was biggest of the big, even though he did not look the part. True he had discarded his shabby, sweated garb; but the ready-made suit that he had taken instead was a typical pattern of the East Side tailor shops.

Lingo looked like a Bowery tough alongside of his lieutenants, Louis Caparani and Buzz Dongarth. Louie was immaculately clothed in a blackish suit that had a tuxedo touch; while Buzz had improved his appearance considerably since making his deal with Bart Koplín.

Big shot and lieutenants took one booth, while the gorillas slid into one adjacent. This conformed to gangland's etiquette. As a precautionary measure, the gorillas chose the booth between Lingo's and the door. They were acting as the big shot's bodyguards.

A pudgy, bald-headed man approached the booth and nodded. Fat chin resting on the points of his dress

collar, he presented menus for the guests. Lingo and the others addressed him as “Maxie”—the only name by which they knew this head waiter.

“Still shy a doorman, eh, Maxie?” questioned Louie.

“Ach, yes,” grumbled Maxie. “They come for the job. They find out what place this is. They go. They do not want the job.”

“How come?” queried Lingo.

Louie looked surprised when he heard the new king's question. Then he laughed.

“That's right, Lingo,” remarked the racketeer. “You hadn't been coming to this joint until I brought you up here the other night. You've liked it since then, though.”

“Stick to the doorman,” growled Lingo. “What about him? Is it a gag?”

“Ach, no,” put in Maxie. “It is too bad. The old doorman, he was foolish enough to get into trouble. One month ago, that was, he was too slow getting out of the way, when customers got busy with their guns. Killed, he was.”

“I heard about it,” recalled Lingo. “Some guy in from Chi bumped into a torpedo who had it in for him. Wasn't that it?”

“Yeah,” put in Buzz. “And neither of them would have hurt anybody else if the doorman hadn't tried to scam out of the way. The sap jumped the wrong direction and got in front of a slug.”

“Try to tell that to the men who come here,” shrugged Maxie. “Ach, the employment offices send them to this address. When they see the name above the door they leave.”

“Change the name of the place,” laughed Louie.

“Or hire one of my gorillas,” add Lingo. “Look at those mugs in the next booth, Maxie. See how one of the would look in uniform.”

“You joke,” declared Maxie, soberly. “But it is no joke to me. I have been told this week to act as manager here. I have to hire the new doorman. But none will come.”

A waiter approached. Maxie took the orders and gave them to the menial. The bald-headed man waddled toward the rear of the restaurant; then came back. He stopped close beside Lingo's booth; the big shot looked up quickly as he saw the head waiter pause.

A HUGE man had come into the restaurant. He was a gigantic African with fists the size of hams. His dark face was wearing a smile as he bowed to Maxie. Apparently he had been sent back to the head waiter.

“Are you Mr. Maxie?” the big fellow inquired. “If you is, you's the gen'l'man ah was told to ask foah.”

“What about?” inquired Maxie, looking up at the face a foot above him.

“Dat job heah. You want a doorman, don't you, sah?”

“Ach, yes!” Maxie rubbed his hands warmly. “Who sent you over here?”

“The Stah Employment Agency. An' when ah seed this place”—the African chuckled—“well, sah, ah

said: 'Dis is where all dat trouble was'—yes, sah, ah remembered it.”

Lingo and his lieutenants were all interested by this time. They were craning from the booth, watching Maxie and the prospective doorman.

“What's your name?” queried Maxie.

“Jericho,” replied the big man. “Dat's what dey call me. An' ah'll tell you somethin', Mr. Maxie. It don't matter to me how tough some people get. Ah'll take care of them.”

“Listen to that hooley,” growled Buzz Dongarth. “Say, with the long legs that gazebo's got, I'll bet he could beat a bullet going down Broadway!”

“He'd try it, anyway,” chuckled Louie Caparani, “if a couple of gunners got started here like they did before.”

“Say, Maxie”—it was Lingo this time, his voice was loud enough for the head waiter to hear—“what's that this big boy's handing you?”

Maxie turned around; so did Jericho. The big fellow grinned as he eyed the three inquisitors.

“If Maxie's got a big enough uniform,” declared Jericho, “I'll staht work tonight, gen'l'men. Ah wants a job bad, ah does. And when ah sees a chanct foah one, ah don't lose no time trying to get it.”

“Say”—Lingo eyed Jericho speculatively—“it looks like you'd be over-sized for the doorman's job. You'd hide half of Brindle's window. What about it, Maxie?”

“Ach, maybe so.”

Jericho's grin faded. The big fellow looked appealingly, almost accusingly, at Lingo. Maxie's doubt was making Jericho feel uneasy. The remark about the window had been a jest; but Jericho's size was indeed a matter to be considered. Maxie was beginning to decide that it would be unwise to hire a doorman of such Gargantuan proportions.

“Ach, the uniform,” said Maxie. “I had forgotten about it. It is a fine one and the tailor, he has fixed it so very well that the bullet hole is gone. It would not do for this man, and besides he would be too —ach, what is the word I want—I mean he would be too much to be seen.”

“Too conspicuous,” chuckled Louie Caparani. “Well Lingo, it looks like you done the big boy out of a job.”

“Maybe,” suggested Buzz, with a laugh, “he'd do for the job Hawkeye was talking about. One thing you can bet; he isn't in the know. If he can act as big as he talks, or even as big as he looks, he'd be your ticket, Lingo.”

“That is an idea!” ejaculated Lingo. “Wait a minute, big fellow, maybe I can do something for you.” He turned to Buzz and whispered:

“Wise those gorillas in the next booth. Slip them the word to gang this guy.”

A grin appeared on Buzz's hard face. The lieutenant shouldered past Jericho while Lingo beckoned to the big fellow. Jericho did not see Buzz stop at the adjoining booth. Nor did Maxie. The head waiter was too interested in the coming conversation.

“Suppose,” said Lingo to Jericho, “that I showed you a job worth fifty a week? Would you like it?”

“Fifty dollahs!” gasped Jericho, gaping. “Dat's moah'n ah thought ah could make in a month. If you isn't fooling me, sah, ah'd tell you dat I'd show you some real service foah dat amount of money. Yassah—”

JERICHO did not complete the sentence. The gorillas had sidled out from the next booth. Buzz had stepped a short distance away; as the new lieutenant flashed a signal, the two huskies threw themselves upon Jericho in an effort to flatten the huge African.

Maxie uttered a cry of warning. He wanted no more trouble in the restaurant. But the brawl that followed was even shorter than Maxie could have hoped. As the first ruffian grappled Jericho, the big fellow wheeled away and swung backward against an unoccupied table. With one hamlike hand he caught the gorilla's neck.

The second thug loosed a punch. Jericho's grinning face bobbed backwards. The upswinging fist scarcely grazed his chin. Jericho's free arm shot forward like a long piston. The big hand at the end of it caught the puncher at the side of the neck.

Each of the struggling gorillas was in a titanic grasp. They might have punched their way free had Jericho allowed them opportunity, but the giant lost no time in his next purpose.

He swung both arms inward with all his force. Two heads cracked, foreheads foremost. Jericho shoved his fists forward and released his grip. The thugs succumbed dizzily. One flopped completely to the floor; the other sagged against the table, his hand to his head.

“Say,” exclaimed Lingo, “that was something!” He looked at his lieutenants and saw that they shared his enthusiasm. “Did you ever see anything like that before? This guy could do more than a crew of bouncers.”

A warning cry from Maxie. Lingo and the lieutenants swung about. One gorilla was still out; but the fellow against the table had come suddenly to his senses. They heard a venomous snarl as the thug staggered to his feet, yanking a gun.

Jericho swooped forward. His big hand grabbed the gorilla's wrist and twisted it upward. A cry of pain; the gun clattered to the floor. Grinning Jericho twisted slowly until the gorilla was forced to drop upon his back. The big fellow released his hold so the thug could fall. There was no anger or meanness in Jericho's action; but the gorilla had not lost his viciousness.

As Jericho started to step away the prone thug shot his hand out to regain his gun. His fingers clutched the weapon but they never raised it from the floor. Jericho stopped him without the trouble of stooping. With a quick step, the African planted his huge foot upon both hand and gun and held them pressed against the floor.

The gorilla snarled; then subsided as he heard a sharp word from Lingo. Jericho removed his foot.

Muttering oaths, the gorilla picked up his gun and pocketed it. His companion was now rising from the floor. Lingo ordered both of them back into their booth. He looked at Louie; then at Buzz.

“Hawkeye sold me on that idea of his,” announced Lingo, “and this is the guy for the job. He's getting it beginning with tonight.”

Fishing in his pocket, Lingo produced a card and scrawled an address on it, He brought out a roll of bills and peeled off some hank notes which he proceeded to hand Jericho. He ordered the big fellow to show up at the address given. Jericho, voluble with thanks, left the restaurant.

IT was nearly midnight when Hawkeye strolled into Lingo Queed's apartment, to find a new

arrangement. A pair of lieutenants were about to take their leave; but no gorillas were in attendance. In their place was a lone bodyguard: Jericho.

Lingo clapped Hawkeye on the shoulder. The big shot began to congratulate the little spotter on the suggestion that he had made that afternoon. Chuckling, Lingo recounted the circumstances which had led to his chance acquisition of Jericho.

The lieutenants were leaving, and Hawkeye planned to do the same. They were in an inner room of the apartment—a place which apparently served as Lingo's private abode for it was equipped with desk and telephone as well as bed.

Seeing that his guests were going, Lingo accompanied them to the outer door of the apartment; then instructed Jericho to remain on guard there.

Hawkeye the last to go out, saw Lingo returning to the privacy of his own inner room. Then Jericho closed the door. Following the lieutenants, Hawkeye maintained his composure while he passed the cordon of gorillas who still served as outer guards. He reached the street and shuffled along the block; then, for the first time, Hawkeye grinned.

He was on his way to make another report to Burbank. It would be a good one, for Hawkeye had done more than merely get himself in right with Lingo Queed. He had paved the way for Jericho's entrance also. For Jericho's arrival at Brindle's restaurant had been a timely one.

Like Hawkeye, Jericho was working for The Shadow. Two aids were now on duty to keep tabs on all that passed at Lingo's. The Shadow had competent men ready for the future. With Jericho at Lingo's, Hawkeye was now free to trail Buzz Dongarth. That would prove an easy task.

LATER, Burbank, seated before a switchboard in a quiet room, plugged in to form contact with his chief. In methodical tones, Burbank delivered verbatim a final report that he had received from Hawkeye. Through the earphones which Burbank wore came the soft whisper of a sinister laugh that carried a strange tone of mirth.

Burbank withdrew the plug. He had heard that parting laugh before; and usually he accepted it without expression of his own. But tonight, Burbank indulged in a sly dry chuckle. The fact that The Shadow had planted two aids with Lingo Queed was a bit of irony that Burbank relished.

CHAPTER XV. STALEMATE

Two weeks had passed. A new evening found Rook Hollister still secure in his hidden abode atop the Hotel Moselle. Attired in garish dressing gown, Rook was awaiting the arrival of Bart Koplín.

A rap at the door. Rook answered it. Bart entered the shuttered living room gloating as he flourished an extra that he had just purchased on the street. Rook chortled as he saw the headline. Police, that afternoon, had smashed a mob attack on an armored bank car. Armed thugs had been captured.

“Looks tough for Lingo Queed,” announced Bart. “He's let these lieutenants of his cut loose. They've been getting theirs—they and their mobs.”

“Lingo can't last,” agreed Rook. “He stalled off too long before he started. Now he's making the mistake of letting his pals run things the way they want. They're jamming themselves.”

“Which means,” asserted Bart, “that Lingo will be rubbed out. Like we counted on—but not by The Shadow. His pals will get him on their own. Then Buzz Dongarth can step in.”

Bart was chuckling as he spoke; but when he had finished, the private dick noted that Rook did not share his new elation. Bart waited, wondering. Rook's explanation came.

“That's the tough part of it, Bart,” declared the big shot. “The Shadow business. Looks to me like he's crossing the dope again. First of all, he used to play a lone game; then he began this fake mob business.

“Right now he's doing neither. He's sitting back, out of sight, with all the guys that work for him. He's picked a new way of queering jobs and rackets.”

“A new way?” queried Bart. “Say, Rook—I hadn't figured The Shadow being in on anything.”

“No? Who do you suppose is passing these tipoffs to the bulls? They've been showing up everywhere, just when they weren't wanted.”

“You mean The Shadow's in on it? Getting the inside on everything that Lingo and his pals are planning?”

“That's it. There's a leak somewhere.”

Bart pondered. Then he nodded.

“That fits with the reports I've been getting from Buzz,” admitted the private dick. “He's told me it was the police, not The Shadow, crimping Lingo's setup. They've been piling in before the stoolies have had a chance to grab off any info from the grapevine.”

FISHING in his pocket, Bart brought out a folded sheet of paper which he passed to Rook. It was a list of lieutenant and bodyguards who stood in with Lingo Queed. Rook checked the list.

Most of the names upon it were those of crooks who had formerly been with Rook himself. The big shot knew that none of them would sell out to the law. Rook noted Hawkeye's name on the line-up. He passed it by.

Hawkeye had too good a rep in the bad lands. The little spotter had once served time in the penitentiary. Since his return from the “big house,” he had shown himself cautious in his actions.

It was not surprising that Hawkeye had at last sought to blossom out. As an aid of Lingo Queed, he had a chance to build up new status for himself. To Rook, the very fact that Hawkeye had once been “in stir” was proof that he was all right.

Among those listed as Lingo's own guards, Rook noted the name of Jericho. Through Buzz, the big shot had learned of the circumstances which had led Lingo to hire the big bodyguard. Jericho, to Rook's way of putting it, was “out of the know” and therefore of no consequence.

“This doesn't give us anything,” argued Rook, passing the list back to Bart. “It's good, in a way, that things are going like they are. Because Lingo will soon be on the spot as bad as I was.

“Maybe The Shadow is keeping hands off him on that account. Figuring Lingo will go the voyage without a push to help. But the bad point is that Buzz is getting nowhere. Those spotters he's got working haven't found a phony gazebo in any outfit.”

“I know it,” admitted Bart, ruefully.

“If we could land some goof that's working for The Shadow,” added Rook, “we'd be sitting pretty. Mighty pretty! We'd have a lead, maybe, straight to The Shadow himself. But this new gag of turning loose the bulls is too smart a move for us to smear.”

“Maybe Buzz has got some new dope tonight,” suggested Bart. “Suppose I go down and wigwag him. He ought to be in his hotel room right now.”

“All right,” nodded Rook. “Tell him I’m sitting tight, waiting. Say, Bart”—the big shot paused to smile—“it’s a hot one, isn’t it—me hiding out right over your signal post. It’s a sure bet that even Buzz is bluffed.”

Bart chuckled in acknowledgment as he left the shuttered apartment. He carried neither hat nor coat, for his destination was a close one. Bart was going to that table by the parapet of the Moselle Roof Cafe.

ACROSS the street on the south side of the Hotel Moselle, was a newer hostelry that rose ten stories higher. This was the Hotel Framton, a modern, pyramiding skyscraper that showed a mass of set-in steps on its higher floors.

There, in a room that fronted on the avenue, a young man was stationed by a table, earphones clamped to his head. Twenty-two floors above the roar of thoroughfares, he was listening over the line of a dictaphone.

This was Harry Vincent. Days ago, this agent of The Shadow had taken up his abode at the Hotel Framton. His room was next to one which was situated on a northern corner. That room next door was the present residence of Buzz Dongarth.

Hawkeye had learned where the hard-faced lieutenant was living. Word relayed to The Shadow, through Burbank, had been followed by Harry Vincent’s registration at the Framton. On his second day of residence, Harry had found opportunity to enter Buzz’s room while it was being cleaned.

There, The Shadow’s agent had installed a microphone behind a radiator. He had run the wire out through the window. After dark, he had completed the hookup by fishing from his own room. Since then, he had been keeping complete tabs on Buzz Dongarth.

There was nothing unusual in Buzz Dongarth’s choice of the Hotel Framton. When mobleaders of his type were “in the money” they invariably picked some better-class establishment as a residence. It was merely a task of getting past the management.

Evidently Buzz had not been recognized for what he was. That was not surprising, because he had not cut much figure in mobland during recent periods. Louie Caparani had lined Buzz up with Lingo Queed; and Buzz, seeing a profitable future, had become swanky for a start.

That, at least, was Harry Vincent’s analysis; and circumstances backed Harry’s belief. For not once, during all his stretches of vigil, had Harry heard anything suspicious from Buzz Dongarth’s room. Occasionally, the mobleader had made telephone calls or had answered them; but always his conversation had been innocuous.

Harry knew also, that Hawkeye was still trailing Buzz to and from this hotel. It was Hawkeye’s job to find out if the mobleader made contact elsewhere. So far, Hawkeye had gained nothing on Buzz.

THE mobleader was in his room at present. He was alone; and the only sounds that Harry could hear through the dictaphone were those of Buzz moving about. So intent was Harry in his listening that he did not hear the door of his own room open and close.

Harry’s first inkling that he had a visitor arrived when a long hand glided upon the lighted writing desk in front of him. Harry stared; then checked himself as he recognized a purplish, translucent gem that glowed from the hand’s third finger. A girasol.

That jewel was The Shadow's emblem. The chief had entered.

Mechanically, Harry removed his earphones and raised them above his shoulder. He heard a soft whisper in the gloom. Without turning, Harry waited while The Shadow, himself, began to listen over the wire.

Five slow minutes passed. The ear-phones came back to Harry. Donning them, the agent could hear a few faint sounds that indicated Buzz might be about to leave. Harry knew that The Shadow had heard nothing else. He realized that his chief intended to trail Buzz in person.

IN the adjoining room, Buzz was donning hat and coat. The Shadow had divined correctly. He intended to start somewhere. But before departing, Buzz made a final stroll across the room. He stopped by an opened window.

The night was mild; it was only the threat of rain that had caused Buzz to don his light topcoat. Standing by the window, Rook's spy could see patrons gathered at the open-air tables on the Moselle Roof.

Bart Koplín was close by the parapet. He was looking sidewise, upward. The private dick could see Buzz outlined against the framed light of the window. Buzz moved one hand in wig-wag fashion.

Sheltered by a potted cedar, Bart responded with motions of a menu. Brief signals passed. Buzz was flashing that he had no news. Bart responded; then signed off. Buzz strolled from his hotel room.

Thus did Bart and Buzz form contact; the private dick keeping in direct touch with Rook while the mobleader had no idea that the big shot was hiding out only two stories above Bart's signal post. Straight across from his room in the Framton, Buzz could see the dark shuttered windows of what appeared to be a deserted penthouse atop the Hotel Moselle.

Not once had Buzz supposed that those shutters hid Rook's hide-out. Similarly, Buzz, as he strolled from the Hotel Framton, had no idea that he was being followed by a dark-garbed personage who took up his eastward trail.

The Shadow had chosen this night to check on Harry Vincent's work. He was performing Hawkeye's task also. His purpose was to find out what his agents had failed to gain—some clue to the contact that he believed Buzz was making with Rook Hollister.

That clue had been in The Shadow's grasp. Yet he had not yet clutched it. The dictaphone, usually so reliable, was this time useless. It gave no record of Buzz Dongarth's unspoken activities.

The Shadow's trail proved barren. Small wonder, for Buzz had already completed his duty to Rook Hollister.

Twenty minutes was all that The Shadow required to trail Buzz to the old apartment house where Lingo Queed lived. Nearing that place, The Shadow dropped the trail and faded into darkness.

GOING up to the fourth floor, Buzz rapped at the door and was admitted by Jericho. He found Hawkeye lounging in a chair. Lingo was not about. Buzz made query:

“Where's Lingo?”

“Went out just before I got here,” returned Hawkeye. “An hour ago, I guess. He was with Louie and Blitz. Jericho says he ought to be back pretty soon.”

“You're waiting for him?”

Hawkeye nodded.

Buzz sat down and lighted a cigarette. He had just finished smoking it when a knock sounded at the door. Jericho recognized it and sprang over to open the barrier. Lingo entered, followed by the gorilla elevator operator.

“All right, Gumbo,” said Lingo to the mobster, “get back on the elevator. Jericho's here. And say—tell Jerry, at the door, to get my laundry from the chink place down the street. I forgot to tell him.”

Gumbo nodded and departed. As soon as the door was closed, Lingo looked toward Buzz and Jericho.

“Maybe you can guess why I didn't wait for the laundry myself,” he growled. “I went into the chink's and he handed me some good old Shanghai chatter. That's why I headed here; why I didn't wait to talk to Jerry, the guy on the lower door.”

“Someone tailing you?” inquired Buzz.

“No,” returned Lingo. “Nobody gets my trail. I was out with Louie and Blitz; when I left them a half hour ago. I slid away in a hurry. Up at Brindle's. Nobody tailed me.

“But the chink at the laundry says he's seen guys around here. Fellows that looked like they were bumming; but that didn't sound likely to me. I've got a hunch somebody's figuring to rub me out.”

“I don't think so,” remarked Buzz. “You're still in right, Lingo.”

“Says you,” snorted Lingo. “Well, let's get Hawkeye's slant on it.”

“It don't look good,” asserted Hawkeye. “If they're gunning for you, Lingo, it wouldn't have me surprised. I've been hearing plenty of squawks.”

“Anything along the grapevine?”

“Not yet. But liable to be. The bulls have knocked off three mobs in the last week. It don't look good.”

“Anybody figured out why the bulls are so tough?”

“Sure. They say the commish told Cardona he could take a stab any time he knew he was busting up a job. Well, Cardona's doing it.”

“Through tipoffs, huh?”

“Looks that way.”

LINGO paced the room, muttering. A knock at the door; the big shot gave a nervous jump. Then he ordered Jericho to answer.

It was only Gumbo with the laundry. Lingo ordered Jericho to leave it in the inner room.

“I've been letting these mugs work their own way,” growled Lingo, finally. “That's why there's been the leaks. Take tonight—here's Louie Caparani; figures he'll pull a swell job himself. Raiding that swell gambling joint they call the Cue Club.

“Going to do some mob leading on his own, Louie is. He knows the joint; he's going to lay back while the crew sticks up that bunch of society swells at the Cue Club. I had to say go ahead. But I don't know how much Louie's been talking, see? So he may hit trouble, and if he does, it'll be mighty bad.”

Lingo resumed his pacing. Then, with an impatient gesture, he swung his arm toward the door, indicating that he wanted his visitors to leave.

Jericho opened the door; Lingo turned on his heel and went to his private quarters, while Buzz strolled out and Hawkeye shuffled after.

Buzz was smiling as he took a taxi to the Hotel Framton. There would still be time to wigwag to Bart Koplín. News of Lingo's worryment would please Rook Hollister when it reached him.

Hawkeye, too, was grinning, as he headed off to report to Burbank. Another tip would reach the police tonight. The skids were under Lingo Queed. Already, Hawkeye could see another change forthcoming in the dynasty of mobland.

Though The Shadow was bearing hard upon the hunt for Rook Hollister, even to the point of engaging in it himself, he still was active in the crimping of crime. For while he followed pursuits of his own, he was invoking the law to concentrated action in behalf of right.

CHAPTER XVI. AN AGENT BLUNDERS

“UXTRY! Uxtry! Big gambler gets the bump!”

Clyde Burke paused to buy an evening newspaper. He had heard much the same words on another occasion, not many days ago. The reporter wanted to learn new details concerning a battle that had taken place last night, at midnight.

Louie Caparani's photo graced the front page. He was the big gambler about whom the newsboy had been shouting. For Louie had gone too far in his checkered career. From gambler he had become racketeer; last night he had become mobleader.

Louie's attack on the fashionable Cue Club had been his first and last endeavor in his new role. Barging into the pleasure palace of the high society, Louie and his picked gorillas had encumbered no less than fifty plain-clothes men.

Joe Cardona had received a tip-off. He had fixed matters at the Cue Club. His own officers were the habitués of the Cue Club last night. Passing as players trying their luck, they had awaited Louie's surge.

Shock troops of mobland had been slain, wounded and captured. Among the dead was Louie Caparani. Holding back, Louie had caved in at the sound of the unexpected fray. He had stopped three police bullets.

Clyde Burke had not gone to see Joe Cardona this morning. Clyde was on vacation; another Classic reporter was handling his usual assignments. Clyde was sure however, that Joe had received a tip-off; he was also positive that the ace detective would not reveal its source.

For Clyde knew the game that The Shadow was playing. The law was having its innings against crime while the cloaked avenger sought to uncover the lair of a big shot more dangerous than Lingo Queed appeared to be.

To Clyde, the hunt for Rook Hollister had been worrisome. The reporter had done his utmost to get some line on the departed head of the underworld. The Shadow was sure that Rook still lived. Yet Clyde had found nothing to prove that fact.

In his campaign, The Shadow had acquainted his agents with definite facts. Like the others, Clyde knew that someone had died in Rook's place. Of all the agents, Clyde was best equipped to learn the identity

of the man who had taken the bump for the big shot.

At the newspaper morgue, Clyde had gone through files of photographs to which he had access in his capacity of reporter; he had not discovered a single face that looked like Rook Hollister's.

This form of investigation, coupled with his regular routine of visiting places frequented by mobsters, had convinced Clyde that the task was almost insurmountable. Rook Hollister must have had a double; but who was the man? Rook was still alive; but where was he?

What chafed Clyde most was the fact that his vacation had expired today.

The Classic had ordered him to take a steamship to Havana and the boat sailed tonight.

Ordinarily, Clyde would have relished the trip to the Cuban capital. Revolution was brewing there and Clyde had been picked as a good correspondent to report developments.

But Clyde still wanted to keep on searching for Rook. He had hoped that The Shadow would allow him to chuck his job with the Classic; but The Shadow had ruled otherwise. Clyde's newspaper connection was too valuable a contact to be dropped.

THIS morning, Clyde had visited the office of the investment broker named Rutledge Mann. There he had received a coded message from The Shadow which had ordered him to comply with the wishes of the Classic. Clyde had told Mann that his boat sailed tonight. Neither Mann nor Burbank would expect any further reports from Clyde Burke.

So far as the Classic was concerned Clyde was merely to inform the office by cable when he reached Havana. So, for the present, the reporter was actually on double vacation that would continue until his sea voyage was ended.

Being a constant worker, Clyde felt hopelessly lost in present circumstances. As he strolled up Broadway, he tossed the newspaper into a rubbish receiver and looked about him glumly. Throngs of meaningless people—lights that showed dully against the brilliance of day—teaming, useless traffic. Such were Clyde's impressions as he viewed the heart of the metropolis.

Strolling idly, Clyde chanced to reach the front of a theater. A placard announced that all seats were priced at twenty-five cents. This was not a first-run house; but the feature that it was playing was a picture that Clyde had not seen. Having nothing better to do, the reporter plunked his money on the counter of the ticket window. Receiving a coupon, he entered the theater.

A newsreel was coming to its blatant finish as Clyde took his seat. The next item was a comedy. The cast of characters was flashed upon the screen. Clyde Burke, accustomed to remember names whenever he read them, digested those of the five players in the short picture. The two-reeler began.

It was obviously an old picture. Clyde classed it as a second-rate comedy that the management had thrown in at little cost to fill out a bargain bill. Two or three of the cast were comedy stars whom Clyde recognized. As other faces came into the picture, the reporter coupled them automatically with the names that he had read at the beginning.

An automobile appeared in one scene. The chauffeur alighted with his face turned away. Remembering the fifth name in the cast of characters, Clyde Burke knew that the chauffeur must be a movie actor named Donald Manthell. Probably some extra, thought Clyde, who had thought himself big-time because his name had actually been listed in a comedy cast.

As the screen chauffeur turned about, Clyde sat bolt upright in his seat. There upon the screen was a man

who looked like Rook Hollister's twin. Clyde had seen many photos of the big shot; he had been looking everywhere for Rook. Here before him was the film portrayal of the very features that he had so ardently sought to view.

The chauffeur bobbed out of the picture. Clyde kept watching for his return, forgetting all other details of the film. The chauffeur reappeared; again Clyde was astounded by his resemblance to Rook Hollister. Shortly afterward the comedy ended. The cast of characters flashed into view as a finale. Once more Clyde saw the name of Donald Manthell.

MECHANICALLY, The Shadow's agent arose and walked from the theater. Clyde was pondering over the strange circumstance that he had viewed. He felt an uncanny conviction that he had observed the picture of the man who had died in place of Rook Hollister. He was trying to conjecture how Donald Manthell had come to New York.

A thought struck Clyde. His last experience with anything that pertained to motion pictures had been that trip to Waylock's office with Joe Cardona. Clyde remembered that there had been hundreds of photographs in Waylock's files.

It was possible that the attraction of a movie contest could have appealed to an extra like Donald Manthell, particularly if the fellow had had poor luck with his comedy career in Hollywood. His chain of thought continuing, Clyde recollected the name of Enterprise Exhibitors.

That office, as Clyde recalled it, had hired a private investigator to look into Waylock's flim-flam. Enterprise might have the information that Clyde wanted. The exchange was a well-known one, located in a Broadway office building only half a square from where Clyde stood.

A big advertising clock was chiming six; yet there was a possibility that there might be someone in the office. Clyde went to the building and found the Enterprise suite on the sixth floor. An office boy was there and Clyde told him he was from the Classic. The boy admitted him to the office of an assistant manager.

Clyde stated his business laconically. The Classic, he said, was interested in the names of those who had been duped by Waylock's fake contest. Clyde wanted a list; the assistant manager had none.

"What about that investigator you had on the job?" queried Clyde. "Fellow I saw down at detective headquarters. I thought he was getting all those files for you."

"You mean Bart Koplín?"

"Yes, that sounds like his name."

"He didn't do much on that case. We had him as a private detective on some other work, and, as I recall it the boss had Koplín busy on the Waylock business, too, but not very long. Maybe Koplín's got those files, though."

"Where can I get in touch with him?"

As a reply to Clyde's question, the movie man consulted an address hook. He picked up the telephone and dialed a number. Clyde heard his end of the conversation.

"Hello..." The assistant manager seemed annoyed by a bad connection. "Yes, I'm calling the Hotel Moselle. I want Room 810... Hello, hello... That you, Mr. Koplín?... This is Enterprise... No, we haven't got another job for you; I want to ask you about an old one. That Waylock business."

“About the files, names of the contestants... Got them have you?... Some of them? Good! There's a reporter here from the Classic who wants to look at them... All right. I'll ask him...”

The speaker turned to Clyde and said:

“Koplin only has a few names that were in the list. He wants to know if you're looking for anybody special. He has the complete data on some of the cases.”

“Ask him about a man named Donald Manthell,” suggested Clyde.

The Enterprise man put the query over the telephone. He received a reply from the other end, then delivered a few affirmative grunts and hung up.

“Koplin says that if you get over there right away you can see him,” informed the assistant manager. “He says he remembers a name something like Manthell; but he hasn't time to look it up right now. He's busy with a client. He'll meet you on the Roof Cafe in twenty minutes. Said to ask for Prexy Storlick, the manager there.”

UNDER ordinary circumstances Clyde, after departing from Enterprise Exhibitors, would have called Burbank.

This afternoon there were definite reasons why he did not do so. Clyde was off duty; he had no suspicion of Bart Koplin; twenty minutes was scarcely ample to reach the Hotel Moselle; and finally, Clyde was due aboard his ship at eight o'clock, so he had no time to waste. He decided that he would do best by getting all the information possible before making his report.

When he reached the Roof Cafe of the Hotel Moselle, Clyde asked for Prexy Storlick. He stated that he had business with Bart Koplin. Prexy ushered him to the table beside the potted cedar. A few minutes later Bart Koplin arrived. The private dick looked surprised when he recognized Clyde. The reporter grinned as he shook hands.

Clyde Burke came directly to his point. He stated that the Classic wanted a special story on the adventures of Hollywood movie actors; that statistics showed that many of them were dupes for schemes that they thought would gain them stardom.

Specifically, Clyde added, he had heard of a former movie actor, named Donald Manthell, who had entered Fergus Waylock's contest. With this name as a starter, Clyde wanted to check up on any others.

Bart Koplin nodded wisely. He questioned Clyde regarding the proposed story and the reporter mentioned casually that he was doing it as a free-lance job of his own in hopes that the Classic would accept it.

Bart seemed anxious to help him. The private dick told Clyde to wait until he came back.

Leaving the table, Bart went inside and picked the little corridor that had the doorway to the staircase. Hastening to Rook Hollister's hide-out, Bart found the big shot and told him about Clyde. Rook became instantly alert.

“You say this mug's with the Classic?” questioned the big shot. “Say —that sheet goes in for red-hot stuff! Not a reporter on it that wouldn't know my phiz if he ramped it. And this guy wants to know about Donald Manthell. All right, we'll let him find out. Bring him up here.”

“Right away?” demanded Bart.

“Sure thing,” ordered Rook. “Hand him any stall to get him up here.”

“That’ll be easy,” assured Bart, as he turned to leave.

DOWN in the Roof Cafe, Clyde Burke was lighting a cigarette while he impatiently awaited the return of Bart Koplín. Seated at the table where the private dick had left him, Clyde was hoping that he would gain a follow-up to his clue on Donald Manthell.

Clyde was destined to attain more than that. He was already at the end of a quest. Within the next five minutes he was due to meet the man whom he had been seeking for The Shadow.

But the circumstances under which Clyde Burke would meet Rook Hollister could well bring disaster to The Shadow's plans. For Rook Hollister, in turn, had been seeking agents of The Shadow; and one of them had blundered into the big shot's toils.

And The Shadow was elsewhere, seeking his own crime clues.

CHAPTER XVII. THE SECOND VICTIM

OVER at the Hotel Framton, Harry Vincent was pacing about his room. Like Clyde Burke, this agent was annoyed by his inability to get results. Long periods of listening at the dictograph had brought nothing. At present, Buzz Dongarth was not in his room; and since it was after six o'clock, Harry decided to take time out for dinner.

As he stepped into the corridor, Harry heard the distant whine of a vacuum cleaner around the corner; at the same moment he chanced to glance in the direction of Buzz Dongarth's door. He saw that the barrier was ajar.

Some servant had started to clean the room; then had gone somewhere else. Harry saw a brief opportunity. He had wondered if Buzz had made any new arrangements in the room since that first time Harry had entered to install the dictograph.

Pushing open the door, Harry entered. The room looked just the same. Through the window on the north side, Harry caught an intermittent glow. It was the light of the sign in front of the Hotel Moselle, blinking through the dusk.

Harry went to the window. He saw more lights. The open space above the Roof Cafe was agleam with strings of electrically illuminated Chinese lanterns. Harry paused to study the colorful scene.

He noted only a few persons on the roof; and he was about to turn away when he observed a tall man in evening clothes walking toward a table by the nearer parapet. This was Prexy Storlick; Bart Koplín had delegated the proprietor to invite Clyde Burke up to the penthouse.

By this plan Bart could lurk behind and come up afterward, giving Clyde no chance to retreat. It was a clever scheme that the private dick had thought out while on his way down from Rook Hollister's hide-out.

Harry Vincent, looking from Buzz Dongarth's window, viewed the parapet of the Roof Cafe at close range. It was only twenty feet below, and scarcely more distant than the width of the narrow cross street. Looking curiously at Prexy, Harry saw the man at the table which the proprietor was approaching.

By the light of the lanterns Harry recognized Clyde. The two agents had frequently worked together. Harry knew that Clyde was going off duty today. He wondered what the reporter was doing at the Hotel Moselle.

As Clyde arose and walked away with Prexy, Harry turned quickly and moved from Buzz Dongarth's room. He was just in time, for the servant was turning the corner of the corridor, bringing the vacuum cleaner. Harry fumbled at the knob of his own door; the cleaning man came up and asked a question:

“Going out, sir?”

Harry nodded.

“I'll clean your room, then,” said the man, producing a key.

HARRY walked toward the elevators. He had intended to go back in his room and make a call to Burbank but the arrival of the cleaning man had prevented it. Harry was not anxious to make a call from the lobby, for the telephone booths were poorly situated and thin-walled.

He decided, when he reached the lobby, to go over to the Hotel Moselle. When he reached the lobby of the adjoining hostelry he found only four booths, all of which were occupied. It was that fact that made Harry decide to go up to the Roof Cafe. He saw a chance of meeting Clyde Burke there.

All the while, Harry suspected nothing. It was not until he had reached the Roof Cafe that a sudden thought struck him. As he seated himself at a table near the one that Clyde had occupied, Harry glanced toward the bulky wall of the Hotel Framton. Trying to locate the exact position of Buzz Dongarth's room, he realized more than before the closeness of the two hotels.

Ideas were dawning upon Harry Vincent. The Shadow's agent was beginning to piece facts that had never occurred to him before; so deeply was Harry engrossed that he did not realize that eyes were watching him.

Prexy had played his part. Returning to the Roof Cafe, the wise proprietor had taken a look about the open garden. He had spotted Harry instantly—a stranger who was taking more than passing notice of the high-storied Hotel Framton.

Prexy waited, cautious as a cat spying an unsuspecting prey. He saw Harry turn about and glance around the roof. Harry was looking for Clyde. His action gave Prexy an opportunity. The cafe proprietor sauntered forward to Harry's table.

“Good evening, sir,” remarked Prexy, in a tone of friendly greeting. “Are you expecting someone?”

“I thought a friend of mine might be up here.” Harry spoke casually, not knowing that Prexy had observed his previous action. “A friend who comes here occasionally. But I don't see him around.”

“Not one of the newspaper men?”

Prexy's question was artful. It gave Harry the impression that the Roof Cafe must be a rendezvous for journalists. An explanation of Clyde Burke's recent presence. Harry fell for the bait.

“Yes,” he acknowledged, “this chap is with one of the newspapers. The Classic, I believe. His name is Burke.”

Prexy chuckled. He leaned close to the table.

“It's just a private party,” he whispered. “Friends of mine, you know—newspaper men whom I invited to my own apartment. If you know Burke, it's all right. You can come and join them.”

The invitation was smoothly worded. Harry saw no reason to decline it. Prexy's manner, his attitude,

were indications that all was well. Harry gained the sudden impression that Clyde must have learned something from a fellow reporter.

That would explain why Clyde had come to the Hotel Moselle so shortly before sailing. To see someone, perhaps, who could give him a tip regarding Rook Hollister. Under the circumstances, Clyde might be anxious to pass the word along.

HARRY'S quick thoughts brought him to prompt acceptance of Prexy's suggestion. Rising from his table, Harry accompanied the proprietor into the corridor. Prexy led the way into the little passage and unlocked the door at the side.

With a gesture, he invited Harry to ascend the stairs first. Still unsuspecting, Harry started up. He heard the door close; he looked back to see Prexy following.

"Two flights up," stated Prexy, smoothly. "The party is in the penthouse. That is where my apartment is located."

They passed the landing. As they neared the top floor, Harry caught the buzz of voices from beyond a door that stood a trifle ajar. For the first time, he gained suspicion. He stopped short; then experienced a jolt.

Prexy was closer behind than Harry had realized. As Harry paused on the threshold, the cafe proprietor snapped a hand from his pocket. With a low snarl, Prexy jabbed the muzzle of a small revolver squarely into the middle of Harry's back.

"Keep moving!" growled Prexy.

Harry delivered a sharp grunt. He became rigid; then stepped forward in mechanical fashion. He was tightening for a sudden swing, ready to deliver a surprise attack that might catch his captor off guard.

Despite Prexy's gun, Harry had a hunch that he could get out of the jam. He was ready to try it, with only Prexy to conquer. But Harry's grunt had been heard beyond the door. Just as The Shadow's agent galvanized for action, the door swung open.

Bart Koplín appeared, gun in hand. The private dick caught a word from Prexy. Harry subsided. He could not fight two men when both had weapons. He allowed himself to be shoved into the living room.

Straight in front of Harry was Clyde Burke, slumped in a chair, hands bound behind him. Facing Clyde was a man in a dressing gown, who swung about as Harry stared. A gasp of new recognition came from Harry's lips as he realized that this was Rook Hollister, in the flesh.

"What's up, Prexy?" snapped Rook. "Who's this guy?"

"A pal of Burke's," informed the cafe proprietor. "I saw him rubbering down on the roof. Invited him up."

"Shove him in that chair."

Prexy forced Harry to the seat that Rook indicated. Bart produced a length of stout cord and jolted Harry forward while he bound the young man's wrists. The private dick frisked Harry for a gun but found none. Stationed away from the danger zones, Harry had been carrying no weapon.

"A pal of yours, eh?" Harry heard Rook rasping at Clyde. "Well, it's lucky we nabbed him. I was just beginning to fall for that stall of yours."

“Acted like you were surprised to see me, didn't you, Burke? Like you never suspected that Manthell and I were doubles. Say—I was just beginning to believe that you weren't anything more than a goofy reporter. But now I know different. Who is this guy we just nabbed?”

“Never saw him before,” returned Clyde, stolidly.

Rook turned to Prexy. The cafe proprietor delivered an evil leer.

“He was asking for Burke,” informed Prexy. “Mentioned him by name, Rook.”

“That so?” Rook glowered at Harry.

“Well, sap, if Burke won't tell who you are, maybe you will. What's your name, mug?”

“David Loman,” returned Harry. “David E. Loman. The E”—he smiled wanly—“is for Egbert. I'm a life insurance agent. That's how I met Burke.”

“I remember this fellow,” put in Clyde, catching the cue. “I'd forgotten you, Loman. You were the chap who sold a policy to the managing editor down at the Classic. He introduced you to me.”

“That's right,” acknowledged Harry. “I saw you coming in this hotel, Burke. Thought maybe you'd be on the roof; and I came up to look for you. Wanted to sell you that policy we were talking about.”

“See what he's got on him,” growled Rook.

BART searched Harry. He dug an assortment of articles from the young man's pocket. Cigarettes, a lighter that failed to work when Bart snapped it; money in a wallet, a watch, but no papers of identification.

Harry was wise enough not to carry cards with him. He had a great variety of them back in his room at the Framton. Cards with different names; for often, in The Shadow's service, Harry was called upon to assume a fake identity.

At present, Harry was not even provided with his automobile licenses. He was not using his car in New York; he had put away his regular wallet, with its proper assortment of identifying cards. A good precaution, that was serving him well in this crisis.

The only object of consequence that Bart discovered was a small, leather-covered insurance manual issued by a mid-western company. Tucked in it were folded applications for life insurance. Harry frequently carried this as a subterfuge. It gave him an excuse for introducing himself in various places.

Harry had come only partly prepared for emergency. Had he known he was taking a risky step, he would have brought faked identifications. As it was, he had made the best of a bad start. He had chosen the name Loman at random. But his mention of insurance had been based on the manual in his pocket.

“Looks like a phony to me, Rook,” snorted Bart.

“It is a phony,” interjected Prexy. “I haven't told you the whole works yet. Do you know how I spotted this bird? I'll tell you—he was looking over at the Hotel Framton, like he was trying to pick out Buzz Dongarth's room.”

“He was, eh?” snarled Rook. “Well, that fixes him! We've got you labeled, Loman. And you, too, Burke. You're coming clean, both of you. What do you know about The Shadow?”

Harry shot a worried look at Clyde.

They were both in a pinch; silence would only drive them deeper. Harry had something to cover; namely, his actual identity, for he was registered under his right name at the Hotel Framton. The best out was to talk, especially while he and Clyde were together. Then they could make their individual stories correspond if quizzed separately, later.

“This mess is my fault,” asserted Harry, in a sober tone, looking squarely at Rook. “I was a fool to get into it; and I did worse to drag Burke along.”

“So you're admitting it, eh?” chuckled Bart.

“Hold it, Bart,” snapped Rook. “Let the gink talk. We'll hear him out.”

“If you'll only let us out of this,” pleaded Harry, “I'm willing to tell you all about it. Everything that happened to me—”

“Spill something,” interrupted Rook. “Maybe you'll get a break if you quit stalling.”

“ALL right,” agreed Harry, “here's how it happened. I was broke. Trying to sell life insurance but the company wouldn't even give me a license or a drawing account until I'd brought in some prospects.

“I was cold canvassing. So I met a lot of people I didn't know. A couple of weeks ago, I received a mysterious telephone call at the insurance office. Some speaker with a very odd voice, a whisper, offered me money if I would aid in a search for a man who was supposedly dead.”

“For me?” quizzed Rook.

“For Rook Hollister,” acknowledged Harry. “And you answer his description.”

“Go on,” chuckled Rook.

“The money came in a letter,” resumed Harry. “After I had accepted the proposition, I wanted to make good. Whenever the calls came in again, I was promised a thousand dollars if I located you, Hollister.

“But I doubted my own ability. I knew Burke here; he was on a vacation. So I offered to split with him if he helped out. We were working together. Burke called me a while ago and told me he had a hot lead—that he'd be over here at the Roof Cafe. So I came over.”

“Is that right, Burke?” snapped Rook, turning suddenly toward the reporter.

Clyde nodded. His gesture showed dejection.

“Where'd you get this lead of yours?” demanded Rook. “The one you called Loman about? This business about Donald Manthell?”

“I saw a two-reel movie this afternoon,” admitted Clyde. “A short entitled 'Papa Pays.' It's running over at the Calabria Theater. There was a fellow in the reel that looked like you, Hollister.

“I'd run into Koplín when I was reporting a fake contest handled by a promoter named Waylock. I knew Koplín worked for Enterprise Exhibitors. So I went up there and found out how to reach Koplín. Then I called Loman”—Clyde nodded his head toward Harry—“and told him to meet me on the roof.”

“What else?” demanded Rook.

“Nothing,” replied Clyde wearily.

“And you?” Rook swung and snapped the question at Harry.

“I’ve told all I know,” returned Harry. “If I could give any more details, I would.”

Rook eyed Harry steadily. After a brief inspection of the agent's face, the big shot turned to Bart and nudged his thumb toward the door of an inner room.

“Shove them in there,” he ordered. “Tie them up right. We're holding them.”

Bart complied. He marched the captives into the other room. He called back for rope; Rook told him he had enough already; that he could take belts from the prisoners and bind their feet with them.

WHILE Bart was engaged in this work, Rook strode over and closed the door to the inner room. He came back to talk to Prexy.

“What about this fellow Loman?” asked the big shot. “You say he was looking over at the hotel next door?”

Prexy nodded.

“Picking out Buzz Dongarth's room?”

Prexy rubbed his chin.

“I wouldn't say yes,” he declared, “and I wouldn't say no. There's a lot of customers who look over that direction. I wouldn't have been suspicious of this guy except that he began to look around afterward. Then I took a Brodie on him knowing Burke.”

“Hm-m-m. That makes it different. This guy's admitted he's working for The Shadow.” Rook began to pace. “But the question is, how deep he's in. The Shadow is smart. He's not going to tell any of his stooges too much about himself.”

Rook paced in silence while Prexy watched him. The door of the inner room opened and Bart emerged. The private dick closed the door behind him.

“Look here, Bart,” stated Rook. “I want you to hop over to the Calabria and see if that two-reeler is running there, with Manthell in it. You told me Manthell had worked in shorts some time ago.”

“He told me that himself,” acknowledged Bart. “Sure, Rook, I'll go over and find out. And tomorrow I can go to the insurance office where this Loman guy claims to work.”

“Yeah?” Rook's question was scoffing. “That's just what you won't do. That would be handing The Shadow a lead—making an inquiry for Loman. Here's the way it stands. Loman has told us enough; and Burke has chimed in with it. We can believe them, if we find out that two-reeler is showing at the Calabria.

“If the picture is there, he knows that we've heard the straight goods. If it isn't, then's the time to put the heat on these mugs. But I'll bet you'll see the short at that theater.

“I'll tell you why. If either Loman or Burke knew a lot about The Shadow, they'd have said nothing. It's because they don't know a lot about him that they talked at all.”

Rook paused. Bart grunted.

“They know more than they've said,” decided the private dick. “I saw Burke with Cardona one day; saw

him again down at headquarters. He's just the sort of bird that would be working for The Shadow direct. Getting tipoffs, passing them to Cardona.”

“Right enough,” admitted Rook, with a surly laugh. “A newshawk on The Shadow's pay roll. That would account for a lot. Burke was mum for a starter; it was this other sap who turned yellow and squawked.

“It's likely Burke brought up Loman instead of Loman bringing in Burke. So much the better—if that short picture is at the Calabria. If the picture is on the screen, we know how both Burke and Loman got here. We don't care how much else they know.

“Because The Shadow is too foxy to have these dumb-bells fixed with a lead directly back to him. We'll keep them guessing and we'll keep The Shadow guessing. Let him try to get them by looking for them.”

With this conclusion, Rook waved both Bart and Prexy to the outer door. They departed, the private dick starting for the theater, the proprietor returning to the roof.

Prisoners in the little room, Harry and Clyde heard the muffled closing of the outer door. Grimly, the trussed agents were whispering future plans. In undertoned agreement, they decided between them they could cover vital facts concerning The Shadow, no matter how heated Rook Hollister's next quiz might prove.

CHAPTER XVIII. THE SHADOW'S STRATEGY

NIGHT had passed. New day had come to Manhattan. The city lay basking in the brilliance of glaring sunlight. But those burning rays failed to reach a spot where darkness always ruled.

That was The Shadow's sanctum. The Stygian abode lay hushed in inkiness, its solid walls holding it as spectral as a tomb. It was not until a faint swish denoted a living presence that man-made light brought illumination to this sable-walled chamber.

A click; a glow upon a polished table. White hands beneath the light. The Shadow began a summary of findings that had brought a sharp change to his plans.

Harry Vincent was missing. The agent had not reported when due. Early this morning The Shadow, himself, had visited Harry's room at the Hotel Framton. Listening through the dictograph, he had heard sounds of Buzz Dongarth moving about in the next room.

No trace of Harry; yet the setup was still working. To The Shadow, that offered two possible conclusions. Either Harry had blundered into trouble outside of the hotel and had covered up his real activities; or he had been trapped by Buzz and the dictograph had been allowed to remain as a means of enticing another victim.

The Shadow, stealthy in his visit, had fallen for no lure. Departing, he had made no effort to learn which case existed. For The Shadow, always prepared for complications, had planned a mode of action in case of emergency such as this.

A soft laugh whispered through the sanctum. Rare opportunity had come The Shadow's way. It was a chance that he had carefully avoided; because, as planned procedure, it would first have forced him to throw an agent into Rook Hollister's hands.

The Shadow had preferred not to risk the life of a trusted aid. But since circumstances had caused Harry's disappearance The Shadow was now forced to the course that he had considered and rejected.

First: The Shadow must learn if Rook actually held Harry Vincent. Second: He must extricate his agent

from the big shot's toils. The Shadow's scheme was double-barreled; it promised to accomplish both missions.

Moreover, it carried further. If successful, it would give The Shadow a direct lead to the big shot himself. But in every step, The Shadow's plan required delicate strategy. No blunt maneuver would do —such as the violent seizure of Buzz Dongarth.

For The Shadow had long since realized that Rook Hollister would stop at nothing. Assuming that Rook held Harry, it was a sure fact that the big shot would murder the prisoner the moment that Harry became a burden rather than a means of reaching The Shadow.

Burbank's voice was coming over the wire. Whispered orders came from The Shadow's hidden lips. Prompt instructions to Hawkeye. New work for the little agent. The Shadow was chancing a course that, if successful, would prove swift.

The light clicked out. The Shadow was departing. His final laugh was prophetic. But that mirth might have been less mocking had The Shadow guessed that two, not one, of his agents were held prisoner by Rook Hollister.

Reports from both Mann and Burbank had announced Clyde Burke off duty. Even The Shadow supposed that the reporter was a passenger aboard a coastwise vessel. Rook Hollister, like The Shadow, was equipped with a double-edged weapon.

AFTERNOON arrived. A slouching figure came along the East Side street where Lingo Queed's apartment was located. Hawkeye waved greeting to Jerry, the street guard stationed in front of the building.

“Lingo in?” queried Hawkeye.

“Sure,” grunted Jerry. “He was out this morning, though, and you should have seen the way he beat it in a taxi.”

“Figures the finger's on him?”

“Looks that way.”

“Lingo's alone now?”

“Naw. Couple of guys are up there with him. Buzz Dongarth and Blitz Schumbert. Guess he's weeping on their shoulder.”

Hawkeye grinned as he rode up in the elevator. He had learned plenty for a start. Lingo was turning yellow. Just what Hawkeye wanted in order to spring the new proposition that The Shadow had ordered. The presence of Buzz Dongarth was also a vital point in the scheme.

WHEN Jericho admitted Hawkeye, the little spotter found Lingo Queed in conference with Buzz Dongarth and Blitz Schumbert.

Lingo's face was drawn, his eyes worried. Buzz was seated in noncommittal fashion, looking on while Blitz rumbled angry accusations. It was plain that the pug-faced racketeer was still beefing over the fate that had befallen Louie Caparani.

“You've muffed things worse than Rook did,” bassoed Blitz. “Worse than Rook did, and quicker. It won't be a bunch getting together to rub you out, Lingo. It'll be everybody. Even your own gorillas.”

"I've got Jericho," grunted Lingo.

"He won't help you," scoffed Blitz. "What I'm telling you, Lingo, is for your own good. I'm not against you—because I figure we were saps to have bumped Rook, the way things have turned out since. Whoever comes along next may be worse."

"What do you think, Hawkeye?" queried Lingo, appealing to the newcomer.

"Blitz is right," commented Hawkeye. He had gained an immediate chance to start things moving. "There's only one out for you, Lingo."

"What's that? To take it on the lam?"

"No—to pull something hot enough to make these mugs forget your bum guesses."

Blitz rumbled contemptuously.

"Where do you get that line?" queried the racketeer. "What can Lingo pull that's going to set him in right? The bulls have queered every job since Lingo was in. One good bet isn't going to fix things for Lingo."

"No?" There was a sly gleam on Hawkeye's wizened face. "You'd better think again, Blitz. I know something that would square Lingo everywhere and put the bulls on the fritz besides."

"Let's hear it," suggested Lingo eagerly.

"All right," agreed Hawkeye. "To begin with, where do you think this dumb egg Cardona is getting all his tips from?"

"Stoolies?" questioned Blitz.

"Not a chance," jeered Hawkeye. "Why, Cardona's wised to stuff that hasn't even been piped along the grapevine. I'll tell you who's handing the dope to the bulls. The Shadow!"

Lingo stared, open-mouthed. Blitz looked troubled. Buzz showed no change of expression.

"I'm telling you what I know," assured Hawkeye. "I've heard plenty of mugs talking about it. There's your stunt, Lingo. Get The Shadow."

"Say"—Lingo snorted as he sank back in his chair—"what is this? A gag? Listen to that, Blitz: Hawkeye says to get The Shadow. Like it was a cinch."

"It oughtn't to be tough," asserted Hawkeye. "Not if you go after it right."

"How's that?" inquired Lingo.

"Easy," replied Hawkeye. "It wouldn't be if The Shadow was still playing a one-man racket. But the way things are blowing, it's a sure bet he's got stoolies of his own. You've got to grab one of those mugs first."

"What then?"

"Lay a trap for The Shadow. Let him come around to snatch back his stoolie. Then you've got The Shadow."

SILENCE followed the proposal. It was making Lingo think. Blitz was nodding his slow approval of the idea! It was Buzz who put the objection.

“Trouble with that,” he remarked, “is that The Shadow would crimp it for you. Maybe you could land one of these heels that's working with him. But you couldn't put the clamps on The Shadow with no ordinary trap.”

Hawkeye was about to refute Buzz's statement when Lingo saved him the trouble. The big shot came upright in his chair. His lips spread sourly beneath his spread-out nose; his jaw thrust forward in a challenge.

“Couldn't snag The Shadow, huh?” he demanded, savagely. “Who couldn't? Say—if I had one of those stoolies of his for bait, I'd make a cinch of it!”

Buzz, doubt showing on his hardened countenance, emitted a depreciating grunt as he heard Lingo's boast. The big shot showed ire at the lieutenant's attitude. Hawkeye saw another opportunity.

“Lingo means it, Buzz,” vouchsafed the little spotter. “Maybe he is in wrong with a lot of guys that think they're big shots; but he stands in tight in places where those four-flushers don't count.”

“Like where?” queried Buzz.

“Down in Little Italy,” remarked Hawkeye.

“Since Louie Caparani got his?” snorted Buzz.

“Well,” admitted Hawkeye, “maybe that wasn't so good for Lingo. But you still rate high in Chinatown, don't you, Lingo? Say—I'll bet that's where you figure you can nab The Shadow.”

“Sure it is,” growled Lingo. “And none of you guys”—he glowered at Buzz—“can tell me that the chinks aren't smart. Say—I've got buddies down there that'll pull anything I ask!”

“Like Koy Dow?” put in Blitz. “He was smart. I met him.”

“Yeah,” returned Lingo. “Koy Dow. He'll fix a trap that would land six guys like The Shadow. He's the guy I'll see about it, too. If I can only nab one guy that could be good bait—”

“That's the trouble,” observed Blitz.

Silence. Men were speculating. Hawkeye noted that Buzz had a far-away look. Again, Hawkeye spoke.

“Listen, Lingo,” he urged. “Suppose I spread it to the grapevine that you're after some mug that's working for The Shadow. Pipe it along that you'll make it worthwhile for the fellow that brings in one of The Shadow's stoolies.

“That'll stop the squawks for a while. The guys that want you out will figure you've got something, that you're following a real lead. Getting The Shadow. They won't holler about rubbing you out while they're seeing how they can grab a reward by bringing in one of the mugs you want.

“Maybe they'll snag a bird for bait. Meanwhile you have it fixed with Koy Dow. Don't let nobody in on what you're going to do until we've landed the boob for the trap. Then you can plant him at Koy Dow's.”

“And then?” demanded Lingo.

“Another pipe along the line,” responded Hawkeye. “Letting it out, like it was a slip, that you've got The Shadow's stoolie at Koy Dow's. Then, The Shadow—”

“I get it.” Lingo came to his feet as he made the interruption. “Let the rest of it slide until we've tried the

first part. It's a long shot but we can't lose much by trying it. Spill it to the grapevine, Hawkeye. Let's see how it goes.”

Lingo was reaching for a coat as he spoke. He gave instructions to Jericho.

“Keep the place until I get back,” he ordered. “I'm going down to see Koy Dow. Come on. Blitz. You can stick with me until we get near Chinatown. Then I'll leave you. I'll see you later, Buzz. You too, Hawkeye, after you've tickled the grapevine.”

A FEW minutes later, Hawkeye left the others outside of the apartment house. The little agent was eager as he strode along. He had gained the point he wanted. Lingo had ordered him to send a rumor out by the underground telegraph of the bad lands.

A report, first, to Burbank. The Shadow would learn that Hawkeye had again put over one of the cloaked chief's schemes. Also word about Buzz Dongarth. For Hawkeye had watched the lieutenant's departure.

The Shadow believed that Buzz was Rook Hollister's representative in the underworld. If so—and Hawkeye believed The Shadow was right—the news of Lingo Queed's proposed trap would travel to Rook before it hit the grapevine.

If Harry Vincent lay in Rook Hollister's power, the big shot would find it advantageous to deal with Lingo Queed. Once such a course began, The Shadow would have a tracer on Rook.

So Hawkeye reasoned; and the little spotter grinned with glee as he foresaw potential success to The Shadow's coming scheme. By dealing with those in view, The Shadow might reach the enemy who had taken cover.

Subtly, The Shadow had ordered Hawkeye to spring his talk with Lingo in the presence of Buzz Dongarth. Through hidden steps, The Shadow was letting Rook Hollister believe that it would soon be time to move.

From Rook would come the bait, once Lingo fixed the trap. That bait would be a boomerang to the big shot who supplied it. What was more, The Shadow's strategy could prove the most effective way of regaining Harry Vincent from the toils of the foe.

CHAPTER XIX. BUZZ SWINGS A DEAL

IT was not until the next morning that Hawkeye returned to Lingo Queed's. Hawkeye had not trailed Buzz Dongarth. The Shadow had ordered hands off. Even though it was probable that Buzz might be in communication with Rook Hollister, the policy was to let Buzz strictly alone.

Hawkeye knew that The Shadow's course was wise. If Rook Hollister had captured Harry Vincent, he might have put him on the spot immediately. If so, Harry would long since have been past recall.

If Rook, as was more likely, had chosen to keep Harry as a clue to The Shadow, it was logical that he would keep him indefinitely. The one danger to Harry would be an inkling that The Shadow was trailing Rook through Buzz.

Hence, Hawkeye was sure that The Shadow was waiting developments. With no report whatever from Harry, the probability that he was a prisoner had increased. But, conversely, the fact that Clyde Burke had sent no report appeared as proof that the reporter was safely en voyage to Havana.

Hawkeye had started things last night. The grapevine was working strong. Hawkeye had proof of this

while riding up in the elevator with Gumbo. The gorilla whispered the inside news that Lingo was on the lookout for double crossers who had sold out to The Shadow. This information had come to Gumbo from pals outside.

When Hawkeye reached Lingo's apartment he found Blitz Schumbert there with the big shot. Jericho was on duty. A short while after Hawkeye's arrival, the huge bodyguard answered the door and admitted Buzz Dongarth. Hawkeye noted an eagerness in Buzz's manner.

"Something I want to spill to you, Lingo," greeted Buzz. "Let's go in the other room where we can talk alone. This is a hot piece of news."

"Spring it in a hurry, then," ordered Lingo. "What's the matter with Blitz and Hawkeye hearing it? They're O.K., aren't they?"

"All right," decided Buzz, after a moment's consideration. "Here it is. This grapevine stuff has turned out big. You want one of The Shadow's stools don't you? Well, I've found out who has one."

"Who?" queried Lingo.

"Rook Hollister," responded Buzz calmly.

A BLANK expression came over Lingo's face, Blitz began to scratch his head in perplexity. Then Lingo delivered a raucous guffaw.

"Rook Hollister!" he ejaculated. "Say—what have you been doin', Buzz, falling for a spook racket? I bumped that palooka myself, even though I haven't been shouting about it. Now you come in and say—"

"I say that I've got word from Rook Hollister," interposed, Buzz. "He ain't dead; he's only hiding out. Don't ask me where he is or how he pulled it, because I don't know. What counts is that he's still alive and got guys workin' for him."

"You mean I bumped some dummy?" quizzed Lingo. "A sap that looked like Rook? Up there in his apartment?"

"That must be it," returned Buzz. "But Rook hasn't got it in for you, Lingo. He knew the finger was on him; and he wasn't blaming the fellows who wanted him to be rubbed out. It looks like Rook knew The Shadow was after him too; that's why he ducked."

"Where'd you get this dope?" demanded Blitz.

"Dope is right," snorted Lingo. "Sounds like Buzz has been hitting a pipe down in one of the hop joints!"

"This is straight stuff," insisted Buzz. "I got a telephone call this morning—from Rook. I didn't believe it was him myself until he talked a while. When I was sure of it, Rook gave me this proposition. He knows I stand in right with you, Lingo.

"Rook wants to work fifty-fifty. He says you're in the same spot he was. He's willing to let you keep on as big shot, while he stays under cover. But you'd be partners, see?"

"Rook's got a big heart along with his cold feet," scoffed Lingo. "What do you think of that proposition, Blitz? Rook was too yella to stick it out for himself. Now he wants half the gravy."

"Sounds to me like Rook is pretty smart," objected Blitz. "I wouldn't call him yellow, Lingo. He bluffed the whole lot of us, the way I see it. What's more, he's where he can stage a comeback, while you're on

the skids. It looks to me like Rook is the guy who is sitting pretty.”

“I’ll say he is,” interjected Buzz. “What’s more, he told me something else. He says there’s a reason why you didn’t shout too much about how you bumped the guy you thought was him. He told me that he’d keep that quiet though, as part of the deal.”

Hawkeye saw a strained expression flicker on Lingo’s oddly formed countenance. The lanky big shot twitched his fingers nervously; then shot a quick glance at Blitz Schumbert. The racketeer was pondering on what Buzz had just said. Lingo spoke quickly.

“You say that Rook has got one of The Shadow’s gang?” he asked Buzz.

The lieutenant nodded.

“Well, that makes the deal look better,” decided Lingo. “I guess Rook is a smart guy and it ought to take two of us to bag The Shadow. I’ve got the trap; you say he’s got the bait.”

“That’s what he told me,” remarked Buzz, “but he wants to be sure that the trap is good enough. Wants me to look it over with you. Says he’ll take my say-so. You’re to tell me how you’re going to work it. Rook will call here later and I’m to talk to him.”

“All right,” acquiesced Lingo. “Let’s hop down to Chinatown, the bunch of us, and I’ll show you the layout that Koy Dow has rigged for me. But if it looks all right to you—well, what then?”

Lingo was getting ready to go out as he spoke. Buzz made reply in brief fashion.

“Rook says that if the setup is right, he’ll supply the bait,” assured Buzz. “He’ll deliver the guy he’s got, right to the spot where you want him. Then you can send it out on the grapevine and let The Shadow bite.”

“Good stuff!” decided Lingo. “Well let’s get going. Say, Hawkeye, you’d better stay here just in case anything new turns up.”

Hawkeye could do nothing but agree. He watched Lingo depart with Buzz and Blitz. Chafing at the situation, he strolled about the big room; then went into Lingo’s private quarters, giving a nod to Jericho, who understood.

Behind the closed door, Hawkeye used the telephone to put in a report to Burbank. The contact man took Hawkeye’s message and told him to wait for Lingo’s return.

ONE hour later, Lingo and the others came back. Apparently Buzz had found the setup to his liking, for his air was one of approval. Blitz took the attitude that the deal was as good as swung. Lingo seemed somewhat pleased by the fact that his companions had liked the trap which they had seen at Koy Dow’s.

Half an hour passed. The telephone rang in the next room. Lingo arose to answer it; then changed his mind and gave a nudge to Buzz. The lieutenant went to the telephone. The listeners heard him give a grunt of acknowledgment.

“Looks good,” Buzz commented over the wire. “Sure, I’ve seen it. Lingo took me down there... A place called the Silver Dragon, run by a chink called Koy Dow... Yeah, if you get the guy down there, the chink will put him where he belongs... All right, we’ll noise the grapevine...”

Returning to the big room, Buzz nodded to indicate that Rook was ready for the game. He mentioned points of the conversation that the others had not gained by listening in.

"I don't know where Rook's located," declared Buzz, seriously, "but he's arranged to ship the guy down to the Silver Dragon. Guess he's got hold of some mob to do it for him. You can't tell."

"Well," assured Lingo, "you can leave the rest to Koy Dow. What I'm wondering, though, is, if the sap really counts much with The Shadow, why hasn't Rook gotten something out of him?"

"Rook says the mug doesn't know much," returned Buzz. "Says he laid off of him on that account. Thought it would be better to use him for bait than to put the heat on him."

"Well," argued Blitz, "if The Shadow doesn't come for him we can put the heat on him later. Guess that's the way Rook figured it."

"I guess so," corroborated Buzz.

Lingo swung to Hawkeye.

"It's up to you now," remarked the big shot. "Start the grapevine going in about an hour; and spread it so the talk will travel fast. It's a safe bet this mug that Rook's got isn't the only one that's working for The Shadow. The more that get wise to it the better.

"Just noise it around that some guy got himself in wrong with the chinks. Say they thought The Shadow was gunning for them, so they grabbed a palooka that acted too smart. Let it out that they've got the guy down at the Silver Dragon.

"No gorillas are goin' to mooch in on the chinks without being told to. That's why this Chinatown business was a good idea. The Shadow is goin' to walk into that trap thinking that nobody's laying for him."

"Only one trouble, Lingo," put in Buzz. "If The Shadow acts tough, he may get too powerful for the chinks to handle. That trap of Koy Dow's is a good one; but suppose he gets suspicious and ducks away from it?"

"Don't worry about that," returned Lingo. "This is too good a bet for me to miss. There'll be plenty of torpedoes that will want a chance at The Shadow. I'm goin' to give it to them."

"You can't jam them into Chinatown," objected Blitz. "If you do, The Shadow may get wise."

"I'm not shoving them down to the Silver Dragon," asserted Lingo. "I'm only going to plant them off on the edges—so they can close in when the word is passed to them. Once The Shadow gets in the trap, we won't have to worry about who's around."

BLITZ nodded his approval. It was good policy on Lingo's part to keep the underworld busy when the time came. Blitz knew that if mobleaders were working for the big shot, they would postpone all plots that might now be fomenting against Lingo's regime.

Buzz, too, found Lingo's plan of action to his liking. Hawkeye was the only one present who felt apprehensive; with the exception of Jericho, who was listening in from his corner.

Hawkeye had seen many evidences of The Shadow's prowess. He had watched his chief conquer tremendous odds on numerous occasions. This time, however, Hawkeye could not dodge the fact that The Shadow had forced an issue to the utmost.

It was getting too deep for Hawkeye to even think about it. The little agent concealed his worryment; but his thoughts so engrossed him that he was startled out of a reverie when Lingo reminded him that it was

time to get going.

Hawkeye departed; he reached the street and shuffled eastward. He was reluctant to perform the duty that lay before him; yet he could not escape it.

For Hawkeye felt that tonight, as never before, The Shadow, in his effort to free Harry Vincent, was bucking odds that would prove too formidable for even the cloaked avenger to overcome.

CHAPTER XX. THE TRAP SPRINGS

CHINATOWN lay basking in its evening glow. Crowds of sight-seers were thronging through the Oriental quarter, listening to the fancy spiels of the guides who conducted them. Chinatown, so the barkers proclaimed, was a district where insidious snares might swallow the unsuspecting visitor.

Tonight, these talkers were correct, even though they did not know it. Ominous danger lurked in Chinatown. A hidden trap awaited a mighty victim. But the pitfall lay on the outskirts of the quarter, behind the garish front of the secluded Silver Dragon.

Bland and serene in his American clothes, Koy Dow was closing his shop for the night. Customers seldom came to the Silver Dragon. It was too far away from the district's center. There was nothing unusual in the early closing.

The front of the building lay black when Koy Dow had completed his task. Locking the flimsy front door, the Celestial stepped to the sidewalk and shuffled away from the direction of Chinatown's lights.

Reaching the doorway that Hawkeye once had used, Koy Dow entered. This secret passage to the back of his own shop was part of Koy Dow's trickery. The Chinaman had requested certain persons to be here tonight. Hence he was not surprised when he found them in the outer passage.

Lingo Queed was waiting with Blitz Schumbert and Buzz Dongarth. Koy Dow nodded to the trio; then he advanced and manipulated the hinges of the door that led to the hidden stairway.

"Where are we going?" quizzed Blitz, gruffly.

"Where we can look in on what happens," replied Lingo. "Into that old meeting room of ours. The one that Koy Dow used for a trap."

"Say, that's a hot one," growled Blitz. "It was bad enough to find out that the room was goofy all the time we was using it to meet in. Now I'm hearing that there was a peephole to it, too."

"Only Koy Dow knew about it," declared Lingo. "He told me about it before we held our meeting there; but since nobody else was wise, it didn't make a difference."

Koy Dow was beckoning from the stone stairs. As the others advanced, the Chinaman pressed his fingers to his lips.

"THE man he was brought to me so soon ago," babbled the Celestial, in a low-toned singsong. "He has been put in the room so you can see. Do not give talkee. It is not wise that he should hear. We waitee for The Shadow."

"Hold it a minute, Koy Dow," suggested Lingo, as they reached the underground passage. He turned to Buzz and Blitz to give low-voiced orders.

"This bird that belongs to The Shadow was shipped to Koy Dow inside a big box, with some truckmen that looked like gorillas bringing it. Koy Dow planted him in the room.

“Hawkeye tells me the grapevine is busy. That means The Shadow is due, now that Koy Dow has closed his shop. Cardona's stoolies will be getting the dope from the grapevine, though. That's the only bad point.”

“It means The Shadow's got to come tonight, don't it?” quizzed Buzz. “If he don't, the trap won't be no good.”

“That's it,” stated Lingo, “but it couldn't be helped. I think The Shadow will fall, though.”

“He ought to,” put in Blitz. “They say he always mooches in ahead of the bulls.”

“I'm counting on it,” said Lingo. “But just the same, we've got to sit tight, in case the bulls spring a raid here. That's why we've got to leave it to the trap. Don't make any noise if The Shadow walks in; if he starts a battle, there's no telling what might come.”

“No shootee gunee!” exclaimed Koy Dow, anxiously. “Gunee bringee cops. Koy Dow no wantee. No gunee—no talkee.”

“We'll shoot plenty if The Shadow tries a get-away,” modified Lingo, with a low growl. “But if he don't wise that something's wrong, there's to be no rods used.”

“Shadow no wisee,” assured Koy Dow, blinking solemnly.

“I'm moving out,” declared Lingo, turning in the passage. “I'm going to shift those mobs I've got posted. Hold them where they belong, until they get the signal.”

“Lights blinkee,” explained Koy Dow, “Outsidee shopee. You see. That happen when the trapee work.”

“I've got it all straight. And that's when the crews move up in front. If there's any bulls around, the mobs will block a raid.”

Koy Dow blinked as he watched Lingo go back. The Chinaman's face was away from the view of Buzz and Blitz. Something like a smile showed on Koy Dow's lips, as though the Chinaman was laughing to himself at all this added outside action.

It was plain that Koy Dow, although he had warned against premature gunfire, was not particularly perturbed by the possibility of a raid or a mob fight. He seemed to consider the premises of the Silver Dragon as his own little world.

Turning about, the Chinaman led Blitz and Buzz to the spiral stairway. He urged them up through the darkness. At the top, he edged each man to a loophole. He took the middle post, where he could grip the arms of the lieutenants.

BOUND and gagged, Harry Vincent lay in the center of the meeting room. All the usual appointments were in view: banners, taboret and teakwood table.

Over at the other side was the paneled doorway, which Blitz Schumbert knew could be opened only from the passage beyond it. Watching this scene, Koy Dow and his companions waited.

Out on the street, Lingo Queed had appeared in front of the obscure door that led to the hidden lookout passage. Lingo's lanky form was half doubled as the big shot edged away toward the deeper darkness on Chinatown's border.

Minutes drifted. They totaled a quarter hour. During all that while, none but a few stragglers passed this

portion of the deserted street. Then, from an alleyway, came blackness.

Obscure at his arrival, The Shadow became momentarily visible as he moved into the center of the street. A sharp observer might have caught an instantaneous impression of a cloaked and hatted figure, as this bold adventurer blocked the glow from far down the thoroughfare.

Another instant; The Shadow had merged with the darkness in front of Koy Dow's. He crowded close against the blackened door that the Chinaman had so recently locked.

The Shadow knew this place. That was to his advantage. Acquainted with the existence of the secret lookout, he also had some knowledge of the shop itself. The door was no obstacle; in fact, Koy Dow had cleverly arranged that it would not be.

Within a minute, The Shadow had opened the barrier. Closing it behind him, he came into the stillness of the shop. A tiny flashlight blinked upon golden tapestries and jade ornaments as The Shadow threaded to the rear of the shop.

The Silver Dragon had a rear passage that The Shadow quickly found. He pressed past a hanging curtain, blinked his way ahead and came to the outside of the paneled door. The tiny flashlight showed a button. The Shadow's gloved hand pressed it. The panel opened.

Flashlight blinked out. It went beneath the cloak; gloved hands swept outward, each with a brandished automatic as The Shadow sprang across the threshold. His blazing eyes saw Harry Vincent on the floor; but his motions showed readiness to encounter any lurking foemen.

The panel closed with a click. The Shadow shot a glance toward it; then laughed softly. He could open that barrier later. Present business was the rescue of his agent.

Sweeping his automatics beneath his cloak, The Shadow stooped to release Harry's bonds.

Harry had been drugged prior to shipment from Rook Hollister's hideout. He had come half to his senses to find himself impounded in this bizarre room, that looked unreal to his distorted vision.

The arrival of The Shadow had given him a return to normalcy. As The Shadow began to cut the bonds, Harry managed to raise his head. Staring, he looked beyond The Shadow's shoulder, toward the paneled entrance. Though the wall remained unchanging, Harry caught a slight wave of hanging banners. He sensed a vibration from the floor.

The entire room was moving downward! The Shadow, apparently, did not realize it.

Harry tried to gasp a warning. The Shadow reached down and loosed the gag from between his agent's teeth. But words were not ready when Harry wanted them. Harry's jaw quivered; his tongue was numbed. He could do no more than make an inarticulate motion with his lips.

FROM behind the lookout slits, Buzz and Blitz were watching with elation. Koy Dow was clamping the arms of the lieutenants. The Chinaman's clawlike finger nails dug through coat sleeves as Koy Dow indicated that no move must be made.

The caution was unnecessary. Both of Koy Dow's companions were satisfied. They saw now why the loopholes were long, vertical slits that ran almost to the ceiling of the sinking room.

Through these slits, they could watch the progress of the room itself. The Shadow, as he released the prisoner, was going downward as in an elevator. Then, as the figures reached a point a dozen feet below, the ceiling of the room came by. View of the trap was cut off. Instead, the floor of an upper room settled

into place.

The Shadow had walked into an elevator, large in size, which had all the semblance of an ordinary room. He and the prisoner whom he had come to rescue were trapped within cellar walls that surrounded the sides of the camouflaged elevator.

Buzz and Blitz had seen the trap work earlier in the day; but they had viewed it from the passage in the Silver Dragon. Tonight, they had gained the pleasure of seeing its action up until the final moment when The Shadow and Harry Vincent had reached the bottom of the pit.

DOWN below, Harry Vincent was managing to blurt out words. Incoherently, he was trying to explain the present plight. Then came a jolt that announced the bottom of the shaft.

The Shadow came upright. An instant later, the room was plunged into darkness.

Harry sank back, despairing. Then, above him, he heard the sibilant tones of a whispered taunt. The Shadow's mirth prevailed within this room of darkness, as though the mysterious master had found the element that was his choice.

“Come!”

The single word followed the echoes of that hissed mockery. A gloved hand gripped Harry's shoulder. The released prisoner was drawn to his feet.

Harry found his balance; then wavered unsteadily. A flashlight glimmered; The Shadow steadied his agent.

Across the room, toward the paneled door that had descended with them. Such was the course that The Shadow took. The flashlight glimmered on the panel; Harry rested against the wall as he watched The Shadow's hand probe the circle of light.

Harry wondered at The Shadow's purpose. This room was nothing but an inner shell, The door was useless, now that the chamber had descended amid stone walls that formed the foundation of the Silver Dragon.

Moreover, Harry recalled that when captors had left him they had been forced to knock for exit. The door could not be opened from the inside. Yet The Shadow seemed persistent in such effort.

Click!

The Shadow had found some hidden spring. The panel slid open. A puff of air whisked inward. The flashlight carved a glimmering path through darkness. The Shadow urged Harry toward the spot where the agent had believed that stone foundations stood.

Another secret of Koy Dow's strange premises. An underground passage of which The Shadow knew. An exit below ground that matched the one above.

Dazed, Harry found The Shadow conducting him through a maze of narrow paths that were tunneled through foundation walls.

Away from Koy Dow's. Off toward the heart of Chinatown. They were traveling catacombs that must once have formed the secret dugouts during the days of the Chinese tong wars. Yawning caverns looked like former arsenals wherein the members of battled factions had drilled for battle.

The flashlight showed a stairway. Up stone steps, through a grated door; then came another barrier; finally a passage. The Shadow opened a final door and drew Harry into the darkness of a secluded street.

THE flashlight blinked no longer, but Harry noted the parking lights of a cab. The Shadow opened the door of the vehicle; Harry climbed aboard. He heard a whispered order:

“Report.”

Mechanically, Harry answered.

“Rook Hollister,” he said, steadily. “In the penthouse. Two stories above the Roof Cafe of the Hotel Moselle. Clyde Burke still a prisoner there—”

A fierce hiss interrupted. The Shadow saw blackness stiffen. Sharp words came in low but commanding utterance as The Shadow responded to this unexpected news.

Harry's words were but brief phrases as The Shadow demanded details. Swiftly, the cloaked rescuer learned how Harry and Clyde had been trapped; how they had been quizzed; then ignored until this night.

Harry told how he had been dragged out and forced to the storeroom on the floor below Rook's hide-out. How he had been packed in a shipping box; then drugged for his journey.

Of one thing, Harry was sure: Rook Hollister had retained Clyde Burke. Harry recalled brief statements that he had overheard. Mention of the fact that he was to be placed within a trap; that Clyde would be reserved for a later occasion.

The report ended abruptly. The Shadow's whisper carried brief commands. Harry heard them; so did the driver of the cab. Moe Shrevnitz was the man at the wheel.

Then blackness closed the door. Harry thought he caught a faint swish as The Shadow moved away. The cab jolted forward. Moe was taking Harry from this district.

But The Shadow had remained. His ways were to be his own. Brief duties held him; then would come the final move. One agent rescued, The Shadow was faced with the task of saving another whose plight was desperate.

CHAPTER XXI. THE SHOWDOWN

A LIGHT was blinking in front of the Silver Dragon. A single bulb, it was flashing as a crimson beacon to all eyes that were watching it. From streets and alleyways on this border of Chinatown, men of crime were moving in to cover.

Hawkeye was one who saw the light. He had been with one of the mobleaders whom Lingo Queed had approached sometime before. After Lingo had gone further on to spread the news, Hawkeye had chosen his present spot, the entrance of an alleyway one hundred feet from the Silver Dragon.

Though close to Koy Dow's shop, Hawkeye had not observed the arrival of The Shadow. He had watched darkness only until at last the blinking had commenced. Long minutes had followed, while mobsters and their leaders crept forward to be in readiness. Hawkeye, however, had kept his present station.

He had seen men come from that doorway that he once had used. He had watched them go along the street and enter the Silver Dragon. One squatty shape Hawkeye knew must be Koy Dow. He decided

that the others were Buzz Dongarth and Blitz Schumbert. In fact, he had recognized a gesture that reminded him of Blitz when the biggest of the three men had motioned to the closest mobsters.

A few of the gunmen had responded; they had also entered the Silver Dragon. Hawkeye, still in the seclusion of the alley, suddenly sensed that someone was close by. He had a startled impression of a hand against his coat sleeve. He whirled about and groped in the darkness.

Then, mumbling at his own delusion, Hawkeye let his hand drop to his side. Something crinkled as he brushed his pocket. Clutching, Hawkeye crumpled a sheet of paper.

The little man moved from the alley. He slouched forward in the fashion of the other mobsters who were moving in. He neared the entrance of the Silver Dragon and stopped at a convenient point where he could catch the dull glow of the street.

Huddling, Hawkeye opened the paper. Straining, he read blue-inked words that faded as he finished them.

A message from The Shadow! To meet Cliff Marsland; to follow instructions that would come from Burbank.

Hawkeye was astounded. He knew what the blinking light meant above the Silver Dragon, yet here was proof that The Shadow was in the clear.

Hawkeye stuffed the crumpled paper in his pocket. Turning, he was about to edge away when he encountered a man who was coming across the street. A hand clamped itself on Hawkeye's shoulder. The little spotter swung to face Lingo Queed.

"Where are you going?" demanded Lingo savagely. "Don't you see that light blinking? It means we've got The Shadow. Stick here with the rest of the torpedoes, in case the bulls butt in."

"I'm sticking," acknowledged Hawkeye, "I was just easing back a bit. I mooched up to see how things lay. There's plenty of rods around here now, Lingo."

"All right," decided Lingo, impatiently, "just so you're near enough to be ready."

"The Shadow showed up quicker than I thought he would. I was still out going the rounds."

As Lingo entered the Silver Dragon, Hawkeye headed back to the alley. Once there he kept on going, pausing against a wall at one point while advancing mobsters passed him. Then Hawkeye continued his course from the district.

WITHIN the Silver Dragon, a group of men were standing at the passage end. Before them was an opened panel. They were looking into a room that was the replica of the one that had descended.

Through the long slitted loopholes of the lookout post, Blitz and Buzz had seen this new room settle into place. Coming around through the shop, they were now on the threshold of the room which had supplanted the old one.

Impatient, they were awaiting Lingo's arrival, for Koy Dow would make no further move until the big shot showed up.

Three mobsmen were with the lieutenants; all turned around as they heard footsteps. Lingo had arrived. Pushing his way to the door, he looked into the room then stared inquiringly at Koy Dow. Buzz laughed.

“This is the top room, Lingo,” assured Buzz. “Blitz and I saw the other room go down with The Shadow in it. He's where he won't get out. We've just been waiting for you to come along and call for the finish.”

“Give them the gas,” ordered Lingo.

Koy Dow bowed. He stooped to the floor of the passage and raised the portion of a board. The action revealed a small lever which the Chinaman turned. A hiss followed.

Koy Dow waited a full minute until the sound had ended; then he bowed again to Lingo.

“Room fillee,” declared Koy Dow. “Takee couple minute to killee people in there. Me timee.”

The Chinaman drew a fancy watch from his pocket and kept his eye on the timepiece. While they waited, Buzz spoke to Lingo.

“Have him bring that room up,” suggested Buzz. “We want to take a look at this mug that calls himself The Shadow.”

“You bet we do,” rumbled Blitz.

The mobsmen added their approval. Lingo was nodding his compliance. His outjawed face was showing the sour smile that characterized it.

“Timee up,” announced Koy Dow. “But maybe we no wantee room up. Maybe too much gasee.”

“Turn that other lever,” ordered Lingo. “You told me it would clear the gas.”

“Maybe not fast enough,” stalled Koy Dow. “No takee chance. Might be bad.”

“We'll chance it,” snorted Buzz. “How about it, Lingo?”

The big shot nodded. Koy Dow pressed the second lever. A milder hiss followed; compressed air was forcing the gas from the death trap.

When the hissing ended, Koy Dow pressed a button in the floor; then pressed the lid-like board back into its tight-fitting place.

Men watched through the open doorway. They saw the floor of the upper room rising, walls and ceiling with it. There was a blocking space as a solid portion passed the doorway; then another obstruction as the paneled barrier of the lower room came upward. The Shadow had closed that barrier after his escape below.

The elevator motion ceased. Koy Dow pressed the button on the wall. The paneled door of the death trap opened.

The onlooker stared into the chamber. Buzz Dongarth sprang forward with Blitz Schumbert close behind him. Lingo Queed followed; then came the mobsters jostling Koy Dow in ahead of them. The panel dropped.

A faint odor was noticeable in the room, indicating that the gas had entered and then had cleared. But that fact was entirely unnoticed by the evil persons who had entered. Men were fuming oaths as they stared about at a chamber that was vacant save for its furnishings.

They had expected to find bodies on the floor beside the teakwood table. No figures were in view. Incredible though it seemed to Buzz Dongarth and Blitz Schumbert, the victims whose descent they had

witnessed were gone.

BUZZ snarled as he swung toward Lingo. The big shot met the lieutenant's glare with an out-thrust of his chin. It was Lingo who growled before Buzz could mouth an angry utterance.

"Well," demanded Lingo, "where are they? What about it? You said you saw them go down"—he turned to Blitz—"and you said the same."

Buzz subsided; so did Blitz, who was beginning to mutter. Lingo was right. He was the one to raise the protest. Then looking for a goat, Buzz pointed an accusing finger at Koy Dow.

"Ask him!" snarled Buzz. "He was with us! He said they couldn't get out—The Shadow and that stoolie of his—but they're gone. Koy Dow is the only guy who can tell us how they went."

Koy Dow shrugged his shoulders.

His face registered perplexity. Blitz entered the argument.

"The chink's a double crosser!" stormed the big racketeer. "I was thinkin' he was phoney, Lingo, from the time we came in tonight. First, it was funny having us meet in a room that was fixed to wipe us out. Then he had us looking in from a place where anybody could have spotted us when we held those meetings."

"Blitz is right," put in Buzz. "Koy Dow has double-crossed us. Get him, you mugs! Make him come clean!"

Mobsters made a grab for the Chinaman. Koy Dow wriggled to the paneled door. A harsh tone from Lingo Queed stopped the gorillas from seizing their prey. The big shot was putting in his say.

"Lay off Koy Dow!" ordered Lingo. "He's a friend of mine! I'll have it out with him; it's not up to you guys. Anybody that wants to bump Koy Dow has to get me first!"

"Yeah?" snarled Buzz. "Well I'm tellin' you somethin', Lingo. It don't hurt who flivvered this deal—you or Koy Dow. You're both to blame. You're through, Lingo. This has finished you. You're due for a rubout—and I'm here to give it!"

WITH a quick motion, Buzz yanked a revolver from his pocket. Lingo was on the job with equal speed. The big shot whipped into view that same .38 that he planted on the dead body of Trip Burley.

It was a death duel at rapid speed; and Lingo Queed gained the bulge. His revolver barked while Buzz Dongarth was pressing the trigger of his gun. Rook's henchman fired; but his frantic shot was too late.

Lingo's bullet sent Buzz staggering as the lieutenant's pellet sizzled past the big shot's ear. With a quick dive, Lingo dropped behind the teakwood table ready to meet other comers. His move was wise, Blitz and the mobsters were on the draw, all in behalf of Buzz Dongarth's cause.

With Lingo's shot, Koy Dow had hammered on the panel door. The barrier opened instantly; as Koy Dow dived through it, yellow faces appeared above leveled guns. Koy Dow had stationed Chinese henchmen in the offing.

A gorilla shouted warning. Forgetting Lingo, Blitz and the others wheeled toward the door. The Chinese opened fire as the mobsters started a rush. The crooks sprawled upon the floor.

Lingo was leaping past the tottering gorillas. Blitz, steadying himself upon the teakwood table, aimed for

the big shot. Lingo whirled to fire; but found it unnecessary. Blitz's supporting arm had weakened; the racketeer sagged forward on the table.

Chinese guns had done their work at close range. But whatever Koy Dow's allegiance, whether for The Shadow or merely against crime, the Celestial still favored the man who had showed himself a friend. As Lingo dashed down the passage, Koy Dow uttered guttural orders to let the fleeing big shot pass.

Into the shop itself dashed Lingo, apparently knowing what he might encounter. An incoming mobleader stopped as he saw the big shot. Then, from the rear, the fellow caught the cries of wounded gorillas.

“Get Lingo! Get the big shot!”

Before the mobleader could respond, Lingo drove his gun against the man's head. The mobleader plunged headlong into a mass of Chinese bric-a-brac. He emerged just as Lingo dived through the outer door, passing two gangsters stationed there. The mobleader bellowed to get Lingo. Gorillas turned to obey.

Again, Koy Dow furnished aid. His Chinese henchmen were piling forward, firing to repel the invasion from the street. Mobsmen dived for cover and fired back. Chinese reached the outer door and opened their volleys.

Only a few scattered shots followed Lingo as the big shot fled headlong for a side street near the heart of Chinatown.

A battle was on; and as mobleaders spattered the shop front with their bullets, new forces came dashing into the fray. Police revolvers barked from near-by streets. Joe Cardona had responded to a new tip-off. He and his men were carving in to shatter mobland's outburst.

The attack on the Silver Dragon faded. Koy Dow and his Chinamen were in charge, with none but dead enemies within their portals. Outside, rats were scurrying to the shelter of bad land dives. The police, coming with concentrated force, were driving them in all directions save one.

None of the fleeing mobsters had chosen to take the direction that Lingo Queed had followed. One fugitive might risk the lights of Chinatown; but not a score, with the police in pursuit. The law had scored a victory; and with it the rule of Lingo Queed had automatically ended.

Lingo Queed was king no more; and in his abdication, The Shadow had profited. Lingo, in that final fray, had eliminated Buzz Dongarth; the one man who might have carried prompt warning back to Rook Hollister who still held Clyde Burke captive.

That was the one stroke which The Shadow needed. But the master fighter had known that he could not again show his black-cloaked figure within the mob surrounded shop of Koy Dow.

Buzz Dongarth, through circumstance, had been saved from death at the point of an automatic wielded by The Shadow; but the work that might well have been done by a .45 had been accomplished by a bullet from a .38.

While mobland's seething hordes fled for cover, too scattered even to take up the trail of Lingo Queed, The Shadow was on his way from Chinatown. He had left massed battle to the law. He, himself, was bound upon a more urgent mission.

CHAPTER XXII. THE SWIFT BLOCKADE

WHILE battle surged about the borders of Chinatown, all lay quiet further north, along the avenue where

the Hotel Moselle was located. Police had ripped loose into the hordes of the underworld, but their sharp attack had confined the warring forces to the underworld itself.

The conflict was like a maelstrom, drawing all factions into its vortex. Hence, other portions of Manhattan were oddly free from characters who looked like desperadoes. Not until later would absent denizens of scumland learn of the great struggle that had marked the overthrow of Lingo Queed.

Harry Vincent stepped from a taxicab outside the Hotel Moselle. As he crossed the pavement, two other men sauntered up to join him. One was Cliff Marsland, firm-faced and of good appearance. The other was Hawkeye, less stooped of shoulders and lacking of furtive air.

The trio formed a reputable group as they entered the Moselle lobby. To all appearances, they were chance guests paying a visit to the Roof Cafe. They joined a throng of entering customers and formed a cluster as they boarded a crowded elevator.

The Shadow had ordered his agents to converge at the Roof Cafe. One obstacle alone existed: Harry Vincent must manage to pass Prexy Storlick without being recognized. That, however, was a simple matter during this hour when throngs were present.

When the elevator reached the twentieth floor, Harry strolled off in the direction of a smoking room. Cliff and Hawkeye were the ones who took the corridor to the roof. They found a vacant table in an obscure spot of the open-air garden. It was on the side of the roof away from the Hotel Framton; and one of the two chairs was well behind a potted cedar.

Cliff took the outer chair, while Hawkeye remained standing. Looking about, they spied Prexy coming from the corridor, conducting a large party to a reserved table. Cliff nudged Hawkeye; the spotter hastened back to get Harry.

While Prexy was still seating the guests, Harry arrived on the roof and sidled into the obscure seat opposite Cliff Marsland. Hawkeye, reappearing, did not take a table at all. Instead, he found a folding chair and placed it in an inconspicuous spot just outside the corridor. Lighting a cigarette, the little man sat down. To all appearances, he was waiting for a friend's arrival.

The roof was noisy. Waiters were swinging back and forth with loaded chairs. Prexy had business inside; for there were inner dining rooms and bars that also demanded his attention. Hence, Hawkeye was unnoticed in the shuffle, while Harry and Cliff, giving no signals to waiters, remained unapproached.

Harry was totally obscured by the little cedar tree. He was relying upon Cliff to tell him what went on. Their conversation was conducted in low tones that could not be heard at near-by tables.

“HAWKEYE'S sitting pretty,” remarked Cliff. “Right where he can spot that telephone at the middle of the corridor. He ought to be able to see the door to the stairway too.”

“Good,” rejoined Harry. “That's the connection point, Cliff. There's no phone in the apartment up above. Either Prexy will get some word and go up; or Bart Koplín will come down here—”

Cliff raised a warning hand. A cue from Hawkeye. Harry watched Cliff intently for further news.

“Somebody's come down,” stated Cliff. “Yes, there's Hawkeye tipping me. A big fellow with saggy jaws. Going over to the south side of the roof.”

“Bart,” informed Harry. “Watch him, Cliff. What is he doing?”

“Picking an empty table,” resumed Cliff. “Looking up, over toward the Hotel Framton.”

“Any lights two stories up?” That's where Buzz would be. “In the corner room at the front.”

“No lights in any of the corner rooms.”

“Good! Buzz isn't back.”

Minutes passed while Cliff watched Bart. While they waited. Harry added remarks.

“Burbank called Jericho,” said Harry. “That is, he probably has by this time. Telling him to get out of Lingo's place. Moe has gone to pick up Jericho.”

“Good,” commented Cliff, scarcely moving his lips. “Lingo's due to be rubbed out tonight, if they get a chance at him. His only bet was to trap The Shadow—and he's failed.”

A pause. More minutes passed. Then Cliff whispered:

“Bart's getting up. Looks sort of sore; impatient. He's going back up to the hideout. Guess he's wondering what's keeping Buzz.”

CLIFF was not the only observer who had seen Bart Koplín arise to make his return upstairs. Another witness had arrived at a vantage spot from which he could spy the private dick's actions. This new observer, however, was not in the Roof Cafe. In fact, he was not even on the premises of the Hotel Moselle.

Across the street, the roofed recesses of the Hotel Framton formed shaded segments shrouded from the city's glow. Like mammoth steps, these unnoticed portions of the huge hotel were perfect lurking spots for any who might use them.

At the east end of the Hotel Framton, such a step ran from north to south along the twentieth floor—on an exact level with the Roof Cafe of the Hotel Moselle. It was there that a figure had arrived; a blended shape that the sharpest eyes would fail to detect.

The Shadow had reached a chosen goal. While his agents had been meeting; while they had been posting themselves and waiting, the cloaked warrior had come posthaste from the vicinity of Chinatown.

He had left the tumult that raged amid the barks of guns. Speeding up-town in a hired taxi, he entered the Hotel Framton in ordinary attire. Riding to the twentieth floor, he had unwrapped cloak and hat, together with the contents of a package that he had picked up during a short stop at the sanctum.

A corridor window had given him access to his present post. Looking at an angle, The Shadow had seen Bart Koplín leaving the parapet of the Roof Cafe. A soft laugh whispered in the darkness. The Shadow was not surprised that Bart had received no wigwag from Buzz Dongarth.

Viewing the Hotel Moselle, The Shadow saw it to his liking. The front portion of the building held the Roof Cafe. Then came the two-storied bulwark that bulged straight upward on the south side. Solid walls housed the storeroom; above were the shuttered windows and the solid door of Rook's hide-out. These were partly obscured from The Shadow's view, because of the railed promenade.

The Shadow was almost on a line with the rear wall of the little tower. This was due to the frontward pyramiding of the Hotel Framton. Behind the tower atop the Moselle was another portion of the Roof Cafe. This was an open-air garden for diners who wanted exclusive surroundings. It carried a cover charge.

As a result, that portion of the roof was practically deserted. Moreover, it had taller and closer cedars

than did the front portion of the roof. There was little chance that any of the people there could see The Shadow's moves.

Looking upward, The Shadow studied the rail that surrounded the penthouse promenade. Whitened against the dark sky, the stone posts showed plainly. At the corner nearest to The Shadow was a heavier, higher post, that marked a join of two balustrades.

This post rose above the rail. From each of its sides glowered griffon heads with long, protruding upper jaws. The architect who had designed these unnecessary decorations had unknowingly performed a service for the future.

PRESSING hard against the steplike wall of the Hotel Framton, The Shadow lifted an object from the package at his feet. It showed yellow against the dull white edge of the roof. The object was a cross-shaped boomerang. Its two cross-bars were joined by a bolt that projected an inch beneath the surface of the lower piece.

Clinging to a block-shaped roof projection, The Shadow delivered a short underhand throw. The boomerang whistled sadly as it whirred upward across the street. Its yellow blades enabled The Shadow to observe its course. The boomerang spun above the rail of the promenade. Circling lazily to the right, it rounded the griffon-headed post; then gathered speed as it zoomed back through the still night air.

Clinging to the block, The Shadow reached out and plucked the boomerang from space. His trial throw was satisfactory.

He produced another object—a tiny spindle wound with a threadlike coil. The spindle had a hollow center. The Shadow pressed it to the bolt that projected beneath the boomerang. The spindle clamped there.

Drawing off a length of the thread, The Shadow retained the end in his left hand while he again grasped the block. Once more, the boomerang whizzed from his expert right. This time it clipped close to the parapet above the Hotel Moselle. It barely passed the pillar with the griffon heads.

Then the missile skimmed back from the night. Again, The Shadow took it deftly upon its return. Only a few coils remained about the spindle. The Shadow had encircled the corner of the parapet with a line of strong thread that remained invisible, so slender was its form.

The boomerang's work was done. To the outer end of the thread, The Shadow attached a reel of stout fish line. Drawing in the free end of the thread, he made this new, stronger connection as a bridge between the Hotel Framton and the pillar of Rook Hollister's unused promenade.

This line completed, The Shadow could trace it through the slight glow that reflected from the sky. He produced a coil of wire that was as strong as thin cable, despite its pliability. He hooked that wire to the fish line and drew in the cord. The result was a double-wired bridge, across and upward. Two lines of glistening steel, each capable of sustaining a greater weight than that of a human being.

The Shadow attached the outer end of the wire to the stone projection that formed a block above the cornice of the roof whereon he stood. His task however, was not yet complete. He gathered up another object and hooked it beneath his cloak. Hands free, the loose end of the wire about his wrist, The Shadow pressed against the steplike wall.

Projections offered holds for hands and feet. Like a mammoth beetle, The Shadow scaled the bulwark to the next step of the roof, one floor above. Again he climbed; a second story—a third—a fourth. When he stopped, he was perched upon the inset of the twenty-fourth floor. Two stories above the top of the

tower that raised itself from the roof of the Hotel Moselle.

His line with the corner post of the promenade rail was a direct one. He could see the lower wire coming up around the post. The upper strand of steel continued to where The Shadow stood.

The stone griffon heads, carved portions of the granite post, had served as The Shadow had planned. The wire had originally lain loose upon the tops of the rails. Drawn taut, raised upward, it had hooked into the yawning, ornamental mouths.

The single wire that extended downward was firmly held by the ornamental heads. The Shadow wound the loose end around a second block of the Framton cornice; one which corresponded to the block on the twentieth floor.

He brought out the object that he had placed beneath his cloak. A small, six-inch car, with roller-bearing wheels. The Shadow unclamped one side; affixed the carrier to the descending wire, then closed the clamp. Hands gripping a bar below the wheels, he poised upon the edge of the roof, ready for a swift flight downward.

ON the brink, The Shadow paused. Another venturer might well have hesitated, through doubt as to the safety of the trip that lay ahead. Not so The Shadow. Calmly, he was making a last moment survey of a scene which interested him.

He was looking at the front portion of the Roof Cafe, viewing portions in from the parapet, which he now could see from this higher lookout. Clear across the roof, at the further front corner, he discerned two men at a table. One was Cliff Marsland; the other, whom The Shadow could see below the top of a small cedar tree, was Harry Vincent.

As The Shadow watched, he saw Cliff leap to his feet. Harry followed. The two sprang across the open garden, heading toward the inner corridor. Some alarm had stirred the agents to sudden action.

Circumstances had ended the blockade. At the very moment of The Shadow's foray, his aids had found cause for action. A double attack was underway against Rook Hollister. Men from below; The Shadow from above!

CHAPTER XXIII. THE RECKONING

HAWKEYE had sounded the alarm. From his obscure station, the little spotter had been watching Prexy Storlick. He had seen the cafe proprietor stop at the center of the corridor to answer the telephone upon the table.

A harsh curl had come to Prexy's lips. Banging down the receiver, the tall man had stepped hastily into the passage. Key yanked from pocket, he had started to unlock the door that led to Rook Hollister's hide-out.

This was the emergency for which Hawkeye had been prepared. At all costs, The Shadow's agents were to prevent Prexy from passing any news upstairs. Rising, Hawkeye had signaled to Cliff. Confident that Cliff and Harry would be behind him, the little agent sprang forward into the corridor.

A simple game; but a sure one. A wild brawl that would bring trouble; but that did not matter. For all of The Shadow's agents were prepared to complete one task. That was to deliver a decisive knockout to Prexy Storlick.

They could answer for the consequences afterward. But with Prexy eliminated, their cause would be safe. He was the one go-between from the roof cafe to the hide-out. Prexy must be downed.

Hawkeye, barging inward, was the first to reach the passage. As the little man plunged into view, Prexy heard him coming. Furiously, the proprietor whirled from the door that he had unlocked. Hawkeye, in the corridor itself, was starting a flying dive to cover the last dozen feet.

Then came the bad break. A waiter, jogging along with a tray above his head, came blundering squarely into Hawkeye's path. Hawkeye's head bulleted the man's shoulder. Both went sprawling into the passage. Loaded dishes and filled glasses crashed in deluge.

As Harry and Cliff came bounding through the corridor, two husky waiters dashed up from the opposite direction. They saw Hawkeye and the first waiter rolling on the floor. They heard Rook Hollister's cry; they saw their boss point toward the corridor.

"Stop them!" roared Prexy. "Those two—coming in from the roof!"

PREXY had recognized Harry. It would have been too late for the proprietor if the waiters had not been dashing in. The Shadow's agents had already gained the passage. Prexy could not have made the stairs.

But the husky menials caught Prexy's order in time. As Harry and Cliff surged by, the two men dived for The Shadow's agents and began to grapple. Fists swung as both Harry and Cliff drove back their opponents. Then came a surge of reserves.

Big bouncers from the roof had followed the dashing agents. As Harry and Cliff downed the waiters, these new huskies piled upon them. Only Hawkeye was clear. He came to his feet, took a punch at the fallen waiter who was rising to stop him, and made a frantic dive for Prexy.

On the stairway, Prexy grabbed the door frame and shot a long leg outward. His height, his higher position, gave him the break. Prexy's kicking foot reached Hawkeye's chest. The drive sent the little man spilling back against the wall on the other side of the passage.

Cliff Marsland was a battler. Harry Vincent was inspired by wild hope of rescuing Clyde Burke. Both agents were swinging fists that struck like bludgeons. They were clipping the chins of Prexy's huskies, sprawling waiters on the floor as fast as they arrived.

Driving back these cohorts, Harry and Cliff were leaving Prexy to Hawkeye. But before the little agent could recover from his second spill; before he could yank a gun in a wild attempt to stop the proprietor's flight, Prexy dashed up the stairs, slamming the door behind him.

The barrier had latched automatically. Hawkeye clawed at it in vain. Harry and Cliff came staggering back, temporarily outnumbered. Pursuit of Prexy was hopeless; Hawkeye surged into the brawl. Rallying, The Shadow's agents drove half a dozen waiters out into the corridor.

More of the white-coated huskies were piling in; but the unequal fight was soon to end. Patrons of the Roof Cafe were all for the three guests who had apparently done nothing to warrant the attack of so many waiters.

Men in tuxedos sprang forward to ward off the hired help. Bartenders dropped bottles and dashed in to aid the waiters. Glasses were hurled; tables overturned. More guests saw red; while elevator men, bell hops and house detectives joined ranks with waiters and barkeeps.

Corridor, lobby and roof became one seething battleground, where fists and furnishings were the only weapons. In the fray, The Shadow's agents were swept away from the passage that they sought. That vital point lay clear of fighters. Shattered plates and glasses alone marked the fact that the fray had begun in this path to the entrance of the service elevator.

UP in the big living room of the penthouse hide-out, Rook Hollister and Bart Koplin had caught muffled sounds that told the outbreak of the fray. Hearing pounding steps upon the stairs, Bart leaped to the door and opened it.

Prexy arrived, excited.

“The jig's up, Rook!” exclaimed the proprietor. “Just got a phone call, a tip to what's happened! The Shadow slipped that trap they had for him! Took that stoolie of his with him!”

“What!” roared Rook. “You mean that guy that said his name was Loman? He got clear—with The Shadow?”

“Yes! What's more, he's here at the Roof Cafe. He and some other mugs started a brawl. Tried to stop me on my way up. You've got to scram, Rook!”

Prexy paused for breath. Then he spoke again.

“We've all got to travel,” he asserted. “The cops got a tip-off. They barged down into Chinatown, headed by Joe Cardona. Buzz Dongarth took the bump, along with Blitz Schumbert in the chink joint—and Lingo Queed took it on the lam.”

“What's that got to do with here?” demanded Rook. “If Buzz is dead, all we've got to do is snatch those mugs downstairs.”

“Joe Cardona's heading here, though,” insisted Prexy. “Some of his dicks nabbed Bugs Glook, that guy I had deliver the crate to the chink this afternoon. Bugs turned yellow and squealed. Cardona got word of it when he put in a call to headquarters from the Hotel Santiago, down near the Bowery.

“A friend of mine runs the place. He overheard Cardona's call. Bugs must have mentioned the service elevator, even though he don't know you sent the box. What's more, there was something about a new tip-off for Cardona, at headquarters.”

Rook Hollister wheeled to Bart Koplin.

“Get Burke,” ordered the big shot. “We've got to get rid of him before we beat it.”

Bart sprang to the door of an inner room. He came back, dragging Clyde, who looked weary. His hands were tied behind him. Rook produced a knife and cut the rope. He shoved Clyde into the arms of Bart and Prexy.

“That brawl's working right for us,” snarled the big shot, with an evil grin. “Anything that looks funny will be laid to the fight, after the bulls got here. Bring Burke along”—Rook paused to stride to the bolted doors at the south end of the room—“and we'll pitch him over the rail. It will look like he went over from the Roof Cafe, during the fight.”

As Clyde struggled against the rogues who shoved him forward, Rook uttered a fierce snort and pulled back the heavy bolt of the door. He swung one half of the barrier inward, to show the dull surface of the outer promenade.

“It's curtains for you, Burke,” gloated the big shot. “One wise guy too many. Well, there'll be one less when—”

Rook stopped abruptly. Bart and Prexy had released their victim. Trembling, the henchmen were raising hands above their shoulders as they stared toward the door. Rook saw terror in their bulging eyes. He

wheeled, then became rigid also.

Weird against the glow reflected from the white walls of the hotel across the street stood a blackened shape that the big shot recognized. Mammoth automatics projected from gloved fists. Burning eyes surveyed the villains from beneath the brim of a slouch hat.

“The Shadow!” blurted Rook.

A HOARSE cry from Prexy. Insanely the cafe proprietor made a maddened leap upon the avenging figure. The Shadow swished sidewise; as Prexy's hands clutched for his throat, he brought his left fist upward.

The rising muzzle of an automatic cupped Prexy's jaw. The tall man slumped to the floor, his fingers slipping as they scratched the cloth of the black cloak.

The Shadow's laugh came in a weird ripple. One foe had subsided; the muzzle of his automatics had kept where they belonged: one toward Rook; the other toward Bart.

In the side tilt of his head, The Shadow had almost lost his slouch hat. Instead of trying to regain it, he gave a shake that sent the head-piece dropping to the floor.

Clyde Burke gulped with astonishment as he saw the features that were revealed by the light. So did Bart Koplín.

Neither the agent nor the crooked private dick had expected to see a face that looked like this one. The Shadow's countenance—even though it must be a made-up one—was an odd choice for disguise. An ugly visage, with over-large nose flattened like a mushroom. Sour lips above an out-thrust lower jaw.

“Lingo Queed!”

Rook Hollister gasped the name. He had met Lingo in the past. As Clyde Burke heard Rook's cry of astonishment—a weird truth dawned upon him. A truth that confounded Rook and Bart as well.

The secret of The Shadow's amazing campaign was revealed. How big shot after big shot had vainly endeavored to build up the empire which Rook Hollister had tried to rule.

As Lingo Queed, a gangster who had served as fixer, go-between and interpreter for powerful lieutenants, The Shadow had learned when crimes were brewing and rackets were about to ripen. As The Shadow, with agents aiding him, he had staged attack upon crime workers. His crafty drives had passed as the work of rival mobland factions.

Rook Hollister had sensed The Shadow's hand. He had faked his death deputing Trip Burley to assassinate Donald Manthell in his place. But The Shadow, making use of his guise as Lingo Queed, had been in with the plotters who had planned to rub out Rook.

Koy Dow was a friend of The Shadow's. That was why he was Lingo Queed's friend also. For Lingo Queed—a faked personality—had been The Shadow all along. The Shadow had planted Hawkeye to listen in on the plots because The Shadow himself, having to play the part of Lingo, could not have trailed Trip Burley, whom he suspected as a spy of Rook Hollister's.

Of all The Shadow's agents, Burbank alone had known the double role that The Shadow was playing. That was why Burbank had chuckled when giving a report from Hawkeye. The Shadow, through Burbank, had ordered Hawkeye to make the very suggestions that he wanted. Then, as Lingo Queed, The Shadow had reluctantly accepted the suggestions in the presence of lieutenants.

All for effect upon those who had acknowledged Lingo as the lord of the underworld. Because of his position, The Shadow had been unable to wage war after he became big shot. But he himself had sent tips to Detective Joe Cardona.

THROUGH Hawkeye, The Shadow had started the faked circumstances that had made Jericho private bodyguard for Lingo Queed. While holding the dangerous throne of big shot, The Shadow had an agent by him. No spies present to mooch in on The Shadow's calls over his private telephone; no chance for would-be assassins to sneak in—for Jericho had been instructed to do all that Lingo told him.

The trap at Koy Dow's had been framed by The Shadow to ensnare The Shadow. A clever arrangement with the Chinaman whereby The Shadow could mysteriously rescue Harry Vincent when the agent was placed there as bait. Koy Dow had told The Shadow of that exit below.

After the supposed trapping, Koy Dow had waited for The Shadow to return as Lingo Queed, knowing that there would be trouble when the trap was found empty.

As Lingo, The Shadow had beaten Buzz Dongarth to the shot. Then Koy Dow and his Chinese henchmen had taken up the battle, that The Shadow might depart.

Originally, The Shadow had planned to maintain his role of Lingo Queed; to square things for Koy Dow, if possible—at least to preserve his own position. Such, until he could get at Rook Hollister.

With his rescue of Harry Vincent, The Shadow had learned where Rook was hiding out. He had also gained news that Clyde Burke was a prisoner. The Shadow had promptly made new plans.

But Rook, as his lips mouthed a defiant snarl, was thinking of something else. He realized that his deductions had been but half right. The Shadow had slain Trip Burley, as Rook had guessed. Lingo Queed had profited by taking credit. The entire sequence, however, had been The Shadow's lone craft.

After planting his .45 on Manthell's body, The Shadow had seen opportunity for himself as Lingo Queed. He needed another gun to stage his bluff with the lieutenants. As The Shadow, he had departed, taking Rook's initialed gun, which would not do in the frame-up. As Lingo, he had returned with a .38. He had exchanged it for Trip's .32 and had replaced it afterward.

As Rook stood glaring at The Shadow, he realized the cloaked victor's purpose. The Shadow had eliminated the actual murderer of Donald Manthell: namely, Trip Burley. Since then, he had given the law its innings.

To cap that campaign, he was willing that the police should gain the big shot who was actually responsible for Manthell's death. Rook Hollister had feigned death; ironically, The Shadow intended to let him live. The thought griped Rook.

Bart Koplín was tense and glowering. In Bart, Rook saw an ally who could serve as dupe as well. Furiously, Rook spat an order for a vain attack.

Thinking that Rook was with him, Bart leaped viciously upon The Shadow.

As the foolhardy private dick came squarely into the path of the gun muzzle, Rook sprang behind him.

The Shadow had no alternative. He had to clear Bart in order to get at Rook. One automatic barked. The slug found Bart's body; but the heavy-jowled private dick kept on coming.

Bart fought like a wounded bull as he clutched at The Shadow's weapons. He grabbed one automatic as it aimed at Rook. The Shadow's shot boomed wide as Rook dived headlong toward the door that led to

the stairway.

Bart sagged suddenly. The Shadow whirled clear of him.

Leaving Clyde Burke in charge of Prexy, who was still groggy, The Shadow swept in pursuit. Rook was halfway down the staircase when The Shadow reached the top. There was no chance for a shot at present.

The Shadow hastened downward; he gained ground while Rook was opening the lower door. As the big shot sprang into the vacated passage, The Shadow reached the bottom of the stairs.

Brawlers were subsiding. Shouts still came from portions of the Roof Cafe; but the tide had moved elsewhere. Momentarily clear, Rook yanked a revolver from his pocket and faced about to aim at the stairs. The big shot wanted to get The Shadow; but the cloaked avenger had expected him to turn.

Holding to the darkness of the stairway, The Shadow was taking aim, his cloaked form deep in the gloom of the steps. Rook was backing toward the door of the service elevator. The Shadow was prepared to spring out upon him.

Then came an interruption. The door of the service elevator banged open. Joe Cardona, a revolver in hand, sprang into view as Rook turned at the noise. Astonishment showed on the face of the ace detective as Joe saw the big shot whom he believed was dead.

Rook Hollister snarled as he aimed for Joe Cardona. The detective swung his gun muzzle toward Rook. Fingers reached triggers simultaneously. It was a situation such as Cardona had falsely pictured at Rook Hollister's apartment; where two fighters stood well prepared to wipe out each other.

In the split-second before the instant of the coming duel, a flash tongued from the stairway. The spurt of flame was accompanied by the roar of an automatic. Hard upon The Shadow's shot came the bark of a revolver as Joe Cardona fired point-blank at Rook Hollister.

The big shot never delivered the bullet that he had intended for Joe Cardona. Winged by The Shadow, Rook had faltered. The Shadow's slug had clipped Rook's aiming arm; Cardona's leaden pellet had found the big shot's evil heart.

TURNING, The Shadow had headed up the stairs before Joe Cardona could reach the open door. The detective suspected trouble up above; followed by a squad, he was starting to investigate.

Up in the living room of the high apartment, Clyde Burke saw The Shadow enter. The reporter heard pounding footsteps from below; he nodded as he listened to hissed instructions that sounded incongruous from the faked lips of Lingo Queed.

Clyde was to tell his story. Bart Koplín, wounded; Prexy Storlick, stunned, would be prey for the law. Clyde could tell Joe Cardona the odd circumstances that had brought him here. With Harry Vincent out of the picture, there would be no need for mention of The Shadow's part.

Regaining his slouch hat, The Shadow affixed it to his head. Clyde Burke heard a whispered taunt of triumph. Staring, the agent saw his chief sweep out through the open door to the broad promenade. By the griffon pillar, The Shadow attached the wheeled carrier. Then Clyde quickly closed the door and turned to greet the incoming detectives.

DOWN through the night, a cloaked figure was speeding along a slender track of stout steel wire. The Shadow reached the end of his swift journey. His shape blended with the blackness that shaded the twentieth floor of the Hotel Framton.

Deft fingers wrenched the end of the wire from the stone block and let it swing out into the street. The Shadow again scaled the steplike bulwarks until he reached the spot four floors above. There he released the upper end of the tracklike wire.

Gloved hands coiled the wire inward. The Shadow was bringing in the evidence of his two swift flights through space. Blended with blackness, he could view the forms of men on the open front of the Roof Cafe.

Cliff Marsland, Harry Vincent, Hawkeye—all three were there. With others who had participated in the mad brawl, they were explaining things to the hotel employees. All seemed satisfied now that the fray was over.

Soon The Shadow's agents would learn that Clyde Burke was safe. They had played their part to aid their chief. Men of the law had gained the hideout where Rook Hollister had dwelt.

Victory belonged to that shrouded master who clung aloft against the huge bulk of the towering skyscraper. From the blackness of his vantage place, The Shadow viewed the aftermath of triumph.

A passing breeze caught the echoes of a whispered laugh. Rising, that mirth broke clear, into a strange uncanny crescendo that sounded like a voice from the Beyond.

The Shadow's agents heard a ghostly taunt which they recognized. As other persons started, wondering, those agents knew that their cause had been won.

Joe Cardona, too, caught the echoes of that chilling mirth as he swung open the door and stepped out to the penthouse promenade. But as he approached the rail and stared into the night, the ace detective could not discern the spot from which the triumph tone had come.

Invisible in his chosen spot of blackness, The Shadow was the conqueror who had ended crime's regime. With the ending of Lingo Queed's rule, the underworld empire was shattered. Yet none, not even Joe Cardona, would learn what had become of the last overlord in gangland's short-lived dynasty.

The identity of Lingo Queed had passed forever. Vengeful mobsters would look in vain for the monarch who had carried them into calamity. For the exploits of Lingo Queed had been the exploits of The Shadow.

THE END