

500 FOOTBALLS FOR THRILLER READERS

# THE THRILLER

LIBRARY WEEKLY

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TEN SAPPHIRES — STOLEN  
FROM AN INDIAN TEMPLE!

WHEREVER THEY WENT  
DEATH FOLLOWED, UNTIL 'THE  
SHADOW' EXPOSED THE SECRET  
OF THE MAN FROM MANDALAY

*A Powerful,  
Long, Complete  
'Shadow' Story*

By MAXWELL GRANT

## The MAN FROM MANDALAY



# The MAN FROM

## A POWERFUL, LONG COMPLETE SHADOW STORY

### Chapter 1.

#### A PERFECT CRIME.

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

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

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

A sly countenance, with a brutal mouth and glittering, murderous eyes. The crook was Sam Baron. He was a gunman for a powerful underworld gang that specialised in "hot ice"—that is, jewel robberies. Carton had arrested Baron several times, but had never been known to pin a single jewel theft on him.

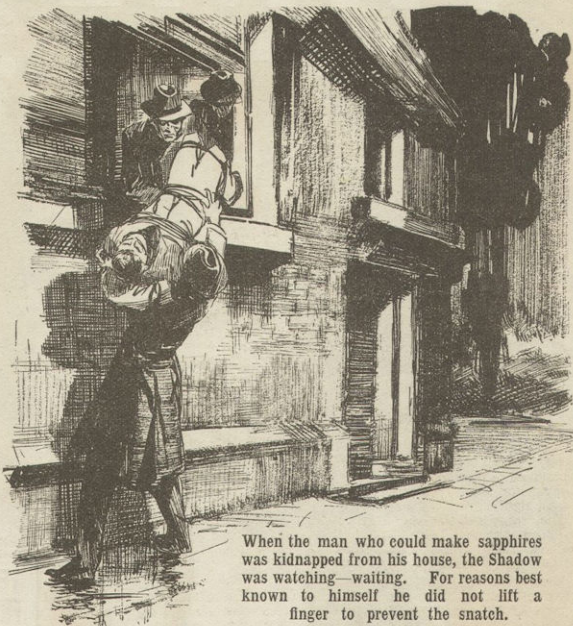
A fence through whom Baron worked remained unknown. So was the actual leader of this clever gang of thieves. Insurance detectives were as baffled as Carton. And no wonder! Not even Sam Baron himself knew who his big-shot boss was.

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

Drexel, the butler, was the only person who would normally be in the house at this time. But a fake 'phone call had sent Drexel off on a wild-goose chase.

That left Sam Baron approximately fifteen minutes before Rodney Mason would arrive home with Isabel Pyne. Baron knew they were on their way now. Acting on orders from his unknown chief, Baron had gone to a celebrated night club and had sat near the table where Rodney Mason was entertaining the beautiful Miss Pyne. He had been able to overhear their conversation.

Baron had heard Mason beg Isabel to drive out to his home for a quiet talk before they ended a pleasant evening.



When the man who could make sapphires was kidnapped from his house, the Shadow was watching—waiting. For reasons best known to himself he did not lift a finger to prevent the snatch.

He had said there was something he wanted to tell her. Isabel had hesitated. Then Mason had told her about his private chemical laboratory. He had promised to show her something in the line of jewels that was worth seeing. Laughingly, the young chemist had alluded to the stodgy presence of his butler, Drexel, as a chaperone.

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

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

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

Mason's laboratory was in a ground-floor wing of the cottage, just beyond the chemist's living-room and study. The crook's electric torch probed the dark room, passing swiftly across a bewildering array of apparatus. His attention focused itself on a safe in the corner.

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

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

The crook slipped on gloves and removed all marks of his finger-tips from the safe door. He began to move swiftly about the room, searching for a secret safe and careful to disarrange nothing in his search.

Suddenly, he heard a sound from the front door; the grate of a key in the lock! Instantly Sam Baron snapped off his torch and put it back in his pocket. Rodney Mason and Isabel Pyne had arrived.

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

"Here's to the loveliest girl in London!"

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

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

"Of course not, Rodney! But I really can't stay. It isn't quite proper."

"Please!" Mason sounded boishly



# MANDALAY BY MAXWELL GRANT

**To own one of the sacred sapphires meant death!  
But was the killer really the angry goddess from  
the East or a hireling of The Man from Mandalay?  
Only one man could answer that question. Only  
one man did answer it—The SHADOW!**



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

"All right."

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

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

Isabel Pyne was a vision of gorgeous loveliness. She was aware that the shimmering gown outlined her attractive figure, and she enjoyed Mason's breathless admiration. But her voice was calm and matter-of-fact when she asked:

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

"Just a moment."

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

Isabel Pyne gasped with delight.

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

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

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

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

Mason explained.

"All these synthetic stones are hybrids—sapphires with a faint trace of ruby

in them. They are useless as jewels until I can find out what's wrong with my experimental methods. I've been two years on this problem, but the stones are still commercially valueless.

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

Isabel shivered a little.

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

The chemist smiled.

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

Isabel nodded.

The two went out to the living-room. Presently they left the house. There was the faint echo of a motor, then silence flooded the house and the grounds outside.

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

In a moment, the synthetic gems poured from their chamois bag into the itching palm of Sam Baron.

The thief knew nothing about chemistry or heat. He knew less about atoms. But he did know that Rodney Mason was a

fool. And so was that girl with the alluring figure. Both of them thought that these manufactured sapphires were valueless. Sam Baron knew different!

He knew that the stones that lay in his good palm were worth the pleasant sum of half a million pounds!

Hastily Baron crammed them back into the bag. He stowed the bag in an inside pocket. A swift glance around the laboratory showed him that he had left no tell-tale marks of his presence to reveal his identity to the police.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The window of the laboratory opened without a squeak. Baron lifted the wrapped corpse carefully over the sill and lowered it down to the lawn; then his beady eyes made a last careful survey of the laboratory. Not a single article of furniture was out of place; not a single betraying drop of crimson marred the floor or the window sill.

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

Baron's car was parked under an overhang of shrubbery in a side lane. He placed the body in the back seat and drove off swiftly. His goal was a pond—lonely and deep—some eight miles away. Mason would take it for granted that a trusted servant had fallen for temptation. And the presence of Sam Baron in the riddle would never be suspected.

Baron hurried back to his car and slid jauntily behind the wheel. All he had



to do was to turn the sapphires over to Otto Muller. Muller would pass them along to the unknown big-shot. Neither Baron nor Otto Muller knew who their powerful boss was. Nor did they care. Not when they were to get a slice of half a million in loot!

#### THE DOG GODDESS.

LAMONT CRANSTON was sitting in the lounge of the famous Cobalt Club, reading an evening newspaper. He was watching a man who sat uneasily nearby, smoking a thinly rolled, foreign-looking cigar. This man's name was Senor Ramon Ortega. He was living temporarily at the Cobalt Club as a privileged guest. His home was in Singapore. He was a wealthy Spanish rubber planter on holiday.

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

He was convinced that Ramon Ortega was a suave criminal!

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

Lamont Cranston was the Shadow!

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

Baron, Cranston knew, was a gunman for a gang of jewel thieves. But the fence through whom Baron worked was unknown. So was the mysterious super-criminal who led the gang. Now, at last, Cranston was aware of a strange fact; Senor Ortega had been secretly in touch with Sam Baron. That was the news that Cliff Marsland had relayed to him, through Burbank.

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

Vincent was the oldest agent of the Shadow in point of service. He would do well on this important job.

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

"Burbank speaking."

"Report."

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

"Report received. Stand by."

Why should Ortega first hire a killer like Sam Baron, then coolly visit Joe Carton? It puzzled Cranston. So did something else.

Cranston had a queer feeling that he had seen Ortega somewhere else. Far from London. Yet he had been unable to remember where.

He waited in his room, eyes closed, sunk

in deep thought. Then again his telephone rang.

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

Five minutes later he was in his car, speeding towards Carton's flat.

Joe Carton's face was expressionless as he ushered Cranston into his living-room and introduced him to Ortega. The Spaniard was blandness itself. He shook hands as though he had never before in his life seen this wealthy man-about-town. He sank back in a leather chair and lighted another of his long, foreign cigars.

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

Cranston's eyes closed as if in boredom, while Carton fizzed soda into glasses. He

his trembling fingers. His face was twisted with loathing.

Carton gave a grunt of amazement.

"What the devil—"

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

"Your name is not really Ortega, is it? You are not a Spaniard. You are a Mohammedan. That's why you couldn't bear the defiling touch of pigskin leather. Your real name is Ali Singh, and you are the Maharajah of Rajakumana. Why are you in London incognito, your highness?"

Ortega gasped. He swung towards Carton; his voice like a whiplash.

"How much does this man know?"

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

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

Ortega was still glaring at his smiling visitor.

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

"Naturally."

Ortega took a small parcel from his pocket. He unwrapped it reverently and handed something to Cranston that flamed with a deep, burning blue in the millionaire's palm. It was a huge sapphire. Cranston held it to the light. In the centre of the stone was a fleck of red, like an imprisoned drop of blood.

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

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

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

"The thief escaped. The rest of the sacred sapphires vanished with him to England—London. Who the thief is, I do not know. But I know he has sold the stones separately to wealthy collectors."

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

Ortega nodded.

"No one but the priests of the temple and my eldest son are aware of the theft. For my people to know would be to risk bloodshed, revolution. They would think—and think rightly—that the gods have abandoned their maharajah. The Ten-year Vigil comes to an end this year. The scattered sapphires of that holy necklace must be found and returned to the Dog goddess before then."

"If not?" Carton asked.

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

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

"The mine," Ortega said harshly, "is no longer in existence. Out of the hundreds of sapphires taken from it, only twenty-one had the sacred drop of blood in the depths of the gems. There can never be more. For when the twenty-first blood sapphire was blessed and borne to the temple, the Dog goddess stamped

### NEXT WEEK

## NORMAN CONQUEST

is taken for a ride in

### Berkeley Gray's

brilliant, long complete story

## THE PHANTOM TRAIN

(See page 394 for full details.)

could see hot, blinding sunlight; streets packed with frenzied natives. A white marble temple, whose roof was solid gold. And on the altar within that temple, the sacred statue of a grim goddess—a statue that was carved from a single block of solid gold! The head was that of a snarling dog. But the rest of the body glowed with the exquisite loveliness of a nude, golden woman!

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

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

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

Cranston opened his eyes slowly. He smiled as he took the drink Carton handed him. He nodded to Senor Ortega. "That's a nice comfortable chair you picked," he said quietly. "The leather is a really excellent grade of pigskin."

Ortega gave a choked cry. He leaped from the chair as though he had been struck. His glass fell to the rug from



her golden foot and an earthquake destroyed all trace of the mine."

"Butter Baron nor Cranston smiled at the thought of a nude golden statue stamping its lifeless foot. There was a blaze of fanaticism in Ortega's eyes that deterred them.

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

"No."

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

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

Cranston frowned.

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

Ortega's smile was edged like a knife. "The goddess will strike, not I. She will strike this very night! Where, or at whom, I have no knowledge. But to-night some guilty man will die because he holds one of those sacred blood sapphires! You don't believe me? Wait!"

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

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

All that night Cranston kept close watch on Ortega's room. But he saw nothing to justify his vigil. Ortega never left his room.

Cranston had a queer feeling that, somehow, he had failed. Had murder actually been committed somewhere in the darkness of London while he waited impatiently?

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

#### THE GREY MR. FRICK.

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

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

The sound that had startled him had come from his inner study. It was the muffled echo of a dog's bark!

Randolph stepped to a bureau and snatched a pistol from a drawer. He was moving stealthily towards the door of his study when he halted abruptly. Footsteps were audible outside in the corridor.

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

"Are—are you quite all right? I—I

thought I heard you cry out," he gasped.

"I thought something was wrong!" Randolph's eyes flicked briefly towards the closed study door.

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

"A bark, sir? I heard no dog."

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

Parker backed out of the library, his well-trained face wooden. Peter Randolph whipped his gun from his pocket. He tiptoed to the closed door of his study and threw open the door. His finger clicked on the lights. The study was empty.

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

Suddenly he heard a cold chuckle of amusement.



The millionaire's butler opened the door when Sam Baron rang the bell. After that it was a long time before he remembered anything.

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

"Good evening, Mr. Randolph. David Frick is my name."

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

Frick laughed at the threat. He moved quietly towards a chair and sat down. He took an expensive cigar from Randolph's ivory box and lighted it.

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

Randolph uttered a choking sound.

"—I don't know what you're—talking about!"

"The stone I want is a large sapphire. It's not really a perfect sapphire, because in its centre is a fleck of crimson, like a

smear of blood. You bought the stone secretly, because you knew it was stolen property. You paid a thousand pounds for it."

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

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

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

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

"And if I don't?"

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

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

Randolph's gun remained steady.

"Never heard of him."

"You should," Frick purred. "His real name is His Highness All Singh. He is the Maharajah of Rajkumana. You're in danger from the vengeance of the Dog goddess of Rajkumana, from whose nude golden body the Necklace of Purity was stolen."

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

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

"You're no detective. You're a crook—and you can get out of here! The fact that I want no publicity is the only reason why you are escaping a bullet or arrest. Get out—the same way you sneaked in!"

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

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

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

Randolph's glance strayed towards his jewel safe in the corner of the room. Something about it seemed to reassure him. He laughed grimly, and poured himself a drink.

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

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

He had seen a parked car at the kerb outside the low fence that bordered the property of the millionaire. A man was getting out of that car. A man whom David Frick instantly recognised. He glided stealthily up the drive. The light from the glass-panned door fell across his grim features.

The man was Sam Baron. He held a black-jack beneath his coat,



Baron's left hand coolly pressed the bell button.

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

Baron's left hand caught him by the throat. The savage grip choked off Parker's scream, and the next instant the victim was shoved backwards into the hall. The black-jack rose and fell with a sickening force, but he didn't fall. Sam Baron's grip held him upright. Sam Baron slowly the door opened. Baron whistled softly. His whistle was echoed from the dark sidewalk; then a man slid inward to the grounds. He raced noiselessly to where Baron was holding the senseless butler, his foot keeping the door from closing.

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

"Yes. Nobody in sight."

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

Sam Baron was back in the hall. Not a sound came from within the quiet mansion. Baron began to tiptoe down the hall. Inside the study was Peter Randolph—and a safe that contained a priceless blood sapphire.

And no witnesses!

But Sam Baron was mistaken. There was a witness. Not inside the mansion, but outside. Hidden behind a black clump of shrubbery, the suave David Frick was grinning in the darkness. His grin was, if anything, more coldly murderous than the leer on Sam Baron's face.

#### THE MUTED BEAST.

THE black-jack was no longer in Baron's hand. He had replaced it in its special pocket. His fingers were all he needed now. He threw the study door suddenly open.

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

Fingers closed on the throat of the millionaire. Two murderous hands were methodically choking Peter Randolph to death. When they finally let go, Peter Randolph was dead.

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

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

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

The holes were too small to peer through. There was no sign of wires or any kind of electrical connection. It couldn't be a trap with a photo-electric eye. Baron was smart enough to be aware of every type of burglar alarm.

Satisfied, Sam Baron whispered to himself:

"Let's go!"

It took him ten minutes to open the lock. It took him another sixty seconds to nerve himself to open the door. Before he did so, he jerked a knife from its scabbard. He didn't know why he did that.

The safe door swung wide. Baron peered eagerly into the black interior.

The next instant he gave a terrified scream and flung himself backwards.

From the safe a crouched dog launched itself at the burglar!

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

Baron felt tearing pain, the warm gush of blood. But the agony was in his forearm, not his throat.

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

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

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

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

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

He rolled over and over towards the dead body of Peter Randolph. He grabbed at the corpse and jerked the dead millionaire upwards into a sitting position. Shielded grotesquely, Baron waited.

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

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

The beast sprang!

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

Baron's knife swept downwards. It buried itself in the dog's body. Again and again Baron struck. He staggered backwards.

The dog lay dead alongside the body of Peter Randolph.

Baron's eyes moved from the dog to its dead master. The dog's final attack had ripped Randolph's dead throat.

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

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

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

The last ounce of superstitious fear left Sam Baron.

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

Baron placed the stolen jewel carefully in his pocket. From another pocket he

drew a second sapphire. It was an exact duplicate of the first. Baron had stolen it along with eleven others from the chemical research laboratory of Rodney Mason.

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

As he bent to do so, the blind on the tall window behind him moved slightly. Eyes were peering into the room.

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

Sam Baron was staring grimly at a dead bulldog and a corpse with a torn throat. A sudden idea glowed like flame in the murderer's clever brain.

No one, except possibly Parker, the butler, could have known that a living dog had been kept in the safe to ward off burglars. And Parker was already disposed of, and wouldn't even be in the country to talk. Squint and another gangster were handing him over to men who would put him aboard a foreign tramp steamer due to sail that night.

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

Peter Randolph was merely one victim. There would be others, as soon as Randolph's supernatural death scared other millionaire collectors into the open.

They'd either attempt to dispose of their sapphires through some underworld fence, or try to get police protection under some pretext. In either case, Baron's gang would have leads to the rest of the scattered sapphires.

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

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

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

"What've you got there?" he growled.

"A dead dog?"

"Shut up!" Baron snarled savagely.

"Get this car moving in a hurry! Step on it, Turk!"

The car slid away. It gathered speed and vanished into the night.

But David Frick had noted the number of the car!

#### THE DOPED GIRL.

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

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

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



most famous jeweller. He knew, also, that she was on very friendly terms with a young research chemist named Rodney Mason. He wondered what sort of a fix a pretty girl like that could get herself into.

Isabel Pyne was wondering, too. She sat tensely in a speeding taxi, and there was fear in her heart. Occasionally she spoke nervously to her driver. Isabel was convinced she was being trailed!

She had first noticed the saloon car a mile or so near town, had noted that the driver seemed to be a swartly foreigner.

The girl's taximan, however, was a clever driver—and his cleverness was increased by a pound note the frightened girl passed to him. He wove a swift, confused pattern through the streets. Somewhere on that dizzy flight he lost the saloon car completely.

Again Isabel Pyne gave him the address of her flat. But she added low-voiced instructions. The taxi went round to the back of the building. She entered by a door which Harry Vincent could not see.

She reached her own floor without being seen. Had she been questioned as to her climb up the stairs, it would have sounded silly to say that she had been frightened by a dark-skinned foreigner in a saloon car.

And yet—she was frightened!

Isabel felt quick relief as she unlocked her kitchen door and closed it behind her. Then she uttered a choked scream; but the cry died instantly on her lips. She stood paralysed, staring at the black muzzle of an automatic pistol.

The man was David Frick.

Isabel cringed backwards.

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

"Nobody's going to kill you, lady!" Frick said huskily. "All I want is information. Tell me everything you know about Rodney Mason."

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

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

"What's your interest in Rodney Mason?" she managed to blurt out.

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

"Maybe David Frick wants to make use of this smart Mr. Mason. I happen to know he's in love with you. I reckon that with a little information, I'll be able to kidnap him without much fuss. If you don't talk I'll kidnap you! Either way, Mason will have to play ball with me. Well?"

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

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

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

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

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

"I understand."

"You will obey whatever orders I give you."

"I will obey."

Her voice sounded drowsy, like a sleep-walker's. The drug she had swallowed was a distilled derivative of Indian hemp. It had robbed her of every atom of her will. She stood like a wax dummy. He brought her cloak from the bed-room, and she donned it over her evening gown. He walked her quietly to the kitchen.

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

Grinning he threw the door open.

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

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

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

"Drop your gun—or I'll blast you!"

Harry Vincent laughed at the threat. He knew that Frick dared not risk the explosive roar of gunfire in that quiet flat.

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

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

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

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

Vincent spun about to follow him. Then he halted. Isabel clutched at her throat, moaning. Then she pitched to the floor.

Quickly Vincent bent over her, sniffed at her parted lips. He knew enough about drugs to recognise a powerful hashish derivative from the odour on the girl's

stiffened lips. She had been forced to swallow a strong tincture of the dreaded East Indian bhang. The pupils of her eyes were like tiny pin points.

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

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

Gently, Vincent questioned her. There wasn't much she could tell. She didn't remember anything that had happened after she had swallowed the drug.

Harry Vincent shook his head gently at her puzzled questions. He didn't tell her who he was, or how he had happened to be on the stairs outside her flat. Actually he had seen the lights go on and knew she had returned. He had raved up the stairs, driven by a queer presentiment of evil.

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

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

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

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

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

Mechanically, the girl walked to the front door and took in her newspaper. She was still dazed, hardly aware of what she was doing. But one glance at the black headlines of the newspaper whirled all drowsiness from her brain. Murder!

A millionaire named Peter Randolph had been horribly and mysteriously slain the night before. His throat had been torn out by a ghostly dog. He had been found with an ill-fated stone in his dead hand—a sapphire with a fleck of blood in its centre. The newspaper called it a "blood sapphire."

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

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



Baron opened the safe, then recoiled in alarm as a dog leapt out on him with bared fangs. It was the last sort of burglar alarm Baron had expected.



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

#### THE GRIM STOWAWAY.

LAMONT CRANSTON visited Joe Carton in his office at Scotland Yard. Senior Ortega was there, indignant to hear that the police were baffled.

"I sent for you, Mr. Cranston," said Joe, "because you know something about jewels." He passed a gleaming sapphire across the desk. "Take a look at that and let me have your opinion. Is it genuine?"

Cranston examined the gem, then glanced up thoughtfully.

"Where did you get it?" he asked. "From the hand of a murdered man," said Carton grimly. "Randolph?" queried Cranston. And Carton nodded.

Cranston shrugged his shoulders. "This gem," he said, "has the reddish smear in the centre like the sapphires that were stolen from the goddess in India. But it would take a very clever man to pronounce it genuine. Let me have it for a while, and I will make inquiries elsewhere."

Carton assented, and Cranston left the Yard. He visited Julius Hankey, in his office in Hatton Garden.

Hankey took one look at the sapphire and paled visibly.

"I know those sapphires!" he said hoarsely. "And they mean death to the man who holds them. It's genuine, Cranston, but take it out of here, and don't let anyone know you've brought it to me."

Cranston left him to his fears, but he knew that the sapphire was false. There was a strange conspiracy going on, and the issue was rendered more confusing when Vincent reported the attack on Isabel Pyne.

Who was the unknown master-criminal behind this fake supernatural campaign?

In his sanctum in Hanover Square the Shadow's pen inscribed six names on the blank sheet of paper before him.

"Sam Baron—Cliff Marsland  
David Frick—Harry Vincent  
Ramon Ortega—Lamont Cranston."

Marsland, planted in Sam Baron's gang, was covering one angle of the mystery. Harry Vincent had already had a desperate brush with the grey-faced scoundrel who called himself David Frick. Lamont Cranston had personal contact with the suave Senior Ortega.

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

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

"Rodney Mason  
Isabel Pyne."

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

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

"Burbank speaking."  
"Report!"  
"Message received from Cliff Marsland.

Baron's gang planning to kidnap Rodney Mason. Exact details later."

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

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

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

Chemist—molecules—sapphires!  
Soft laughter of the Shadow pierced the sanctum.

It was past noon when Rodney Mason awoke. He swung his bare feet to the floor. He was still worried about Drexel. The butler hadn't turned up since his disappearance two nights ago.

Rodney frowned. He decided to have a bath and dress. Fully clothed, he opened the front door of his house, picked up the morning newspaper that had been lying there for hours.

One glance at the headlines, and his calmness deserted him. The whole front page of the paper was black with the story of the horrible murder of Peter Randolph.

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

Dropping the newspaper, Mason raced to his laboratory. He swung outwards the shelf that concealed the tiny vault in the wall. His muscular hand explored the interior. His sapphires were gone.

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

He learned about the stolen Necklace of Purity; read of the legend of evil connected with those sacred gems missing from a pagan altar in India. His laugh was harsh as he read about the vengeance of a nude golden goddess with the head of a snarling dog.

"Rot!" he snarled under his breath. The thing that interested him most was the fact that Randolph's butler was missing. The disappearance of Parker was an exact duplicate of the vanishing of Drexel.

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

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

"Rodney, have you ever heard of a man named David Frick?"  
Mason's eyes gleamed. He didn't reply for a moment. Then:

"No. I've never heard of him. Who is he?"

Isabel described the vicious attack that had been made on her the night before. Mason was grimly interested in the man who had foiled the attack. He made

Isabel describe Harry Vincent's appearance. He listened carefully.

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

"Rodney, exactly where were you last night?"

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

"I did! There was no answer."  
Mason's eyes blinked. He covered the mistake smoothly.

"That's funny! My bell didn't ring. I've had trouble with my 'phone lately."  
"Oh!" said Isabel.

"I don't think you had better tell the police about this," Mason advised gently. "You don't want to be drawn into a sensational murder case. There is no need for anyone to know that you saw my synthetic sapphires. Suppose you let me handle this?"

"All—all right, Rodney."  
"I'll come round and see you soon. Keep quiet about everything. And don't forget, darling—I love you!"

Mason rang off. His smile deepened. He murmured in a low tone to himself:

"And now for the police."  
But when he again lifted the 'phone a voice stiffened him.

"Drop that 'phone, stupid! Turn round!"

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

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

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

"Keep those hands up high!"  
There was no fear in Mason's eyes, merely a cold watchfulness.

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

"This bloke knows too much," Squint interrupted. "Let's bump him off and be done with it."

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

"The first one who tries to plug Mason gets a slug from my gun! We ain't killing this fellow. We need him in our business. A man who can fake jewels as neat as he can, is worth a devil of a lot more to us as a live proposition. This is a kidnapping job. Take him, boys!"

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

Sam Baron chuckled.  
"Very nice! Squint, stay here. Turk, you go downstairs and out at the back. Tell Pete everything is O.K. in here. Find out if it's safe to walk out of here."

Turk left the room.  
"Pete is probably asleep under a bush, the lazy devil," Squint grinned. "I never saw such a sleepy bloke in all my life!"  
But Pete wasn't asleep. Events unknown to the gangsters had snapped Pete to a tense watchfulness. He heard the hissing whisper:  
"Marsland!"



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

The Shadow!

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

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

Some he was able to answer. Others he was not. The gang had not taken Pete fully into its confidence. He had no knowledge where the hide-out was located. That was Sam Baron's secret. The car they were going to use for the kidnaping was parked in the lane behind the house.

Suddenly the Shadow vanished. Cliff Marsland knew why, as his attention was jerked back towards the house. Feet were descending the rear stairs.

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

"What a boy! You're supposed to be a look-out, dopey!"

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

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

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

Lamont Cranston—the Shadow—had already attained his objective. He was crouched in utter darkness. He had slipped inside the dickey at the back of the car.

Mason was taken to the rear of a Soho delicatessen shop. Cranston managed to leave the car as it slowed down at a corner near by. He watched the proceedings, but did not interfere with them. Marsland had told him that the shop would not be the final destination for Mason. There was another hide-out in the country which, as yet, Marsland knew only by repute. He had never been there. Cranston hoped that the crooks would lead him to this other headquarters when they took Mason there.

His wishes were gratified. Half an hour later, when a car left Soho, Cranston was in a taxi with Moe Shrevnitz at the wheel, following them.

#### BEHIND THE BROWN BEARD.

MULLER'S delicatessen was crowded. Two assistants behind a long counter were having their hands full serving customers. They paid no particular attention to Sam Baron.

Sam seemed in no hurry. His eyes remained dull as he stared briefly at two things that had brought him to this busy store.

One was a dingy door at the back of the shop. The other was a mechanical piano that stood near the lunch tables along the side wall.

Baron sauntered over to the piano. It was a penny-in-the-slot variety. Behind a glass panel was a card with a printed list of the selections that the piano played. A lever at the side moved a pointer to the

various popular tunes to which a person might listen.

Baron grinned faintly when he saw that No. 9 on the list had been covered by a slip of paper. On the pasted paper was a typewritten line in smudged capital letters:

"OUT OF ORDER."

It was to this particular line that Sam Baron moved the selection lever. He dropped a coin into the slot. Evidently the sign meant nothing, for the piano immediately began to play.

Baron was not surprised. He knew that the printed warning was merely a ruse to keep ordinary customers from playing a tune that was a password to a criminal fence.

The tune was a popular one: "I've seen diamonds in Amsterdam—"

When the tune was finished Baron glanced towards the door at the rear of the shop. It opened almost instantly. A man in a white apron entered from a rear room. He had friendly, wrinkled eyes and a brown, bearded face.

Baron nodded to him.

"Good-evening, Mr. Muller."

"Good-evening, sir. Haff you been waited on?"

"I want a tin of sardines."

"Certainly."



Harry Vincent was helpless just long enough to give Frick time to dash down the stairs. The girl seemed to have gone mad.

He selected a tin from the shelf, began to wrap it in paper.

"Make sure that sardine tin has a key with it," Baron said. "The last one didn't."

Otto Muller chuckled genially.

"This one you will haff no trouble with."

Baron paid for his purchase and left the shop. He walked swiftly towards the corner. He had already ripped the bag away from the tin of sardines. The usual tiny key was attached to the top of the tin, but Baron paid no attention to it. He was grinning at a second key that had been deftly wrapped with the purchase by the wily Otto Muller. This was a large brass one.

Baron slipped it into his pocket. He tossed the sardines into a refuse bin and continued leisurely to the head of a dark, narrow alley. The alley led to a concrete courtyard at the rear of the delicatessen shop.

There was no back door leading from the store. But there was a slanting cellar door set in the concrete.

Glancing cautiously around, he made

sure that he was unobserved. Then he opened the cellar door with his brass key. A moment later he had descended from sight, locking the cellar door above his head.

The glow of his flashlight disclosed an empty room. Baron played his torch on the bare inner wall. He waited.

In a moment a section of the wall moved aside. A cheerful glow from within disclosed the smiling face of brown-bearded Otto Muller.

Baron walked through the opening. He found himself in a luxuriously furnished chamber. There were rugs on the floor, shaded lamps, every evidence of wealth and comfort. Sam grinned as he accepted an expensive cigar from Muller. It wasn't the first time he had been here.



Otto Muller was Baron's superior in an efficient criminal organization for the theft and disposal of precious stones. Muller's delicatessen was merely a blind to deceive the police.

Sam poured himself a drink of whisky from a bottle of Muller's.

"So what now?"

"Another job," Muller said grimly.

"To-night."

"Murder job?"

"Yes."

They used the word murder as casually as men discussing a haircut. Muller reached into a drawer and removed something wrapped in tissue paper. It was one of the synthetic blood sapphires that Baron had stolen from the laboratory of Rodney Mason.

"The name of the next victim is Andrew Shafter," Muller said. "He's the last millionaire collector that we absolutely know has one of the original blood sapphires. Your job is to steal the real gem and leave this fake one clutched in Shafter's dead hand. Andrew Shafter is going to have his throat torn out by a ghostly dog. A dog that no one will ever see! Take a look at this!"

Muller walked to a tall steel cabinet and unlocked it. He took out some-



## To My Readers

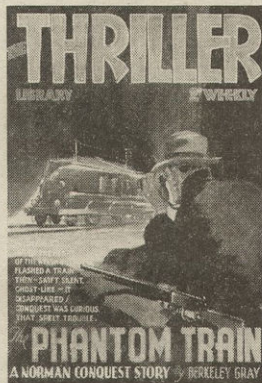
It was a haunted holiday! Norman Conquest—the incomparable 1066—was at great pains to give Joy Everard, his loyal pal, the most peaceful and enjoyable time possible, but the ghost of his past bobbed up to sling lead at him.

After all, a war with crookdom, once started, never stops. Even a well-earned holiday couldn't bring an armistice. The scene shifted—that was all. In the quiet fold of the Welsh hills there were crooks. They recognised Conquest as soon as they saw him, and resented him butting into their domain. They took it for granted that Norman's arrival meant trouble for them. Anyway, they started something, and Norman Conquest decided to finish it and lay the ghost.

Only the ghost was unique. No doubt about that. Imagine it—a lonely valley, a disused railway line, long since cut off from any main line, and an abandoned tunnel running through the heart of a mountain. On stormy nights, when the wind howled, came the weird thrumming of wheels on the ancient

metals. Through the wild night speeds a train—into the tunnel—out again. Then—whoosh!—it vanishes, no one knows where, when or how. Gates across the line were undamaged. The Phantom Train ignored obstacles.

But Norman Conquest was another sort of obstacle altogether, and any sort of ghost was just a pain in the neck to him. Since



crooks didn't want him in that valley, that was the reason why he stayed. Since a Phantom Train was running on the disused line he decided to book his ticket for the next excursion to wherever it went; and he didn't trouble about the return half!

Thus, a quiet holiday was suddenly changed into the brand of hectic adventure that Norman Conquest could never resist. And what happened on the second trip of the ghostly express you can find out for yourselves in next week's amazing, long complete NORMAN CONQUEST story, by Berkeley Gray, entitled, "THE PHANTOM TRAIN." Next week's issue of The Thriller Library is the ticket if it's thrills you want!

And don't miss the astounding climax of Anthony Parson's stirring Indian story, "BLOOD OF THE BORDER," in the same issue.

*The Editor*

Letters to the Editor should be addressed to: "The Thriller" Office, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

## THE MAN FROM MANDALAY

(Continued from previous page.)

thing that looked like an orchestra leader's baton. But the shaft of that strange implement was thick and solid. It was tipped at one end by five claws.

Sam Baron's breath gulped at sight of those shining claws. They were tempered steel, ground to sharp, ugly edges at the broad points. Sam picked up the instrument and hefted it in his muscular hand. He was not an imaginative man, but he could guess what would happen to a man's throat if those steel claws were hooked into soft flesh and ripped loose with a powerful jerk.

"You like it?" Muller whispered. "Can you guess what the police will think when they find Shafter's body? Can you guess what the newspapers will print? Every man, woman and child in London will be convinced that Andrew Shafter died from the same ghostly attack that killed Randolph!

"The criminal will be the nude, golden statue of a pagan goddess—a woman with the head of a snarling dog! The newspapers will say she was avenging the sacrilegious theft of the Necklace of Purity from her temple in India!"

With a shudder, Sam Baron eyed the deadly device in his hand.

"Where the devil did you get it?" he gazed.

"A little idea of the boss," Muller said huskily. "It came by messenger this afternoon. You've got to hand it to the big-

shot. Whoever he is, the man is a genius! He never misses a trick."

Baron nodded. He felt the same way. He grinned and returned to the subject of the blood sapphires.

"We've got ten of the real ones now. That makes eleven, after I finish Shafter to-night. There were twenty-one jewels in the original Necklace of Purity. Have you been able to find the ten stones that are still missing?"



Inside the room was Rodney Mason, gagged and bound to a chair.

"No," Muller admitted, and there was anger in his grunt. "Shafter's is the last I have any line on. That's why the boss wants us to work the supernatural stuff. We're depending on that to scare those ten unknown collectors who still hold sapphires.

"Some of 'em will be bound to try to get rid of their dangerous stones. They'll be afraid to go to the police, because the law would know they purchased stolen property. So they'll try to dispose of their sapphires in the underworld market."

"And?" Baron suggested.

"Any underworld contact they make will lead them to my door. I'm the only fence in the city who handles big-time stuff. I'll know how to handle them."

Baron took another drink of Muller's whisky, while the rascally delicatessen dealer wrapped up the steel-clawed implement of death.

Five minutes later Sam was outside the panel of Muller's ornate hiding-place. He was in the bare chamber that gave access to the slanting cellar door.

He opened the door, went out into the courtyard. A quick dodge took him through the dark alley to the street. He hailed a cab and drove quietly away.

Otto Muller returned to the shop by ways unknown to his assistants. He spoke in a slow, kindly voice to the men behind the counter.

"I'm leaving now. I may be back a little later in the evening. Goot night."

"Good-night, Mr. Muller."

The fence entered a taxi and was driven to the West End. But Muller didn't drive straight to his destination. At Oxford Circus he alighted and walked down the



busy thoroughfare. A second taxi carried him the rest of his journey.

His goal was a sedate second-class hotel in Bloomsbury.

Muller went straight to a room on the second floor. While he was there a startling change took place, for the man who came out was Julius Hankey, the famous Hatton Garden jeweller.

He drove straight to his Kensington home, and was surprised to find a very lovely girl waiting for him in the living-room. She sat on a sofa, with a pile of luggage at her feet.

"Isabel!" Hankey cried. "This is indeed a pleasant surprise! I—what's the matter?"

Isabel Pyne's face was pale. She threw nervous arms around her uncle. He saw that his pretty niece was frightened.

"May I stay with you for a few days?" she asked hurriedly. "I'm terribly worried! I'm afraid of something that—that—"

Julius Hankey laid a quick finger on her lips. He had noticed his butler was watching the girl curiously.

"You're tired, my dear," he told Isabel. "I think you had better lie down and rest. Bascom will show you to your room."

The butler bowed. Isabel followed him up the broad staircase. Hankey smiled as he watched Bascom and his niece go upstairs. When the two had vanished, Hankey's smile spilled into cautious sound. It became a grimly sardonic chuckle.

The next morning brought a thrill of horror and fear to every newspaper reader in London. Again the police were faced with a gruesome murder that seemed to point to a supernatural power. The morning newspapers were black with the headlines:

#### DOG GODDESS CLAIMS SECOND VICTIM

Andrew Shafter, Throat Torn, Dies Holding Ill-omened Sapphire.

Police Discount Supernatural Attack; Promise Early Arrest.

The news produced a terrific sensation. People shuddered at their breakfast tables, talked about it on their way to work.

Julius Hankey read every line about the case with grim amusement. When he had finished he rose quietly and made sure that the door of his study was locked. He picked up his telephone.

The 'phone was a private one, unconnected with the many other 'phones inside the house. It was impossible for Bascom, the butler, to listen in even if he were suspicious—which Hankey doubted.

The jeweller got through to Senor Ramon Ortega. His voice was not that of the dapper Julius Hankey when he spoke to Ortega. It was low-pitched, muffled, heavily

Teutonic. It was, in fact, the voice of Otto Muller.

"The ice has arrived O.K.," he reported. Ortega's distant voice trembled with eagerness.

"How many does that make?"

"Eleven. There should be twenty-one. Therefore, ten are still missing."

"Can you—find those others?"

"Of course! As soon as things quieten down I expect to be approached by people who will be eager to sell. Wait until you hear from me. Good-bye."

Julius Hankey left his palatial home. He was so intent on his thoughts that he did not realise he was being followed. Conceit had robbed him of his customary caution.

The person who followed Julius Hankey was a woman. A slim, lovely blonde of striking beauty. It was Isabel Pyne—Hankey's own niece! She trailed him from the other side of the street. There was anger and determination in her blue eyes.

Another man who was especially interested in the account of Andrew Shafter's strange death was David Frick.

Frick had his own ideas on the subject of the Dog goddess from India. He opened a safe, using a long and intricate combination that took nearly five minutes to release the steel bolts of his strong box.

He took a small chamois bag from the safe and spilled its contents on the table before him. The smooth table seemed suddenly to glow with blue flame. Sapphires! Ten of them! Each with a spot of crimson tucked away like a spot of blood in the heart of the stone.

He knew that these ten stones were genuine. They were the ten for which Otto Muller and his gang of killers were still searching. Not scattered, as Muller thought, but concentrated in the greyskinned hands of a shrewd and ruthless scoundrel.

Frick was out for big stakes. It would take more than a ghostly, golden statue with a dog's head to scare David Frick!

He placed the glittering sapphires back in his safe and locked it securely. He

was awaiting a visitor. The door-bell rang presently, and he admitted a breathless man.

His visitor was Ramon Ortega.

Ortega was twitching with repressed excitement. His low-toned voice was urgent. He told Frick that he had just had a telephone call from Otto Muller. The gang had recovered the eleventh sapphire from the unfortunate Andrew Shafter. They had promised to find the other ten without much further delay. What was Frick's advice?

"You're a detective," Ortega whispered huskily. "You told me you could outwit Muller's mob and recover the entire twenty-one sapphires without publicity or scandal."

"Correct. And I also promised you that the price for the returned necklace would not be the price that Muller asks—but exactly half that. In other words, you save a fortune, and I earn the same amount."

"But—"

"You can take my word," Frick said grimly, "that I have a pretty accurate idea where those last ten sapphires are hidden. I've unearthed a few facts that will wind up the case with a speed that may surprise you. Forget about Otto Muller and Sam Baron and the rest of those fools!"

"I'm afraid of Muller's unknown chief," Ortega admitted uneasily. "No one knows who he is—not even Muller. Who is he?"

"I'll tell you that, too, before long," Frick chuckled. "I must ask you to excuse me now. I have an important clue to investigate."

When Ortega was gone, Frick forced his thin lips into a smile.

"Private detective," he murmured. "That's funny! Before I finish with that fool of a rajah from dear old India, he'll pay me a jolly sight more than half a million quids for his twenty-one blood sapphires!"

His smile faded. He began to wonder grimly about the identity of the unknown leader who was behind Baron and Muller.

David Frick found himself suddenly shuddering. He cursed at himself for his weakness. It was hard to fight down the presentiment of evil that chilled his blood.

"O.K., Dog goddess!" he spat through twisted lips. "Let's see you scare me!" He put on his hat and walked out.

Rodney Mason, who was also vitally interested in the death of Andrew Shafter, saw no newspaper headlines.

In fact, he could see nothing!

He was in utter darkness. He lay on a hard wooden bunk inside a sealed room. He sat up with a groan, and there was a faint metallic rattle in the dark. There were more rattling clanks as he dragged himself painfully to his feet.

The man was chained.

But the chain that fettered him was long enough for him to move a few feet inside his black chamber. His feet dragged across a stone floor. He stared upwards at a tiny window.

He knew the window was there because he could see dimly a faint greysish square in the wall, protected by four iron bars set close together. A heavy shutter kept out all light.

As he turned away he whispered harshly:

"Damn them!"

He began to feel his way back to the hard surface of the wooden bunk in the wall. Suddenly he stopped. He had heard a low, rumbling sound followed by a coughing grunt.



That open door was probably a trap, but the Shadow had passed through it. Joe Carton and Marsland drew their guns and followed him.



Rodney Mason sniffed. He could smell faintly the fetid odour of an animal. A wild beast!

He shivered in the earthy darkness of his prison. The sound he had just heard was the coughing snarl of a tiger!

The Shadow was in his sanctum. Light from a single spot of electricity cast a pool of clear brilliance on the polished surface of the desk at which he sat.

There was a small pile of documents, papers, reports and neat cuttings from a dozen newspapers under the restless hands of the Shadow. He had read and digested all these papers.

The Shadow had learned much from Cliff Marsland. Harry Vincent's reports had told him more. It was like a jigsaw puzzle arranged by many hands separately, and then handed to an expert for the final assemblage.

The Shadow was ready to strike. Through his mind passed the figures of six people: Ortega—Frick—Sam Baron—Rodney Mason—Isabel Fyne—Otto Muller.

The Shadow was aware of a grim rendezvous of this gang headed by Otto Muller. He knew when and where the rendezvous would be. He suspected the identity of the most unusual criminal he had fought against in his entire career.

The Shadow had issued orders through Burbank, his contact man. Harry Vincent knew exactly what was expected of him. Inspector Joe Carton was also aware of things to be done. He was puzzled, but he would co-operate with Vincent. Carton always did.

The Shadow was content. Carton and Vincent would begin the attack this very night.

The rest was up to the Shadow!

#### THE SHADOW'S STONE.

Two men crouched alertly in the thick foliage that lined one side of a country road. The road was dark, the gloom only broken at intervals by arc lights along the road. There was a high stone wall on the other side, a light visible from behind a steel-barred gate in the wall almost directly opposite where the two men watched.

One of these observers was Inspector Joe Carton. The other was Harry Vincent. The spot that drew their watchful gaze was the lower hinge at the left side of that steel gate.

Harry Vincent was wearing rubber gloves. He knew that the gate was electrified. So were the sharp spikes of a metal fence that topped the stone wall. A single touch would bring a jagged spurt of electricity ripping through the body of an unfortunate trespasser.

"Ready?" Carton growled under his breath.

"Wait!" Harry Vincent said.

He was staring alertly at the luminous dial of his watch. It was still too early to move towards the hinge of the gate. Cranston had specified the exact time in the message that had come to Vincent through the unseen lips of Burbank.

The walled estate had been built in this desolate part of Essex for a necessary business reason. Up to within a year ago, it had been owned by a famous showman as one of several winter quarters for a well-known circus.

Deep inside these guarded walls were cages and dens where wild beasts spent the winter, awaiting the annual spring journey across country in the gaily painted motor-caravans.

A year ago, however, the land had been sold. The circus had moved its wild

animals to a site in Bedfordshire, where its main headquarters was located.

At least, such had been Carton's belief. Now he wasn't sure. For, from the deep blackness within the walled grounds, he had heard a sinister echo.

The throbbing roar of a wild beast!

Vincent's face was pale as he stared at Joe.

"I thought you said the circus sold this place last year?"

"They did."

"Who was the purchaser?"

"I don't know," Joe whispered. "I did my best to find out—and failed. The transaction was handled by an agent. Whoever brought the land had plenty of money—and plenty of shrewdness."

"For a moment both men were silent. Then Carton whispered again.

"What time is it now? I think we can—"

He was cut short by Vincent's warning hiss. Someone was cautiously approaching the lighted area outside the steel gate in the wall! Whoever he was, he had evidently left his car in the lonely lane a mile or so away. He was advancing slowly on foot.

Suddenly a figure became visible. It was Julius Hankey!

Thunderstruck, Carton stared at the aristocratic face of Hutton Garden's most well-known jeweller. What was the socially correct Julius Hankey doing in this wild and remote spot in Essex?

Carton received an answer almost immediately. It was a strange and utterly unexpected one. Hankey had moved past the lighted gate into the shadow of the stone wall. He hunched his shoulders for a moment or two. Then—

He became another man!

The glimmer of light that streamed through the steel bars of the gate fell on a totally different face. It was covered by a clipped brown beard. Crafty eyes gleamed. Julius Hankey had changed to—Otto Muller!

Carton's heart began to pound excitedly against his ribs. He had suspected Muller for a long time of being a criminal fence for the biggest gang of jewel thieves in London. But Joe had been unable to prove his suspicions.

Now he had startling proof that Otto Muller and the suave Julius Hankey were the same man!

Presently a faint whistle sounded up the road. The whistle was repeated by Muller. From the darkness a second figure emerged.

Senor Ramon Ortega! The dark-skinned visitor to London, who was concealing under a Spanish incognito the fact that he was His Highness Ali Singh, Maharajah of Rajkumana!

The two men conferred in whispers that were inaudible to Vincent and Carton in their leafy covert across the road.

"Excellent!" Muller chuckled.

He leaned cautiously towards the deadly steel bars of the electrified gate. He seemed about to pass a signal to someone within the walled grounds. But the signal was interrupted. Ortega was responsible for the delay.

He had whirled suddenly, and was staring up the road, dark as this point. His sharp ears had caught a faint sound in the silence. Carton had heard it, too—the crackle of a snapped twig.

Ortega darted away. His ears and his sense of direction must have been as keen as an animal's. He went plunging into a clump of bushes. There was a quick, desperate struggle, a shrill cry that was throttled into silence the instant it was

uttered, then Ortega came slowly back along the road, dragging a prisoner with him.

Ortega's palm was crushed over the mouth of his captive. It was a girl! Hankey's own niece—Isabel Fyne!

She fought furiously, but she was no match for the strength of her two captors. In a twinkling Isabel's hands were twisted behind her back. A gun muzzle pressed itself against her spine.

"One scream—and you'll die!" Muller snarled in a hoarse, disguised voice.

Isabel gave no sign of horror that would indicate if she knew Muller and her uncle were the same man. Ortega's palm lifted from her mouth.

"How did you find this place?"

Isabel didn't answer.



At the Shadow's feet lay the body of ever seen. It was like a transparent conspiracy—and the

"What are you doing here? How much do you know?"

Again the girl was silent.

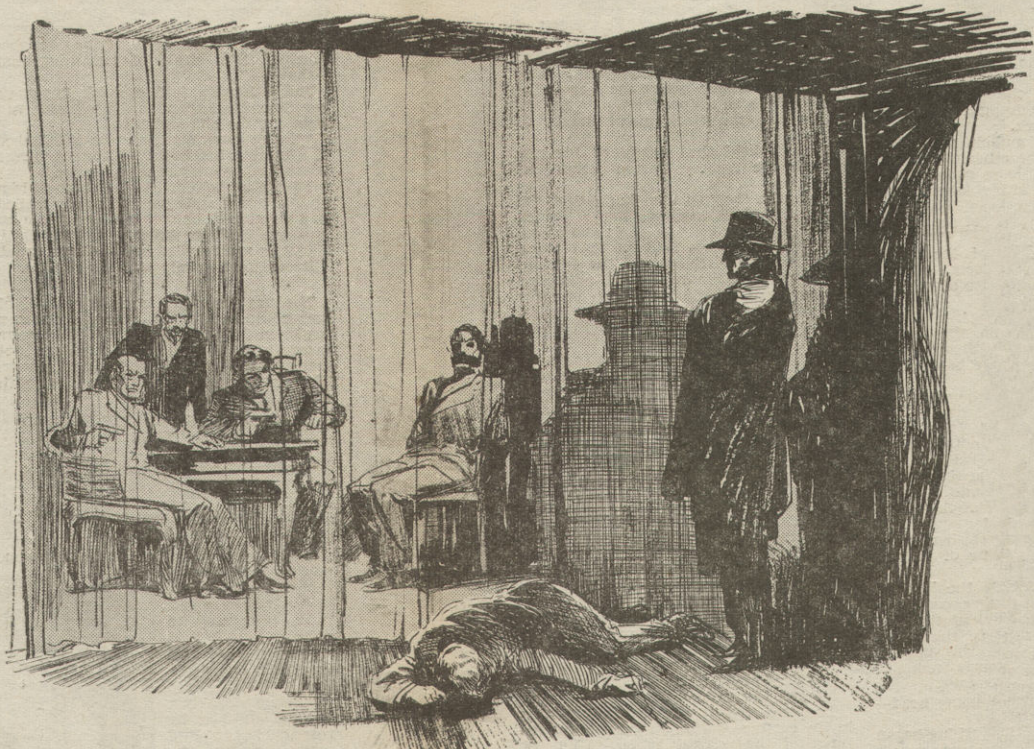
Ortega began to twist savagely at the girl's pinioned arms. Muller stopped him.

"Not here, fool! Inside!"

He jerked a flashlight from his pocket. The quick pressures of his thumb on the button of the flash signalled a code message through the barred gate. An answering glow was faintly visible in the darkness of the grounds.

A man approached the inside of the barrier. It was Squint, the narrow-eyed henchman of Sam Baron. Squint approached a small metal box inside the wall, threw a lever. Evidently he had cut





At the Shadow's feet lay the body of Frick. Before him was the strangest wall he had ever seen. It was like a transparent veil, and beyond it were the central figures of the conspiracy—and their victim. It was a show-down!



off the deadly current that pulsed through the metal of the gate, for a moment later Squint had no hesitancy in opening the gate with his bare hands.

Muller and Ortega dragged Isabel Pyne inside. She fought fiercely, but her efforts were vain. The gate slammed. Squint darted to the metal box.

Once more thousands of volts of high-tension current began to leap invisibly through the charged metal.

Vincent and Carton had made no effort to rescue the girl. The mysterious orders of the Shadow had warned them to keep their presence a secret until they were inside the grounds. The lower left hinge of the gate was to be their password and key to this mysterious estate.

Gritting their teeth, they remained in-

"The Shadow's Stone!" Carton ejaculated. "What the devil does that mean?" Vincent didn't know any more than Joe did. But he took something from his pocket, that showed he had been prepared for just such an emergency. It was a disc of steel that contained a rolled tape measure.

He started to back up the road with the end of the tape, when he halted suddenly.

"What's that?" he cried.

He was peering upwards at the black night sky. Ragged clouds covered the moon. But Vincent stared rigidly, trying to see something in that black void overhead.

"An aeroplane!" Carton cried.

He was right. But there was more than an invisible aeroplane in the sky to-night. Drifting slowly down was a queer, whitish blur in the darkness. It looked like a pale mushroom as it floated towards the quiet earth.

A parachute! The tight-drawn cords from the spread edges of silk were attached to the dangling dot of a man.

They had a quick, startled glimpse of his swinging body. Then he dropped out of sight among the trees inside the walled grounds.

Was it the Shadow himself? The question occurred simultaneously to both observers. Carton shrugged. Vincent shook his head. Both had a feeling that it was not the Shadow.

Uncertainty spurred Vincent and Carton to nervous speed.

Harry disappeared with the end of the measuring tape. They measured off the 210 feet.

But where—and what—was the Shadow's Stone?

It was impossible to tell. The wall itself offered no clue. It was exactly the same as at any other point. The ominous steel points of electrified spikes at the top precluded any possibility of scaling it at this spot.

Light from the single lamp at this spot of the road dappled the faces of Carton and Vincent as they stared hopelessly at the barrier.

Vincent backed across the road as a painter backs away from an easel to get a more distant view of the composition of a troublesome picture.

Suddenly Harry gave a quick cry of delight. "He had the answer!" He had missed it hitherto, because he was too close to the wall.

He saw now that one of those light-bathed stones was splashed with shade. The leafy top of a tree across the road cast a black, irregular blotch over one of the stones. It made a tiny, yet grimly familiar, silhouette. A line like the jut of a strong, beaked nose; a suggestion of a firm mouth and chin half-hidden by the folds of a lifted cloak—

The Shadow's Stone!

## THE GOLDEN SPECTRE.

A MAN hung swinging in mid-air at the end of a tangle of twisted ropes. Above his head was the dark blur of spreading branches. Below him was the vague blackness of the ground. The man hung like a jerking spider.

The parachute jumper was David Frick. He didn't waste a moment of time. Coolly, he measured the distance below his dangling legs to the ground. His quick estimate told him that the fall could not be more than twenty feet. He fumbled in a pocket of his clothing. It was hard to reach what he was after because of his rope harness. His exertions made his body circle dizzily.

But he finally jerked out a clasp knife. His teeth helped get the blade open. Holding on grimly with one hand, he used the other to sever the cords that bound him to the wreckage of the parachute. His left hand clutched the last cord about the spot where the keen blade of his knife cut through.

Straight as an arrow he dropped. His lungs were expanded, knees slightly bent, arms folded over his chest. The impact was terrific. But as he rolled head over heels, he allowed himself to fall with the boneless ease of a rubber doll.

Instantly he was on his feet. He slipped silently through the interlaced leaves of the bushes beyond the tall pine.

He came presently to a gravel-covered path, stood watching it from concealment. He saw that the path wound inwards from the gate in the electrified wall. David Frick expected visitors to come along that path. He expected to see the furtive figures of Ramon Ortega and Otto Muller.

He was disappointed in that hope. He was unaware that Muller and Ortega had entered the grounds before he had leaped from an aeroplane high in the black sky. After a while, however, he guessed the truth. Silently he stepped from concealment to the path.

An instant later, with a gasp, he was back out of sight. He had seen the staccato beams of a flashlight through the steel bars of the gate in the wall. A signal!

The signal was answered by someone farther back in the grounds. A man hurried past Frick's hiding-place at a quick trot. Frick recognised him as he passed. It was Squint, one of Sam Baron's gun-slingers.

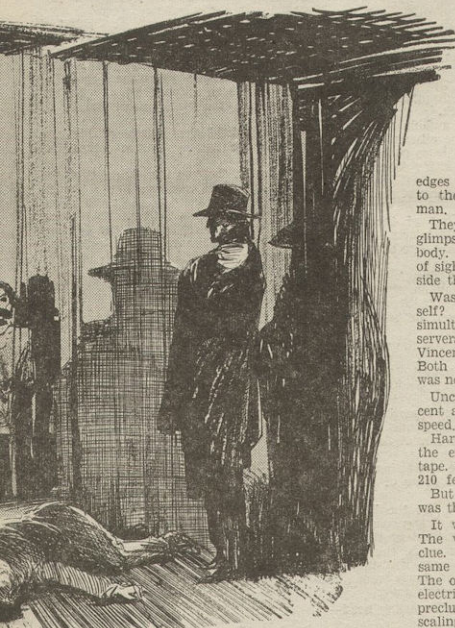
Squint turned off the electric current and opened the gate. He came back with a companion whose ugly voice rumbled deep in his throat. Sam Baron!

Baron and Squint hurried along the gravel path. Their goal was evidently some spot deep within the guarded grounds. David Frick followed them like a grey wraith. Presently he saw where they were heading. A large frame building with a high peaked roof, loomed in the darkness.

Baron hurried to the front door and opened it. He and Squint vanished inside the building. But before the door closed behind them a queer sound was audible from within. A shrill medley of chattering and screaming. It rose to a high pitch as the door opened, then died into silence in the faint slam the closing door made.

David Frick moved stealthily forward to investigate the interior of that frame building. But a more ominous sound halted him. From the darkness behind him came a coughing roar. To Frick's tense nerves, the snarling echo seemed to vibrate almost behind his back. He whirled.

David Frick knew enough of tigers to



Before him was the strangest wall he had and beyond it were the central figures of the tin. It was a show-down!

visible in their hiding-place. They watched Isabel Pyne being dragged along the drive into blackness.

Five minutes later the two investigators approached the deadly gate. Vincent was wearing rubber gloves.

He examined the gate's lower hinge, then drew something out that was tucked flat in a groove of the metal. It was a tiny scrap of folded paper. Unfolding it with nervous fingers, Harry Vincent saw that there were two brief sentences typed on the paper. It was unsigned, and read:

"Proceed 210 feet south along outside wall. Enter grounds through the Shadow's Stone."



recognise the roar of one when he heard it!

But the sound was not very close. Frick's shiver turned to a grin of relief. Turning on his heel he abandoned further thoughts of the distant jungle beast.

He followed the closer trail of Squint and Sam Baron. He darted like a grey streak towards the frame building from whose opened door had issued that jangled outcry of chattering and shrieks.

Stealthily Frick opened the door.

Harry Vincent had a mind as quick as a steel trap. The stone and the one next to it were loose in the wall. Harry didn't hesitate to tug at it. His hands were still encased in rubber gloves.

The cement between the Shadow's Stone and the next one to it was a binding agent that was easily removed. Harry dug it out in a few moments. Carton helped him remove the two stones from the wall.

The rectangular hole thus disclosed was large enough for both men to squeeze through. Inside they advanced cautiously through the thick planting of shrubbery within the wall.

They came presently to the tree from which David Frick had dropped after slashing himself loose from his dangling parachute harness. They still had no idea of the identity of the mysterious "chute jumper"; but his present whereabouts were hinted at by the marks in the earth and the bent branches of the shrubbery where Frick had glided out of sight.

They heard and saw nothing until they reached the frame building into which Frick had vanished when he had followed Sam Baron and Squint.

There were no windows in the building through which Carton could peer. Apparently light was admitted through a glass skylight arrangement on the roof.

Drawing his gun, Joe Carton motioned meaningfully to Vincent. The two stationed themselves on either side of the closed door. As Joe threw it open, both men flattened themselves against the entry, their guns pointing inward.

They could see nothing. It was pitch-dark inside the building. But a terrific jangle of shrieks, yelps and chattering issued from the warm darkness.

Vincent closed the door softly behind them. His tiny electric torch sent a stab of yellow into the blackness. The place was a monkey-house! Dozens of apes were darting wildly about their cages, grimacing, leaping from trapezes, making a shrill and hideous uproar.

The fact that the apes were so wildly excited meant nothing to Carton. He sensed that the recent presence of other humans had aroused the monkeys to so excited a pitch. The glow of his torch proved the accuracy of his deduction. In the centre of the floor, in the open area between the cages, was a square black opening.

Someone had raised a trapdoor and had left it open behind him. Someone who might have been afraid to cut off his line of retreat!

Carton's torch showed that a flight of steep wooden steps led downward to what looked like a cement cellar beneath the floor of the monkey house.

But Joe didn't descend. At that exact instant, he and Harry Vincent heard from somewhere outside the building the coughing roar of a man-eating tiger!

Going outside, they waited until the noise was repeated; then they were able to trace it. It came from a section of the grounds sharply off to the left. A

narrow footpath led upwards through the darkness to the summit of what seemed to be a natural rocky knoll. At the brow of the hill, the path turned sharply and descended into a rocky hollow.

They could see below them the barred outlines of a large, open-air pit. Inside the pit, chained to the rock wall behind him that formed part of his prison, was an enormous tiger.

Vincent and Carton descended the dark slope, approached the bars of the open-air den. On the door of the cage a faded placard had been tacked to a slab of wood, evidently by the former circus owners of the jungle beast. The sign read:

#### "BENGAL TIGER

Habitat: India, Province of Rajkumana."

Rajkumana! It was the name of the native principally ruled over by the Maharajah Ali Singh!

Carton felt that he was sliding into deeper and deeper mystery.

Suddenly he felt the swift tug of Vincent's hand. They dropped flat behind a small outcrop of rock.

A tiny sound was audible somewhere in the darkness on the other side of the tiger's rock den. A loose pebble rolled down a slight incline with a faint clatter.

Someone was creeping stealthily across the ground towards the den of the Bengal tiger!

As Carton stared, one of the clouds broke into grey, ragged tatters. For a second or two the moon shone downwards with eerie brilliance.

And Carton saw—the Thing!

It was crouched flat on the ground outside the tiger's den. It lifted its head slowly, to glare between the bars at the chained tiger.

The Thing facing him in the moonlight was a golden dog!

As abruptly the dog vanished. The moon above had slipped behind another cloud. Carton could see nothing. Yet he had a queer, shuddering feeling that the ghostly dog was gliding like golden mist, straight through the solid steel bars of the tiger's cage!

Vincent's teeth were chattering.

"Joe! What in the name of Heaven is—"

His whisper cracked. In the light of the reappearing moon, Harry could see once more the golden head of the dog. But the dog was now inside the tiger's den! The beast was towering upright on its hind legs, swaying slowly from side to side. And—and it wasn't a dog!

Except for the bestial, snarling head—it was a woman!

A nude, golden girl! The Thing began to sway with curiously stiff steps towards the wide-open jaws of the tiger. It moved like a lifeless statue. The tiger growled menacingly in his throat. But he was retreating! Backward he slunk, his tail nervously swishing the ground. Without a sound the golden statue advanced.

"The Dog goddess!" Vincent thought wildly.

Darkness blotted vision from his eyes. When he could see again, the moonlight showed him the tawny shape of the tiger as it sprang forward. But the claws of the great striped beast struck empty air. The tiger was alone in its den.

The Dog goddess had vanished!

For a long time Carton and Vincent remained rigid, clutching mechanically at the ground where they had stiffened themselves. It took courage to rise and approach the bars of that den. But they did it—walking close together to feel the solid, comforting touch of their own flesh-and-blood bodies.

It was Carton who made the first discovery. Joe's hand lifted to the barred gate. It swung noiselessly ajar at his tremulous touch. It was unlocked.

He looked mutely at Vincent. Vincent's face was white and strained. He nodded. Both men passed cautiously inside the den.

The tiger leaped at them. But it couldn't reach its victims. The long chain jerked taut and held it helpless by the scruff of its tawny neck. Carton saw that the beast's chain was anchored to one of the rocks in the rear of the den. It seemed to disappear into a metal slot in a huge boulder.

Vincent whirled. He pointed to the earth with a faint cry. In the soft ground, a faintly indented trail was visible—the naked prints of a woman's feet.

The prints led to a rock at the left of the growling tiger. It was too far away for the beast to reach. Carton, bending over the rock, saw that there was a deep hollow in the back, where the rear of the stone had been chipped away. In the hollow was the black metal handle of a lever.

Vincent held the muzzle of his gun towards the tiger. Carton jerked the lever.

Instantly, the two men knew that the vision they had seen was not a golden wraith, but a woman of flesh and blood. The long chain that held the tiger began to pull steadily. It dragged the fettered beast backward on its striped haunches. As the chain slid inch by inch into the rear of the den, its shortening length pulled the tiger away from the spot where it had lain crouched.

A square of solid earth began to rise at that spot. It tilted soundlessly upwards, disclosing itself as a cunningly camouflaged trapdoor. A steel-runged ladder led straight downwards into the darkness. The strange retreat of the tiger was explained. So was the magic disappearance of the golden goddess.

For an instant Carton and Vincent stared at the yawning hole in the floor of the den. Then they roused from their frozen inaction.

The chain that held the tiger was again lengthening. It was coming out from the slot in the boulder. At the same time the trapdoor began to close.

Both evidently worked in unison. They were controlled by a mechanism that had been started by the lever in the rear of the hollowed boulder.

Carton glanced grimly at Vincent.

"Yes!" Harry cried.

The two sprang towards the opening in the earth. Carton wriggled down the rungs of the vertical ladder. Vincent followed him.

Clang! Thump!

The metallic sound was the echo of the falling trap. The duller thump was the impact of the tiger's body. He had struck the spot where Harry Vincent had stood barely a second or two earlier. The beast was crouched directly over Harry's hidden head.

Carton and Vincent gripped hands for an instant. Their quiet whispers floated in the darkness. Then they began to descend.

Cautiously. Testing each metal rung of the ladder. Downwards—into utter blackness—

#### THE SAPPHIRE STAIN.

CARTON led the descent. He was the first to reach the bottom of the ladder.

Harry Vincent dropped from the ladder and stood crouched in a dark tunnel alongside the bulkier Carton.



No sound came from the darkness as the two men turned the sharp angle at the end of the corridor. The width remained narrow. The earth floor gave no betraying echoes.

The bend of the walls told Joe whenever the tunnel curved—and it curved often after they had covered fifty yards or so.

Unconsciously, Carton increased his pace. He was pressing forward, when out of the quiet blackness he heard a grim command:

"Stop!"

Instantly Carton stiffened. His gun pointed towards his unseen foe. He bent swiftly to one side to allow Vincent, also, to point his gun.

For ten nerve-racking seconds, the two men waited, fingers taut against triggers. Vincent knew that voice. He had heard it countless times, when the pursuit of criminals had led Harry to a spot of urgent peril.

"The Shadow!" Vincent gasped.

Carton dropped his gun muzzle. Vincent listened alertly; he heard only a single word:

"Look!"

A beam of light sprang from Cranston's hand. It slanted straight downwards. Shuddering, Carton recoiled a step.

Directly in front of him was a pit whose walls and bottom seemed to be made of smooth black glass. The pit was about ten feet deep. It spanned the entire width of the tunnel from wall to wall.

The whole bottom of that glass pit seemed to be moving, twisting. Carton could see flat, ugly heads, speckled with brown; lidless eyes; the darting fury of forked tongues—

"Snakes!" A tangled, writhing nest of them—poisonous brown adders! One of them tried to glide up the vertical glass wall of the pit. It slipped back on the writhing mass below.

The glass was greased. That was the only thing that kept those speckled adders from crawling out of the pit. But if Carton had taken one more step, had fallen—

He cringed, in spite of his iron nerve. Vincent was watching the Shadow. Harry realised that the woman they were pursuing had crossed that death pit harmlessly; so had the Shadow. He was wondering how?

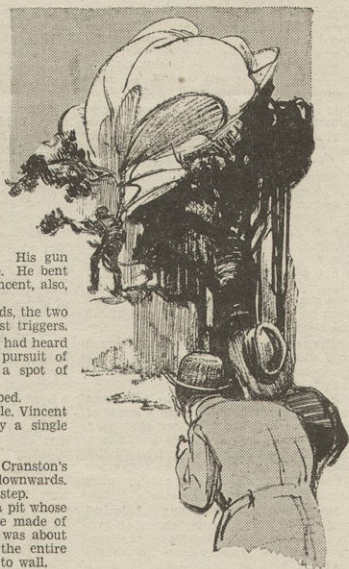
The answer came from the lifting torch of Lamont Cranston. His finger pointed. On the roof of the tunnel, supported by metal brackets, was a black, horizontal cable. A wheeled device was attached to the cable. Hanging downward from it was a circular ring.

Cranston showed how the overhead cable worked by reaching up and grabbing the smooth metal ring. A kick of his feet sent him racing along the cable. Cranston's body whizzed across the unclear horror of the adders' pit.

At the other side, he depressed a tiny handle at the end of the queer suspension bridge. The wheeled ring returned across the pit to where Carton and Vincent waited.

In a few moments they had joined Cranston. They knew now how the golden goddess had bridged that death gap.

Cranston proved it. His tiny torch swept the floor of the tunnel. Just beyond the far edge of the pit was a smear of white powder scattered on the tunnel floor. There were marks in that powder,



**The unknown parachutist was caught in the tree. Carton and Vincent made no move. The Shadow was due to arrive at any moment. Had he chosen this strange method of approach?**

The bare footprints of a woman! They led onward into the tunnel.

Cranston led the way onward. The tunnel dipped and turned in a bewildering maze through the bowels of the earth. Occasionally Cranston flicked on his torch. There was no sign of life ahead.

But suddenly he beckoned. A glimmer of light became abruptly visible as Carton and Vincent followed their guide around a sharp turn in the passage. The light came from the wall itself. Beyond that wall was a room. Its door was open.

Gilding forward, he peered warily. The light came from a single frosted bulb in the ceiling. The room was as black as a monk's cell—except for two things in the farthest corner. A metal bench was fastened to the wall. And on the bench, bound and gagged, lay the helpless body of a man!

His face was livid. His eyes bulged towards the figures in the doorway. It was Rodney Mason!

Lamont Cranston suspected a trap. But it suited his purpose to ignore the fact. He was still not quite certain about the position of Rodney Mason in the well-organised murder syndicate that was headed by an unknown master-criminal.

So he entered the room. Vincent and Carton followed. Harry rushed towards Mason and began to fumble at his bonds. But the voice of the Shadow halted him. Words came from those calm lips. The order was strange, but Harry obeyed at once.

He removed Rodney Mason's left shoe. He also removed his sock. Then he

loosened the gag from the chemist's stiffened jaws.

For a second Mason tried to talk, and failed. Then terror loosened his tongue. He began to talk wildly. None of his disjointed words made sense.

"Don't kill— You—don't—know—who—I am— Beware of the—sapphire death—"

Mason was glaring towards the doorway. Carton saw, and leaped. His hand darted outward. But he was too late. The open doorway leading to the tunnel was gone. The closing barrier had slid shut without a sound. It was locked, immovable.

The next instant the frosted bulb in the ceiling went out. The room was plunged into pitch blackness.

In the darkness came a sharp, tinkling sound—the shattering crash of glass. The next instant Cranston felt a curious numbness stealing over his brain. His eyelids dropped. His hearing began to fade.

He threw himself flat against the floor. His voice cried out a warning as he stuffed a handkerchief over his nose and mouth. He could hear Vincent and Carton throw themselves flat in the darkness, obedient to his order.

Then—with startling abruptness—the frosted light bulb in the ceiling was again lit.

Cranston stared towards the bench where Rodney Mason had been lying. His left shoe and sock were there. But Mason had gone. He was no longer inside the sealed room!

There was a deep bluish haze in the air. It was like a stain of some incredibly blue dye. The sapphire death!

Its colour was fading rapidly. But its effects remained. Carton and Vincent were semi-conscious. Only the fact that they had hurled themselves flat beneath the rising puff of blue vapour, had kept them from losing their senses completely.

Cranston began to crawl swiftly towards the wall of the death chamber. On the floor was a scatter of white powder. He had spread it with a desperate sweep of his hand at the instant the light had gone out.

He saw at once what he had hoped to see—the prints of a man's feet. One of those feet had been shod, but the other was bare! Rodney Mason! The prints led directly towards the smooth surface of the side wall.

Close to the last footprints was a smudged set of marks at the base of the wall. A tiny crack showed between wall and floor. A man—either a guilty Rodney Mason, or the clever abductor of an innocent chemist—had hooked his fingers in that crack.

Cranston did the same. A section of the flooring slid backwards from the wall. The tiny crack became a square opening. Mason had fled, not outward but downwards!

An instant later Cranston's torch explored the depths below him. He lowered himself with a quick twist of his body. As his head vanished there was a faint thump. The sound indicated that his drop was not a very deep one.

Almost immediately his head reappeared. His hands hooked at the floor edge. He vaulted upwards into the death chamber. His long legs carried him swiftly to the dazed figures of Vincent and Carton.

He dragged them to the trapdoor and dropped them through. The fall was not more than five feet. Cranston's torch glimmered faintly behind the shield of his



black robe as he worked over his two agents.

Both recovered swiftly in the fresher air in which they now found themselves. They rose shakily to their feet.

It was another tunnel, they discovered. They started alternately to left and right—a deeper corridor, whose existence not even Cranston had suspected.

But where had Rodney Mason vanished? To the left or to the right along that empty gallery?

Cranston pointed to the left. His action did not depend on a hasty guess. It was the result of accurate observation and keen logic. He had seen a tiny smear of crimson on the floor of the tunnel in the faint glimmer of his half-hidden torch. A drop of fresh blood!

Another drop was visible farther on. And another.

Cranston remembered the brittle tinkle of shattered glass in the room above at the instant the light had gone out. One of Mason's feet was bare. He had cut his foot on a fragment of glass before he had vanished through the secret opening between floor and wall.

Cranston began to glide cautiously forward. Deeper and deeper he penetrated into the dark gallery that cut like a mole's highway through the soundless earth.

Suddenly he halted. He waited rigidly, one hand lifted.

"Listen!"

They heard the shriek of a man—a man in mortal terror!

Carton and Vincent began to race forward. Cranston was already in motion. With his gun a bright glint behind the glow of his torch, he was running swiftly towards unknown horror at the end of the black tunnel.

#### THE GREY WALL.

WHEN David Frick followed Sam Baron's trail inside the building with the high-peaked roof, he was prepared for instant gunplay. He had thought that the building might be the headquarters for Sam's toughs.

Convinced that Baron had already left the building by some other exit, Frick showed a cautious light. He passed between the cages where apes gibbered and leaped frantically up and down their narrow steel bars. He paid no attention to the animals. His gaze was directed to a spot in the centre of the worn wooden floor.

A hinged section of the flooring had been lifted. It was obvious that this was the route taken by Baron.

Frick had no hesitancy in descending. He knew that Baron was unaware of his surveillance. Baron's carelessness in leaving the trap tilted upward proved that. Frick didn't close the trap, either. He wanted to leave an open line of retreat in case he ran into a desperate situation below.

Frick saw that he was at the entrance to a long corridor. The corridor was lighted. Every ten feet or so in the ceiling, an electric bulb glowed dimly. He guessed that it led to some spot deeper underground, for there was a perceptible slant to the floor.

He kept his pace slow and noiseless. His eyes watched the walls, the ceiling and the floor. But there was something that entirely escaped his scrutiny. It was so tiny that Frick passed it without notice.

It was a small peephole. It pierced the wall of the passage at shoulder level. The moment that Frick passed it, something jotted without sound from that tiny hole.

It was a single puff of bright blue

vapour. It scattered thinly in the air, directly behind Frick's head. The blueness faded so fast that had Frick turned he would have been unable to see it.

But he didn't turn. He was staggering. The faint haze of that poisonous vapour had already been sucked unconsciously into Frick's nose and mouth by his tense breathing. He fell forward on his hands and knees. Then he rolled stiffly on his side. He was completely unconscious.

A second or two of silence passed. Then a small section of the wall nearest the fallen man moved slightly aside. From a narrow opening, a gloved hand emerged. It reached swiftly towards the gun that lay in Frick's loosened grip. The gun vanished through the small opening in the wall.

For a minute or so it remained out of sight. Then once more it reappeared. The same gun! Apparently nothing had been done to it. It was replaced within the slack fingers of David Frick.

The panel closed. The corridor lapsed into silence. For five minutes longer Frick remained crumpled where he had fallen.

Suddenly his eyes opened. He gave a noisy exclamation. It was a sound of annoyance and anger, rather than fear. He scrambled quickly to his feet, like a man who has been silly enough to stumble and fall in the midst of an important undertaking. That was exactly what David Frick thought!

He was still holding his gun. It looked and felt the same. Cursing himself silently for his apparent awkwardness, he continued his slow progress down the winding tunnel.

He came at last to the spot where the tunnel ended. He advanced cautiously on tiptoe, because the faint diffusion of blue light warned him of a hidden chamber beyond a doorway.

The door was open, but Frick was still unable to see. A heavy curtain of thick blue velvet screened the opening. Through that curtain came the growling mutter of men's voices. Listening intently, Frick was able to separate the sounds. Three men were conferring in the room beyond his vision.

Frick grinned coldly as he recognised the voices. One was Otto Muller. Another was the cultured Senor Ortega. The third was the harsh, rasping snarl of Sam Baron.

Drawing a small knife from his pocket, Frick took hold of one of the folds of the velvet curtain. He held it rigidly, so as not to move the fabric. The point of his knife dug a tiny hole in the material. By pressing his eye to the hole, Frick was able to see into the room beyond.

It seemed to be a large one. Directly opposite him was a door. Two exits from a room were better than one for a desperate crook.

Otto Muller was sitting at a desk. Ortega and Baron were hunched forward in their chairs, talking grimly with him. They were talking about Isabel Pyne, the girl whom they had captured outside the gate of the estate. Ortega wanted to question her. Baron wanted to kill her. Otto Muller was trying to pacify both men.

He shrugged suddenly. Behind him was the door of a closet. Rising, he twisted the knob and threw open the door.

Isabel Pyne fell helplessly forward into his arms. She was bound hand and foot. Her face was pale with terror. Sam Baron sprang with an oath to seize her by the throat. But Ortega and Muller stopped his grim rush.

"Let me talk to her," Ortega snarled. He spat eager questions at the girl,

Isabel refused to answer. Her lovely lips were compressed in a stubborn line.

A knife appeared in Ortega's slim, womanish hand. He leaned closer, madness on his swarthy Oriental face. But again Otto Muller avoided bloodshed.

"Wait!" he snapped. "Don't be fools! Torture can come later. In the meantime, I have excellent news about the thing we are all chiefly interested in. I mean—blood sapphires!"

He seized Isabel Pyne with a brutal clutch. He forced her helpless body backwards into the closet. The door slammed on her despairing face. Muller's voice became smothering than silk as he said:

"We now possess eleven of the sapphires. Ten are still missing. I have discovered something new about these missing gems. They are not scattered all over London, as we thought. They are in the possession of one man!"

"Who has them?" Ortega gasped. "What's his name?"

David Frick's gun jutted in his right hand. With a sudden gesture of his left, he tore aside the velvet curtain that covered the doorway. He sprang down a short flight of wooden steps and bounded murderously into the blue-tinted room.

"Maybe I can answer that last question," he sneered. "Maybe the name is—Frick!"

His gun spat flame as Sam Baron went for his weapon. There was a yell of pain from Sam. The pistol leaped from his paralysed grip and skidded halfway across the floor.

"One more stunt like that—and I'll shoot you dead!" Frick warned through grey, pinched lips.

Ortega and Muller sat staring at the crook with rage on their twisted faces. But neither of them made a threatening motion. Staring past them, Frick made another discovery that brought a hard chuckle from him. There was one more man in the room. The angle of the doorway had hidden him from Frick's gaze when he had peeped through the velvet curtain. But he knew he had nothing to fear from his fourth enemy.

The man was gawky. Cords bound his hands and feet securely in a tortuous harness. One of his feet was bare. It was Rodney Mason.

Ortega's voice broke the ugly silence. In his excitement, the Maharajah of Rajkumana forgot his precise English. His voice slurred.

"But, Meestah Frick! How ees thee? I do not understand! I ave hire you. You are private detective. You promise me that—"

"Private detective nothing! I've been foxing you, you damned fool! I've got ten blood sapphires at this moment. Muller has the other eleven—he just said so! I'm going to take those eleven gems, and I'm going out of here with them. When I do, the price for the Necklace of Purity is going sky-high!"

The maharajah gave a shrill, despairing cry. Muller's question cut through it like the snap of a whiplash.

"Where did you get hold of that blue ice, Frick?"

Frick's laughter was vicious, jeering. "I'm the fellow who stole the necklace from the temple in India! Tell that to your darned Dog goddess!"

He took a step closer. His eyes blazed at Muller.

"Lay those eleven hunks of ice on the top of your desk! If you don't you'll get a bullet right smack through your forehead!"

Muller cringed.

(Continued on page 406.)



The uninvited wedding guest was Colonel Blood!

# BLOOD *of the* BORDER



Secret Service work  
in the shadow of the  
Himalayas

A STIRRING STORY  
OF THE  
NORTH-WEST  
FRONTIER

By

ANTHONY  
PARSONS

## TRAPPED!

**M**AHOMET RAMCHUNDR, the scourge of the Border, had been caught, tried and sentenced to death. It was a triumph for Colonel Blood, the Secret Service man. The Governor of the Punjab travelled north to attend the trial. Ramchundra told him bluntly:

"You'll never hang me in Peshawar Gaol."

The governor thought that was mere bluff, but that night he changed his mind, for on the way south his train was stopped by Pathans, his attache murdered, and himself kidnapped—whisked away into the unknown.

The officials at Delhi were aghast, especially when they received a telegram from Sher Shah, Ramchundra's right-hand man, to the effect that if Ramchundra died by hanging, then the governor, would be hanged, too.

There was only one thing for the Government officials to do. They sent for Colonel Blood. They said the kidnaping gang had fled south. Blood didn't believe that and eventually proved they had gone north.

Hot on the trail, he traced them as far as Rawal Pindi, but no farther. He felt sure they were somewhere in the town with their prisoner, awaiting the chance to slip across the frontier.

In the native bazaar, disguised as an elderly Madrassi, Colonel Blood heard a young Pathan telling how he saw men drop from the trucks of a goods train. The Secret Service man knew then how the kidnapers had travelled so far and so fast.

He got into touch with the man who had witnessed the incident, making out

that he had a brother with the gang and wanted to be sure he was still safe.

The Pathan offered, for fifty rupees, to take him to the house where the men who had dropped from the train were staying.

He turned as he spoke, and Blood followed him—not, even in that heady moment of triumph, forgetting that he was an elderly man of frail physique and slow steps. They went out through the archway into the comparative silence of the alley beyond; and there, by the light of the moon, the fifty rupees was carefully counted out, as carefully checked, and in due course hidden away in the Pathan's clothing. Then they went on again; Blood keeping a wary eye on the Pathan's silver-hilted knife, for if the fellow thought he had a lot of money on him—an old man in a dark alley with none to see or to hear—!

However, there was no sudden rush and no attempt at treachery, and they pressed steadily forward through the hot darkness of the bazaar until presently the Pathan turned into an alley so narrow that the houses were scarcely a dozen feet apart. Not a light was showing anywhere, and in the thick dust their sandalled feet made no sound.

Suddenly, without a word of warning, the Pathan checked. In the same instant, Blood became aware of strange shuffling sounds behind him. The thought flashed through his mind that they had been followed by robbers from the serai, but even as he would have started forward, there ahead of him he saw other grey shadows completely blocking the exit.

"Trapped," he muttered—and in the

same split second, with a wild yell of triumph, the Pathan leapt.

Blood took him in mid-air. He fired through his sleeve, and he fired to kill, for those who live along the Border know there is no such thing as a second chance. The Pathan crumpled and went down, and a second shot crumpled the shadowy blur behind him.

Cool as a cucumber, the colonel backed against the wall, moved sideways until his free hand felt a door behind him, and kicked back at it even as he fired. They were pressing him from sides and front, now, but he kept them at bay while he battered at the door—for in that lay his only chance. If he could smash it in and step back into the house he might yet escape.

Someone slashed at him with a dagger, but Blood ducked just in time so that only his turban was swept away. The next second, bracing himself against that door, he drove his foot viciously into his assailant's stomach, bending him like a hairpin. With a choking gasp the man collapsed, and behind him, lit for a second by the flash of his automatic, Blood saw the twisted face of the man who but a short time ago had called that young Pathan a "rat"!

And then he knew the full height and depth of Sher Shah's cunning. The whole affair was a carefully baited trap, and he had walked into it like the veriest fool. They had known that he was in the serai somewhere, and the Pathan's "story" had been concocted to the one end that he should reveal himself. With amazing understanding, Sher Shah had ordained that the Pathan should speak the truth, knowing that only the truth would bring Blood



into the open—and it had brought him! All that insulting talk of "Border rat," the Pathan's "fury," the realistic "bargaining," the well-simulated greed—even the loud talk and laughter which had caused the crowd to collect—everything had been carefully arranged.

Blood saw it all. He saw it in the split second that the flash from his automatic lighted up that twisted face—and he fired again, and had the satisfaction of seeing that face, too, slide down into the dust. Then he ducked swiftly as a thrown knife crashed into the wood where a second before his throat had been, but he was up again in a flash, and back-heeling with all his strength at that closed door.

It was the press that saved him. They were too eager to finish the job. They crowded him so hard that none could get free play for his own knife-hand. An unlucky thrust laid open his forehead, and when he would have fired point-blank at the man who had driven it, his pistol clicked harmlessly. A yell of triumph warned him that they were aware of his plight, but in a second he had snatched out his knife and buried it hilt deep in the back of a man who on his hands and knees was seeking to hamstring him.

But it could not last. They were too many for him. With the blood streaming into his eyes he made one last Herculean effort on the door behind him—and smashed through. It went down suddenly, and he shot through the opening on his back.

In a flash he was up again, and lurching through the pitch-black darkness into sanctuary. His groping hands found a door, opened it, snapped home the wooden bolt on the far side in the exact second that Sher Shah's men crashed against the opposite side.

And now he stopped for nothing. A

hand grabbed at him in the darkness, but he thrust it aside and leapt for where a square of lighter grey warned him of the presence of a window. He went through the wooden lattice bodily, in a flat dive, landed all his length on a garbage heap under the stars, picked himself up again and raced blindly down the alley.

It was neck or nothing now, for already they were on his heels again. They had burst through that door, through the window, and were already in full cry. Straight down the alley Blood fled, and with a sliding lurch took the first corner he came to—plumb into a cul-de-sac!

Too late he saw his mistake, but he could not get back. In front of him was what looked like a high wall, and upon either side of him, barred and shuttered houses. The wall was his only chance. He increased his pace and took it in his stride as years ago he had taught young recruits to take the "wall" on the regimental obstacle course. He ran straight at it, straight up it, scrambled wildly at the top, and just managed to get a grip with his hands in time to save himself from falling back again.

A second later he was up and over and dropping into the blackness on the far side. He had taken it for granted that the drop would be the same as the climb, but he was wrong. He continued to fall. He knew a moment of sheer terror as realisation burst in upon him that it was a bit of the old city wall, built high above a nullah for defence—then he crashed with terrific force on the steep slope, bounced outwards into space, grabbed wildly for a hold, and went down turning over and over into oblivion.

Eight o'clock the next morning found Captain Nevison, District Superintendent

of Police for the Pindi Area, literally beating his brow in sheer impotence. There was still no news of Colonel Blood—of Sher Shah, the gang, or his Excellency the Governor of the Punjab. There was no news of anything. All night long he had been raving through the bazaar on the heels of the rioters, but despite a score of arrests, a thousand threats, sundry beatings up and a house-to-house search of the entire area, nothing material had come to light. He had found a dead Pathan and three other corpses—all bearing the marks of Blood's automatic—and he had searched through the house with the smashed door, climbed through the broken window, and had his men search through the alley and right back into the bazaar—all to no avail.

He knew that Blood had gone to the serial—that much he had learned last night from Abdul Aza—but a thorough comb-out of everyone he found there had produced nothing of value. If anyone in the serial had seen the elderly Madrassi he had long since forgotten it! And since it was a police affair—would take good care never to remember it. And to cap all, less than an hour ago, word had been brought to him that Abdul Aza had been found lying dead across his anvil—so that he would never speak again!

Nevison was admittedly at his wits' end to know what to do for the best. That Blood had by some means or other succeeded in discovering Sher Shah's hide-out he did not for one moment doubt—but what had happened then? And where was he now? No one had left Pindi by train—of that at least he was certain! Every passenger coach had been searched, every truck had been thoroughly overhauled, and police had gone north on all three trains in case the gang tried to jump aboard en route—but all to no purpose. All three trains had arrived safely in Peshawar, and none had anything to report. His police had nothing to report. No one had anything to report!

Meanwhile where was Colonel Blood? He fell to pacing his office. Now and again he would pause to stare anxiously down the sunlit Mall, but always it remained empty and always the same question returned to beat like a devil's tattoo on his naked brain.

Then, towards nine o'clock—when he had almost abandoned hope—the door was burst open, and his orderly came in in a sliding stagger.

"Huzoor!" he gasped. "That—that Madrassi, huzoor!"

"Where?" Nevison bawled.

"Here!"

"What?"

For a split second relief held Nevison literally rooted to the spot, and in that moment the curtains were dragged aside, and there was Colonel Blood, leaning weakly against the jamb of the door. But in what shape! Nevison had to look twice before he recognised him. Great gouts of blood were congealed on his face, while across his forehead was a gash you could have put three fingers into. He was hatless. His Madrassi robe was in ribbons. He was grey with pain and fatigue.

"Have you—got him?" he whispered. Nevison recovered his scattered senses. He bawled for whisky, hot water, the doctor sahib. He got the colonel into a chair and began working on him with expert hands.

"What the devil have they done to you, sir?" he demanded through tightly clenched teeth. "Where have you been?"

"I crashed into a nullah—been lying there all night. They trapped me." Blood spoke jerkily, between gasps as the D.S.P.

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dabbed at him. "What have—you done? Have you got him?"

"No, sir. I had no luck at all." He related everything that had happened in the thirteen hours since Colonel Blood had left the bungalow disguised as an elderly Madrassi, and wound up with the reports from his men at Peshawar. "So he hasn't arrived at Peshawar, sir," he said. "He's still in Pindi, somewhere! And the governor!"

Blood shook his head. In spite of the greyness of his face his eyes were still bright with intelligence. He could still think clearly, even if he could not walk.

"No—he's dished you," he said. "He's dished you, Nevison. Sher Shah isn't in Pindi—nor the governor."

"What?"

"They're in Peshawar!"

"But—"

"Went by train, too," the colonel went on in the same flat voice. "Must have done. You let them through, somehow!"

Nevison stepped back from the colonel's chair. He stood amazed. The man was crazy! He was wandering in his mind. It was absolutely impossible for Sher Shah or anyone else to have got past the guards he had set, and he said so. Every solitary man leaving Pindi last night had been searched and examined and checked up on—but Blood shook his head at all explanations.

"Fetch me—Abdul Aza," was all he said at the end of it.

"I can't, sir!"

"What d'you mean?" Blood turned in his chair. "What d'you mean?" he repeated on a stronger note.

The D.S.P. spread his hands.

"It's too late, sir," he said. "He's dead. He was found lying across his anvil—an hour or so ago—stabbed."

There was a long silence. Colonel Blood remained just as he sat; but now his eyes were fixed in a blank stare on the dusty road visible through the window. A



Blood leapt from the machine. Below him was enemy country. One false move and his life would not be worth one rupee. (See next week's sensational instalment.)

bullock cart creaked noisily past, but he did not hear it. He did not even see it. In his mind's eye he was back again in that open booth by the Lahore Gate, and in his ears was the soft voice of Abdul Aza as he said: "I am not afraid, huzoor. If my fate is written, it is written. As for the rest, not one knife thrust shall stop the Work—"

"Another spot of whisky, sir?" Nevison urged into the silence.

night for Peshawar—I want to know how. There is no time to waste. I want to see the men who were actually on guard at the station and in the goods yard. Have them brought here at once. I must be in Peshawar this afternoon."

"Peshawar?" Nevison cried involuntarily. "But good Heavens, sir, you—you can't do it!"

"Can't I?" Blood's head went an inch

(Continued overleaf.)

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higher. "Sher Shah may have slipped you, Nevison—but, by thunder, he shan't slip me!"

#### THE DANCING GIRL.

HALF an hour later, when he had bathed and changed and been attended by the doctor, Colonel Randolph Blood took a chair at Nevison's desk and listened to all they had to tell him. From this man and that he gathered sufficient information to enable him to build up the story of the night's happenings, but though he probed deeply and questioned closely, nowhere could he find a loophole through which Sher Shah could possibly have smuggled either himself or the Governor of the Punjab. In view of the precautions taken it seemed impossible that anyone could have travelled up in either of the truck trains, and that left only the "mixed" passenger train.

"You see, sir, he can't have gone!" the D.S.P. argued desperately.

"He has gone!" was all Blood answered.

"But—but why, colonel? Why are you so positive?"

"Because Sher Shah is a Mohmand, and in Peshawar Jail lies his idol, the man Mahomet Ramchundra—a doomed man, unless Sher Shah can get the Governor of the Punjab across the border before tomorrow's dawn." He reached out as he spoke for the list of passengers who had gone up in the "mixed," last night—six local musicians, their six dancing girls, a bunyia from the bazaar, and a retired police-constable. "You're absolutely certain of these people?" he asked for the third time.

"Absolutely, sir," the D.S.P. answered a mite wearily. To his mind, Blood was simply being obstinate. "The six musicians form a band of sorts that is highly appreciated all round the district, and the girls dance," he repeated. "I

spoke to each man separately, on the platform, and each was himself. The bunyia is also well known to me, and the excitable served under me for several years—both are above suspicion." He spread his hands. "That leaves only the dancing girls," he shrugged, "and Sergeant All Khan has already answered for them."

"Quite." Blood sat back in his chair and thought for a moment. He knew exactly what Nevison was thinking, but the knowledge made not the slightest difference to his own certainty. Somehow, by some extraordinary trick, Sher Shah had contrived to get the person of His Excellency the Governor of the Punjab through Nevison's cordon of police—and he was determined to discover how. At first he had been very suspicious of those purdah'd dancing girls—since a purdah robe covers its wearer from head to heel, leaving only the eyes visible through an inch-square spy-hole. It was obvious that Sher Shah might have hidden not only himself, but also the Governor and four of his men beneath those six-purdah robes—save for the unshakable evidence of Sergeant All Khan to the effect that they were women.

"You are positive that we can trust the sergeant?" he asked.

"To the last hair of his head, sir. Besides, as I've already told you, I was there myself. I, too, spoke to the girls; and while I can't swear to their identity, I can swear that they were all girls. You could hear them, for one thing! They were larking about on the platform for an hour or more before the train came in—you know what these dancing girls are!"

"More or less," the colonel admitted without a smile. He rubbed his chin for a time, thoughtfully. He had already seen Sergeant All Khan and heard what he had to say. The sergeant frankly admitted to

knowing these dancing girls personally, and he had spoken to each one of them on the platform. He had also spoken to each of the musicians—in spite of the fact that they were all friends of his—and insisted upon them unwrapping their instruments for his inspection. On the face of it the problem was insoluble; yet the trick had been worked somehow—of that Blood was quite positive.

"Do those girls always travel purdah?" he asked at last. And when Nevison could not be sure, Sergeant All Khan was recalled. He listened to Blood's question respectfully, but when he replied he could not prevent the grin which wreathed his fat, cheerful face.

"Nay, sahib!" he said. "It was just—foolishness. They were pretending to be shy—miming up and down the platform like high-born ladies—and laughing when a good Mussulman averted his eyes. They were being foolish, huzoor. All except Pearl of the Moon," he added as an afterthought. "She sat still by the gate. She had hurt her foot."

"Hurt her foot?" Blood echoed. It was the first he had heard of that. "How?" he asked.

"Last week, huzoor, while dancing in the bazaar. She told me about it."

Blood's brows came together in a thoughtful frown. "But if she's lame, how can she dance?" he asked. "What was she going to a tomasha for—if she couldn't walk?"

"She wanted to go, huzoor. It is a very big tomasha, and she did not wish to miss the fun—or the presents! Besides, huzoor, Lal Bhoze had written to say—"

"What?" Blood shouted, so suddenly that the sergeant started. "Lal Bhoze, you say? For a moment he seemed speechless, dumbstruck. "Lal Bhoze?" he asked again. "You mean to tell me that that band was going to Lal Bhoze's house?"

The sergeant stared. He did not understand.

"But—of a certainly, huzoor," he got out at last. "It is a very good band, and it is hired to play at the wedding of Lal Bhoze's son."

Blood leapt to his feet. He'd got it! Lal Bhoze's son was marrying a woman of Ulaial—an Afridi from over the Border! In accordance with custom he was going over to fetch her, and the band would go with him—not only to beguile the long journey but to play at the bride's house when they got there. The whole darned band would cross the border—including a lame girl under a purdah!

"Why the devil didn't you tell me this at first?" he raved as he explained himself.

"But you don't think, sir—"

"Think, man? I know!" Blood shouted. "It's as plain as a pikestaff! That lame girl under the purdah was none other than His Excellency the Governor of the Punjab—doped, and unable to walk or speak. That's the answer to it all, Nevison. That's how the trick was worked!"

"But I—I spoke to her, huzoor!" protested the sergeant when he could get a word in edgeways. "I spoke to her, as she sat by the gate, huzoor—and it was Pearl of the Moon! I spoke to her for several minutes. I know it was Pearl of the Moon!"

Blood checked. If that were so, of course, then—

"Wait!" he cried suddenly. "So you may have done—but when? When did you talk for several minutes to Pearl of the Moon?"

"When she came on to the platform, huzoor."

"Not afterwards? You didn't speak to her again?"

## 198 OVERSEAS READERS WIN PRIZES FOR "STAMPS"!

THE Editor is pleased to announce the result of the Overseas Section of our "Armaments" Contest No. 1, for which there was a special late closing date.

As stated in the competition offer, there were special prizes for good "scores" from overseas, and these have been awarded in cash form as follows:

FIRST PRIZE, £2: Gordon Emery, 227-27 Street W., Saskatoon, Sask., Canada (whose stamp total was 1,050—congratulations, Gordon!)

SECOND PRIZE, £1: Keith Murray, 6, Brighton Avenue, Preston, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia (who came next with a "score" of 737).

For space reasons we are unable to print all the other winners' names here. All "scores" of 166 and over qualified for prizes, however—totals of 255 and over winning special consolation prizes of 5/- each, while totals of 254 down to 166 were awarded prizes of 2/6 each. These prizes have all been posted.

Well done, winners! And those of you who haven't won remember that there are still two other ARMAMENTS "Overseas" prize-givings to come—we hope you've sent in for them.

Also, ALL of you should have a crack at "Footer-Stamps"—see the back page of this issue—there is also a special cash prize-list for overseas readers each month!

Next week the full list of football winners for the first month of the Footer-Stamps contest will be published in the THRILLER Library.

If you have not yet entered for this contest, start now. There's a chance for everyone.



The sergeant hesitated.

"Nay, huzoor," he said at last. "I don't think I did—not again."

"And she was sitting on the platform for an hour, you say? Sitting against a gate, eh? What gate? Do you mean the iron gate which opens on to the bazaar road?"

"Aie, huzoor." Under the hail of quick-fire questions, the sergeant was beginning to sweat. But Blood gave him no respite.

"Tell me," he said; "there were many people crowding round the other side of the gate?"

"Aie, huzoor, there were, but—"

"Never mind the 'buts,' man! Answer my questions. Did Pearl of the Moon walk to that train?"

"No," Nevison answered for him. "They carried her—the other girls, I mean, between them. They made a joke of it. You could hear them shrieking all over the platform."

"The devil!" rapped out Colonel Blood viciously. "Carried her! And still you didn't interfere? Good heavens, man—"

"But I had interfered, huzoor—and she was Pearl of the Moon!" protested the sergeant courageously. "Am I then a fool—that I shouldn't know the eyes and voice of the woman with whom—"

"Peace, man!" Blood thundered. "I'm not blaming you. You did speak to this Pearl of the Moon, but Sher Shah dished you. She was sitting there against the gate, wasn't she? She sat there until the train came in and the other women fetched her? How many got into the train?"

"Six, huzoor. Five others and—Pearl of the Moon!"

"Well, that's where you make your mistake," Blood smiled thinly. "Six got in, all right—but one of them was His Excellency the Governor of the Punjab; not Pearl of the Moon at all! Listen! Sher Shah crowded that gate with his men. With him, doped down and hidden beneath a purdah robe, he had the Governor of the Punjab. When those five women came to fetch Pearl of the Moon—when they were all standing over her and hiding her momentarily from your view, even if you happened to be looking at that moment—which I don't suppose you were!—Sher Shah opened the gate, pulled her out, pushed the Governor into her place, and the other women carried him into the train. You say they were laughing and screaming—that's why! They were carrying the Governor of the Punjab, and they didn't want you interfering! They were acting the role they'd been acting all night, ever since they entered the station. Every one of those dancing girls is in the plot—and the men, too! And they're the people who are crossing the border to-morrow! Call your car, Nevison!"

"You're—going after them, sir?"

"You bet your sweet life, I am! I'm going to see Pearl of the Moon and inspect her foot!"

"But—but if what you say is true, sir, Pearl of the Moon won't be there."

"I know, she won't—that's why I'm going!" Blood laughed as he reached for his helmet.

#### THE WEDDING FEAST.

FROM Pindi to Peshawar, as the crow flies, is some hundred and twenty miles; and within a few hours of leaving Nevison's office, Blood was at Command Headquarters with General Dawkins. At first the general was astounded, then dubious.

"You mean that Lal Bhose is in the plot?" he asked at last.

"Not he!" Blood said. "Lal Bhose is loyal to the core; that's why they're using

him. It gives them cover, don't you see? He simply ordered that band, and the six dancing girls, to attend his son's wedding—and when he learns that one of the girls has hurt her foot and can't appear—well, what of it? Or maybe, they won't mention the matter. Like enough they'll enlist another girl here in Peshawar, and then drop her when the rest cross the Border for Unlai. When's the party going, by the way?"

"An hour before dawn, to-morrow. Lal Bhose was here yesterday afternoon, as you see, he heard we'd closed the Border. He wanted to know if it would be all right."

"What did you tell him?" Blood smiled. "I told him yes—naturally. A man of his standing, and so forth—"

"Quite!" Blood smiled again. The thing was too obvious. A while back he had thought that the centrepiece of Sher Shah's plot was the "24-Dawn Mineral Express" and that ganger's trolley beneath the water tank outside Bawalla station, but now he had to add Lal Bhose's son's wedding party. That, too, was an integral part of the scheme.

"All the same, I hate upsetting the old man," Dawkins said a few minutes later as they drove along the Mall towards the merchant prince's bungalow. Behind them was a second car containing the D.S.P. Peshawar Area and half a dozen uniformed constables, for this time Blood was taking no chances.

Lal Bhose was at home, and received them at once, his fine face puckered with anxiety as he perceived the police gathered in his courtyard.

"In Allah's name, sahib—" he was beginning, when Blood stopped him with a gesture.

"Peace, Lal Bhose!" he begged. "This is no slur on you or your house. It is with the band you have hired from Pindi that our business lies. Are they within?"

The old man nodded speechlessly.

"Even now my—my son celebrates his festivities," he stammered. "You would not—spoil his day, sahib?"

"Allah forbid—but the business of the Sirkar must come first!" Blood said. "Thou knowest that, Lal Bhose—thou, who hast ever been loyal to the Sirkar."

The old man bowed his head.

"It is as it is, sahib," he said. "Follow me, please. My house is yours, and all it contains."

Blood slipped his revolver into his jacket pocket and followed hard on his host's heels. The D.S.P. followed a pace or two behind and remained in the doorway of the central hall—watching.

Lal Bhose's son was sitting high on a carved throne in the centre of the room, with a garland of flowers round his neck and all his friends in attendance. The band from Pindi was playing in one corner, and the dancing girls were reclining in a semi-circle immediately in front of it. Gold and silver fruit—very fragile—was heaped on a low table to one side, while food in abundance and the sweet drinks beloved by the natives of India weighted down a long table opposite.

So much Blood saw at a glance. Then he saw that there were six dancing girls reclining there instead of the five who had left Pindi, and he guessed that a sixth had been picked up in Peshawar, exactly as he had told the general might be the case. For a moment he eyed them grimly. There was nothing "purdah" about any of them now! Save for a wisp of silver gauze apiece they were next door to starko. Finally he spoke.

"Which of you is Pearl of the Moon?" he asked.

"I am, sahib!" a girl answered him instantly.

Blood looked at her. She was a slim little thing, rather pretty, with heavily painted eyes and a scarlet mouth. Behind her left ear flamed a scarlet flower, and red bangles were round her arms.

"Stand up, O Pearl of the Moon," he said softly. "Stand up, and come hither."

There was a moment of dead silence. The other girls lay watching him with wide eyes and parted lips.

"Don't be afraid, O Pearl of the Moon!" smiled Colonel Blood triumphantly.

The next moment, however, some of that smile died slowly from his eyes as he watched the girl prise herself awkwardly to her feet.

(Is Colonel Blood on the wrong track? Don't miss the climax of this gripping story in next week's THRILLER Library.)



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## THE MAN FROM MANDALAY

(Continued from page 400.)

"Where are they?" Frick spat at him. "Top drawer."  
"Take 'em out with your left hand. And if you make a single funny move—I'll plug all three of you!"

Muller's left hand slowly opened the top drawer of his desk. He opened it far enough so that Frick could see there was no gun in the drawer. All that was visible was a small chamols bag, which Muller withdrew with trembling fingers.

"Spill the gems out so I can see 'em," Frick rasped.

Muller obeyed. On the polished top of the desk, there slid a bewildering array of flashing blue flame—Eleven sapphires! Leaning cautiously closer, his gun ready for instant death, Frick caught a glimpse of a crimson smear in the depths of the nearest stone. He laughed hoarsely.

At his order, Muller's left hand replaced the sapphires in the chamols bag. His right hand was lifted helplessly above his head. The hands of Ortega and Baron were also elevated.

Frick backed away with his loot, turning slightly, so that he had a partial view of the curtained doorway behind him. He began to slide towards the curtain.

But he had taken only three shuffling steps when there was a sudden, unexpected sound. A metallic clang! It shook the room. Frick guessed what it meant. It was the slam of a steel barrier. The door behind the velvet curtain was now closed and locked. His retreat through the dimly lighted corridor that led back to the cellar of the monkey house was now cut off!

There was no expression on the faces of the three men who sat stiffly under the menace of Frick's gun.

The creak circled past them towards the opposite door. He turned the knob. The door was not locked!

Frick whispered through dry, twisted lips:

"So-long, you mugs!"

He vanished behind the closing door.

As he did so, there was a faint click

near where Rodney Mason lay. Three figures glided into the room. They had pinched, watchful eyes and cunning faces. All three were gunmen, part of Sam Baron's gang. But they made no effort to rush after the thief.

Their eyes stared at the grey wall behind which Frick had just vanished.

Suddenly, an amazing transformation took place in that blank surface. It glowed with light. The whole wall became transparent! Behind it, the figure of David Frick was disclosed, standing motionless on tiptoe. From head to foot, he was bathed in a bright, unearthly brilliance.

He uttered a cry of terror. A figure was gliding slowly towards him—a woman whose bare feet moved across the floor without noise. Her nude body was gold from head to foot. She moved with the curiously stiff steps of a lifeless thing—an inanimate statue.

Atop the sleek, golden glitter of her body was a horrible sight—the head of a snarling beast.

The Dog goddess of Rajkumana!

Frick fired. Again and again flame spat from the stuttering muzzle of his gun. His aim was true. The flame darted straight towards the body of that moving thing. But the stiffly advancing steps never halted. The golden statue came closer and closer to the rooted figure of the thief.

She sprang!

As she did so, the lighted wall went suddenly grey. It was no longer aglow with eerie light; darkness hid everything.

Muller and Sam Baron remained staring at the wall. Ortega, however, had slumped from his chair. Pale with superstitious awe, the Maharajah of Rajkumana was down on his knees, with his face bent to the floor in worship. He had seen the power and majesty of the Dog goddess from the sacred temple of his ancestors. He was praying in a shrill, unnatural whisper.

He did not see that the wall was again

ablaze with light. He was unaware that it had become transparent.

But Muller and Baron saw. With tight, expressionless faces, they gazed at the figure of David Frick. Frick was in the same spot where the golden apparition had sprung at him. But he was no longer erect. He lay flat on his back.

The Dog goddess had vanished!

In the dreadful silence, a faint vibration seemed to hang in the air. It was the echo of the shriek Frick had uttered as the fangs of doom ripped through his throat!

### THE AMAZING TRUTH.

LAMONT CRANSTON heard that terrible shriek as it resounded far down the blackness of a tunnel in the earth. He knew it came from the lips of a dying man.

He began to race at top speed through the passage. The beam of his electric torch danced like a will-o'-the-wisp ahead of him. It threw a weird, distorted likeness of the Shadow on the flickering walls of the tunnel.

Vincent and Carton followed.

Their steps were faltering. They were still partly under the influence of the vapour they had breathed in the sealed chamber from which the skill of Cranston had rescued them.

Far in front, they saw the electric torch of the Shadow halt suddenly. Then it began to rise. It vanished upwards out of sight. Cranston had come to the end of the earth tunnel. In front of him was a steep flight of stone steps. He could see above him the outline of a closed door.

The knob of the door began to revolve slowly under the pressure of Cranston's palm. Its metal catch slipped from its grooved slot. The door opened a hairs-breadth. The gap widened to an inch. Then Cranston gasped.

Vivid white light beat down pitilessly on the upturned face of David Frick. His face was almost unrecognisable.

Directly in front of Frick's body was the strangest wall Cranston had ever seen. It offered no obstacle to the human eye. The entire wall was transparent! Through it, he could see into a room beyond. The room was veiled in deep blue light. Murderous faces glared at Cranston. He could see the ugly, brown-bearded Otto Muller. Sam Baron was crouched close to the bogus delicatessen dealer. Three other toughs were visible in the blue-lit headquarters of the gang.

Two of them were guarding a pair of victims in a far corner. Cranston could see the pale, frightened face of Ramon Ortega, his hands upraised under the menace of guns. At Ortega's feet lay the helpless figure of Rodney Mason. The wall seemed to ripple faintly. It wasn't a wall of mortar and plaster, but a cunningly camouflaged curtain—a transparent grey fabric!

Bullets dotted it with holes as Cranston sprang forward. A slug whistled past his cheek.

Somewhere behind him, Harry Vincent and Joe Carton were racing up the stone steps from the tunnel in the earth.

The upraised hand of Lamont Cranston glittered as he leaped towards the transparent wall. He had whipped a knife from beneath his robe. The sharp point slashed a ragged hole in the grey material. Through that hole in the flying body of Cranston plunged like a black meteor.

He landed crouched on hands and knees. Muller's gun belched. Pain crossed Cranston's throat like the touch of a red-



## Men of Vengeance

Six men—six gaunt, desperate Legionnaires of France—listened to the last, gasped words of a dying man, learned a strange and staggering secret. . . . By night those six had vanished with what they knew—human wolves let loose on a trail of terror and vengeance—ripe for murder!

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hot wire. But he was up and whirling away before Sam Baron could pump a more accurate shot from the other side of the room.

The knife clattered to the floor as Cranston leaped. Twin guns replaced it in his black-gloved hands. Those guns could shoot fast and straight. They dropped Sam Baron in a dead huddle as he tried to end the Shadow's life.

The next instant Vincent leaped headlong through the ripped grey fabric. Cranston followed him.

Joe's slug cut down one of the thugs to the left of Muller. Vincent fired and missed. Muller hurled the dead gunman's body. He jammed the muzzle of his pistol against Vincent's temple.

Cranston hadn't wanted to kill Muller. He had hoped to take him alive, to force certain facts from his cunning lips. But now he had no choice. As Muller's gun muzzle jammed against Vincent's skull, Cranston fired. The heavy slug from the .45 flung Muller backwards like the kick from a mule. He rolled in a quivering heap. The motion of his limbs, however, was purely spasmodic. He was stone dead.

Vincent recovered from his daze just as the remaining thug rushed at Joe Cranston. The face of the killer was a mask of twisted fury. There was madness in his eyes. The knowledge that he was trapped broke the last cord of reason in his warped brain. He was running amok! But Joe Cranston dropped him with a quick shot.

The air reeked with the stench of burned cordite. Smoke drifted lazily in thin sheets. There was sweat on Cranston's forehead. A sick horror in the eyes of Vincent.

Cranston stood very quietly, staring at Ramon Ortega and at Rodney Mason.

They were the only ones left alive after that swift burst of gunfire. Ortega's trembling legs had dropped him in a frightened huddle against the wall. Mason lay gagged and bound.

Carton paid no attention to either of them. With a face like flint, Joe walked grimly to where Otto Muller lay and ripped the brown beard away. The dead face of Julius Hankey stared up at him from sightless eyes.

"The dirty rat!" Carton breathed. "A social leader—Hatton Garden's most famous jeweller—and all along this darned Julius Hankey was the secret head of a murder syndicate!"

"No!"  
The calm voice of Cranston uttered that single word.

Carton looked startled. So did Vincent. They turned with a single motion towards the cowering figure of Ramon Ortega.

Again Cranston uttered that cool monosyllable.

"No!"  
Cranston's finger pointed towards Rodney Mason. He ordered that the gag be removed from the lips of the good-looking young chemist.

As the gag came away, Mason gulped and strangled in his terrified eagerness to talk.

"I'm innocent!" he gasped. "Otto Muller ran the gang. He was the leader. He kidnapped me twice—He captured Isabel—"

Terror glazed his eyes as he remembered the captive girl in the closet. He wobbled forward on unsteady legs.

Carton got there first. Joe jerked open the closet door. The body of Isabel Pyne pitched stiffly forward into Joe's arms. Her blue eyes were closed. Her face was deathly white.

The cords that bound her were slashed away. Mason gave a cry of delight as her eyes fluttered open. He took her in his arms, kissing her pale eyelids, murmuring hoarse words of endearment. Cranston was smiling queerly.

He laid a steady hand on Mason's shoulder and drew him backwards. At the touch of that hand, Mason shivered. He recoiled, glaring at the Shadow.

Then Cranston did a strange, brutal thing. His fingers closed on the neck of Isabel's gown. With one powerful jerk he ripped the gown from the girl's body. Isabel Pyne screamed. Then she stood very still.

The gown that lay in tatters at her feet was the only garment she had been wearing! From the white line of her throat to the edge of her low-rolled stockings, her body was a dull glitter of metallic gold. Her arms, too, were gold—except her hands. From wrists to fingertips, those hands were white.

Seen at close range, it was obvious that she was wearing slights tights. The gold paint had been daubed over that. Isabel Pyne began to laugh harshly. The loveliness in her face seemed to grow pinched and haggard. Rodney Mason recoiled from the evil glitter in her blue eyes.

But Isabel ignored the man she had fooled so long. She sneered at the watchful face of Lamont Cranston.

"You are very clever. How long have you known that I was the brains of the gang? How long have you suspected that I was playing the amusing rôle of the Dog goddess of Rajku—"

Her hand moved with the swiftness of light. The glitter of a ring on her finger streaked to her mouth. Carton tried to stop her. He was too late.

Isabel Pyne swallowed convulsively. Then she swayed.

"No rope for me, thank you!" she jeered from pale lips.

Her legs gave way. Her body thumped against the floor. There was no need to bend over her; the subtle poison she had swallowed had locked her rigid in death.

Cranston uttered no sound. He had expected her to do this thing. He had not interfered. Bending, he picked up the torn gown of the dead girl. He dropped it across her body, hiding the golden gleam of the most dangerous woman criminal he had ever encountered in his career.

He showed Carton and Vincent something he had taken from a pocket sewn in the lining of Isabel's gown. It was a chamois bag—the same one that David Frick had stolen from Muller. Opening it, he disclosed a handful of shimmering sapphires.

"But how—?" Carton was stuttering in his excitement. "How was she able to—"

"Wait!"  
Cranston turned. He strode towards the closet. Squeezing inside, his deft fingers moved. Vincent, peering over Carton's shoulder, uttered a cry of enlightenment. The rear of the closet was swinging open on a pivot! It had a false back! Beyond it was a dark passage into which Cranston disappeared.

When he returned he was carrying some rather sinister objects.

The first was the counterfeit head of a dog. The thing was made of light papier-mâché. It was daubed with the same gold paint that had covered the slights Isabel Pyne had worn. It was curved slightly at the bottom, so that it could fit snugly against the girl's shoulders when she slipped the ugly thing over her head.

Cranston also carried a pair of golden gloves.

Carton understood. Having donned helmet and gloves, and removed her slippers and stockings, Isabel Pyne could become swiftly—murderously—the Dog goddess of Rajkumana!

The final proof produced by Cranston were the ugly mechanical claws that had been delivered to Muller's delicatessen by special messenger. Isabel Pyne had sent them to her disguised Uncle. And she had known how to use them herself!

Lamont Cranston explained.

(Continued on back page.)

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Frick had stolen the blood sapphires and escaped with them from India. He had sold eleven of them to wealthy collectors in London. The rest he kept. Otto Muller found out what was afoot when a member of the underworld brought "Ramon Ortega" to him for a secret conference. Out of that conference a pact was born. Otto Muller promised to recover the missing jewels for the sum of half a million pounds.

Muller and Julius Hankey were, of course, the same man. The Hatton Garden Jeweller had been acting as a criminal fence. Isabel Pyne had given him the idea. Hers was the brain that directed Hankey.

Rodney Mason was an innocent tool. Isabel deliberately sought his friendship the moment she learned that Mason was a chemist who had succeeded in manufacturing synthetic sapphires.

Cranston plotted to the ends that had seemingly been twisted tight around Isabel Pyne when she had been thrust into the closet by her confederate, Hankey. The cords were cunningly fitted with elastic, so that Isabel was able to slip them off at will. While she was supposed to be a helpless prisoner in the closet, she was actually working her horrible murder game in gold-painted tights.

Her perfect alibi had fooled everyone—except Cranston!

Joe Carton nodded grimly as the amazing truth became clear to him. He turned, glaring angrily at the maharajah who called himself Ortega.

"I wish I could send you to goal for a long time!" he snapped. "It was you who started this whole conspiracy of death. You lied to me! You tried to play both with the police and with the underworld!"

Ortega was frightened. He kept prudently silent.

"Unfortunately, I can't send you to goal," Joe Carton continued harshly. "Your rank as an Indian prince would cause complications with India. But I can do one thing, by gosh! I'm giving you twenty-four hours to get out of this country. If you don't—I'll have you deported!"

"I'll leave," Ortega promised in a shaking voice. "Don't—don't expose me!"

Carton turned towards Cranston. He gave a quick cry. So did the others.

The Shadow was gone!

Unnoticed, he had vanished from that sinister room. His work was done. He had smashed a powerful group of organised criminals and exposed its real leader. When he had ripped the gown from Isabel's gold-smear'd body, she watched her die by her own hand. Cranston had ended for ever the menace of the Blood Sapphires. The criminals were dead. Carton had all the facts. The credit for solving the mystery would go to Joe.

Cranston wanted no credit. That was why he had so silently vanished. He would remain invisible and unknown until a new challenge to the law brought him again out of shrouding darkness.

Like a black symbol of justice the Shadow would be waiting—ready for endless war on crime!

THE END.

(Let the Editor have your opinion of this story. Address your letters to The Editor, The THRILLER Office, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. And see Page 394 for full details of next week's latest and best NORMAN CONQUEST story—THE PHANTOM TRAIN, by Berkeley Gray.)

HURRY UP! . . . THE WHISTLE  
WILL BE GOING NEXT WEEK!

500 FREE FOOTBALLS



**HURRY UP!** if you want to be in the running for one of the FIVE HUNDRED FREE FOOTBALLS offered to "FOOTER-STAMPS" collectors! The ball-cover is coming next week. "Footer-Stamps" are still appearing every week, and consist, of course, of pictures of six different actions on the football field—the object of this great competition stamp-game being to score as many "goals" as you can with them, and by the closing date (November 6th) for this month's prizes.

**TO SCORE A "GOAL"** you collect a complete set of six stamps (they're numbered 1 to 6), made up of the following movements: **KICK-OFF—DRIBBLE—TACKLE—HEADER—SHOT—GOAL.** (Note that the "goal" stamp by itself does NOT count as a "goal"; you must get a set of the stamps 1 to 6 each time.)

The more stamps you collect the more "goals" you can score, and this week there are ten more stamps below to add to your collection. Cut them out—there's another complete "goal" for you among them, and the other stamps will, no doubt, fit in with others you have left over from previous weeks (or even previous contests). Save all your stamps still, and collect any more you can, because time is getting short.

\* If you want to score some other quick "goals," remember that "Footer-Stamps" are also appearing in **DETECTIVE WEEKLY** and **WILD WEST WEEKLY** each week. There are more "goals" waiting in these papers this very week.

The 500 Footballs in the October prize-giving are going to the 500 readers scoring the highest numbers of "goals" with "Footer-Stamps" for the month. So don't send any stamps yet! Wait until we tell you how and where next week.

**RULES—500 Footballs** will be awarded in the October contest to the readers declaring and sending in the largest number of "goals" scored with "Footer-Stamps." The offer may extend or amend the prize list in case of too many ties, and no reader may win more than one prize in "Footer-Stamps."

Each "goal" must consist of a set of "Footer-Stamps," Nos. 1 to 6, inclusive—all claims for prizes to be made on the proper coupon (to be given next week). No allowance made for any coupon or stamps mutilated or lost or delayed in the post or otherwise. No correspondence! No one connected with this paper may enter, and the Editor's decision will be final and legally binding throughout. (N.B.—"Footer-Stamps" may also be collected from the following papers: "Detective Weekly," "Wild West Weekly," "Gem," "Magnum," "Modern Boy," "Boy's Cinema," "Triumph," "Sports Budget," and "Champion.")

**OVERSEAS READERS!** You readers far away—you're in this great scheme, also, and special prizes in cash will be given for the best scores from overseas readers. There will be a special closing date for you as well, of course!

10 MORE "FOOTER-STAMPS"!

