

SHADOW

The Death House Rescue (September 9, 1937)

Synopsis and critique

[This is the first episode of The Shadow radio program. For a long time it was believed lost. [Indeed, it is for sale in a package called **The Shadow: The Lost Shows.**] It's a bit ragged - there are some continuity problems with it, with events taking place out of time sequence. The use of the opening teaser is confusing! (But a staple of the early episodes.) See (and try to hear) for yourself...]

Lamont Cranston - Orson Welles
Margot Lane - Agnes Moorehead
Paul Gordon - Bill Johnstone (a Shadow to be)
Mrs. Gordon -
Red
Lefty -

The Shadow theme.

Laughter. "Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men?" More laughter. "The Shadow knows." [A thin, reedy, voice, the voice of the 'original' Shadow (host of *Detective Story*), Frank Readick. Throughout Welles' tenure, Readick continued to do the opening. As is clear within the episodes themselves, Welles' 'Shadow laugh' leaves a bit to be desired.]

"Blue Coal presents The Shadow, a man of mystery who strikes terror in the very souls of sharpsters, lawbreakers, and criminals."

Organ music

"All signs point to a severe winter. Be prepared. If you want to be sure of even, dependable, healthful heat, in any kind of weather, insist on Blue Coal. America's finest anthracite mined from the fields of Northern Pennsylvania. The coal that is colored a harmless blue at the mine for your protection."

Music

Sound of a man rattling on the bars of his cage. His voice is desperate, tearful. "You can't take me to the chair! You can't do it! Let me out of here. Let me.."

A voice...an eerie voice...[filtered through the microphone.] "PAUL GORDON. LISTEN."

"Eh? I can't see anybody. Who's that?" [This is to be a constant refrain in the eighteen years of episodes to come...]

"I AM THE SHADOW."

Gordon whimpers.

"STOP. WE HAVEN'T MUCH TIME. WE MUST HURRY, GORDON. YOU'RE IN THE DEATHOUSE. CHARGED WITH MURDER."

"Yes. I'm innocent! I'm innocent! But nobody knows it."

"TAKE COURAGE, GORDON. THE SHADOW KNOWS." And his laughter fills the cell.

MUSICAL BRIDGE.

"All right, Margot, won't you sit down?" It's the voice of the Shadow, but not as eerie, a normal voice. A slightly nasal, upper class, young man about town voice. "I told Abdul to serve our coffee here in the library, unless you'd rather go on the terrace."

"No," says Margot, in pensive tones. "I prefer it here."

"Then let me see you smile. That frown is most unbecoming."

"Lamont," Margot says earnestly, "give it up."

"Give what up, my dear? Drinking coffee?"

"I'm serious, Lamont Cranston! When I foolishly let you know that...do you remember what you said. It will be exactly five years next week."

"But there's still so much to do, Margo."

“Well then let somebody else do it! Don’t you realize that you *can’t* keep on like this for ever. Someone’s certain to identify you. And when that someone does, someone else is certain to kill you! “

“Perhaps. But until they do...darling, stop frowning.”

“I don’t mean necessarily to give up your work, Lamont. But this other. Let The Shadow just disappear, and come out openly. Join the organized forces of law and police.”

“Won’t you realize, Margo, that my entire usefulness to the organized forces of law and police, lies in my remaining outside those forces? In remaining always...the Shadow. Would they approve my methods, would they believe in my science?”

“You would make them believe. You could make them approve.”

“And in doing so reveal my secrets, my knowledge. Reveal them, and eventually let them fall into the hands of organized crime. No, Margot. No one must ever know. No one but you. Why do you think I’ve devoted countless hours to investigating electrical and chemical phenomena. Why do you think I went to India, to Egypt, to China? What do you think I studied in London, Paris and Vienna? Except to learn the old mysteries that modern science has not yet rediscovered. The natural magic modern psychology is beginning to understand, and well, magic that wouldn’t seem so natural...I studied and learned...for a purpose, my dear.”

“All right, Lamont. I...I realize all that. But *now*, now the entire underworld has but one objective, to erase the Shadow! And to me that means...”

“Until they know what the Shadow is, and who he is...what can they do? Stop and think how many criminals are either dead or in prison because of our activities. Why, even now, tonight, as we sit quietly here, somewhere, an innocent human being may be in desperate trouble. Somewhere, perhaps, there is a problem that can never be solved, except by the Shadow.”

An innocuous MUSICAL BRIDGE.

“What did the doctor say, Grace?” It’s Paul Gordon’s voice again. Calmer this time. We’ve obviously gone back in time, to discover how he ended up in the death house.

“It was good news...and bad too, I’m afraid, dear.”

“Well, whatever it was, dear, tell me.”

“Well, he said the baby could be perfectly well again within a year.”

“Thank God for that! Poor kid, she’s had a tough time. Well, what else?”

“This part isn’t so good, Paul. She’ll need treatments during all that time! Paul! Treatments cost money!”

“I know. Well, we’ll have to manage somehow. You didn’t do a very good job marrying me, dear.

“Darling...”

“If I could only get a job! I’ve got my health, and I’ve got brains! But...no one seems to want them.”

“They will dear. They’ve...they’ve got to!”

“You’re right, dear. We’re just about down to rock bottom. I’ve raised every cent I can on the house and car. There isn’t anything left.”

“You and I are still left, Paul. And we’ve got to take care of Sally. She’s our daughter, Paul, and she’s got to have her chance!”

“And she’s going to have it, somehow. Tomorrow I’ll start out, and take anything I can get.”

“Darling. Perhaps tomorrow things will break for us.”

“Yes. If only they don’t break the wrong way.”

MUSIC

Sound of men talking. People working. It’s a restaurant.

“Excuse me, but are you the boss here?” “That’s right.” “I’m looking for a job.” “Nothing doing, buddy.” “I’ll do anything, wait on table, wash dishes, anything at all.” “I don’t need anymore help.” “But how about delivering things? I’ve got a car.” “Nope, I don’t deliver nuthin. Sorry, don’t need ya.” “I see. All right. Thanks.”

“Hey! Hey, you. Bud.”

“What? You calling to me?”

“Yeah, siddown.”

Paul Gordon sits. The man introduces his friend, Lefty, and himself, Red. Red gives Gordon a proposition. “We need a car, and we need someone to drive it for us. You understand?” Gordon clearly *doesn’t* understand. “Well, I’ve got a car!” he says eagerly! “Is it a good car? Has it got speed?” They arrange to meet Gordon the next morning, right in front of the

uptown bank. "We've got to go there first to cash a check," Lefty says innocently.

Gordon shows up the next morning in front of the bank at nine in the morning, as instructed. A cop approaches him, tells him to move. "Don't you see that sign? No parking." "I'm not parking, officer, I'm waiting for a couple of men. I'm working for them." "Oh," says the cop, and as he speaks there's the sound of gunshots. "He, what's that?"

Noises and sounds of confusion as Red and Lefty appear and order Gordon to start driving. Or they'll shoot him. Gordon drives. Red continues shooting out the back of the car. "We should never have shot that cop," Red comments. "Say, let me out of this," says Gordon, panic-stricken. "Take the car. They'll think I'm in with you!" "That's just what we're figuring on," Red says cruelly.

Red and Lefty bail at the next curve, leaving Gordon alone in the car with planted evidence – a bag full of money and a gun. The police don't believe Gordon's denials. "And you say you're innocent...it'll take more than saying so to keep you out of the electric chair!"

MUSIC

Courtroom. The judge reads out the verdict. "Paul Gordon, the jury have found you guilty...I direct that you be taken from here to the place whence you came and be put to death... and may god have mercy on your soul."

There's the sound of laughter, which irritates the judge no end. "The laughter came from that corner." "But there's no one in that corner, only a shadow!"

ORGAN MUSIC

"Go to sleep, dear. Mother will be right here in the next room."

As soon as Mrs. Gordon gets into the next room, she lets her calm façade drop. She's so worried about her husband, she's practically in tears. At this point, Margot Lane knocks on the door. She gives Mrs. Gordon a thousand dollars in cash, and tells Mrs. Gordon not to lose hope. "There is hope for Paul, then?" Mrs. Gordon says anxiously. "The man who sent this to you never fails."

MUSICAL BRIDGE

“Well, Lefty, tonight the fall guy goes to the chair.”

“That’s what he gets for being a sucker.”

“Yeah. There’s not a clue that even points our way.”

“Not even a print. We had gloves on all the time.”

“You had yours off for a minute when you were sitting next to him.” [How convenient]

“Yeah, but I didn’t touch the wheel.”

“Then we ain’t left a clue.”

“YOU THINK SO.”

“Who said that?”

“IT WAS I. YOU CANNOT SEE ME. I AM HERE IN THE ROOM. IN THE SHADOW. YOU HAVE PINNED YOUR CRIME ON AN INNOCENT MAN. HE SHALL NOT SUFFER, BUT YOU WILL.”

“I don’t know who you are or where you are, but you’re bluffing, anyway. You got no evidence. We didn’t leave a clue.”

“YOU DID LEAVE A CLUE. A CLUE THAT WILL SEND YOU TO THE CHAIR.” The Shadow laughs. “KEEP THINKING ABOUT IT. KEEP THINKING ABOUT THE CLUE THAT YOU FORGOT.” And he laughs again.

Ominous music

“MARGOT LANE. PAUL GORDON IS IN THE DEATH HOUSE AND IS TO DIE IN THE CHAIR TONIGHT. I AM GOING TO HIM NOW. WE CAN STILL SAVE HIM. STAND BY FOR ORDERS.”

COMMERICAL MUSIC

“In a few moments we will return to The Shadow. But before we do, let me stress this one fact. For home heating, anthracite is best. And America’s finest anthracite is Blue Coal. Anthracite is the healthful fuel. It gives steady uniform heat that helps prevent colds and cuts down doctor’s bills. For with anthracite there is no quick chilling of the house, such as you get with fuels of the on and off type, or with quick burning fuels that flare up and burn out. Bear in mind that heating plants in this part of the country were especially designed to burn anthracite. So before that cold snap catches you unaware, call your local Blue Coal dealer. You’ll find his name listed under the Where to Buy It section in your Classified Directory under the words, Blue Coal. Call him tomorrow, and order a supply of America’s finest anthracite.”

The Death House. Paul Gordon asks the Warden if there is any news from the Governor. But the governor has refused to take any action. His execution is scheduled for eleven o’clock that night. “What time is it now?” “Almost ten.”

Gordon is moved into another cell by two guards – closer to the electric chair. They go into the Preparation Room. One of the guards, however, is not who he seems. He knocks out the other guard, and his voice takes on the tones of the Shadow! He also disappears, back into the shadows. “NOW GORDON, LISTEN TO ME. NO CRIME IS PERFECT. THERE’S ALWAYS SOMEWHERE, A LOOSE END. THE ONLY REASON THAT ALL CRIMES AREN’T SOLVED IS BECAUSE THERE’S SOME ONE FACT THAT SOMEONE KNOWS AND DOESN’T TELL. AND SOMETIMES THEY DON’T TELL, BECAUSE THEY DON’T KNOW THAT THEY KNOW.”

“I told everything I know in court. But they wouldn’t believe me then.” “BECAUSE YOU COULDN’T PROVE WHAT YOU SAID. WE’RE GOING AFTER THE PROOF NOW. YOU AND I...I’M GOING TO THINK WITH YOUR MIND...DON’T TRY TO UNDERSTAND...I WANT YOU TO CONCENTRATE, GORDON, FIX YOUR MIND ON EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED THAT DAY, MAKE MENTAL PICTURES. I’LL SEE WHAT YOU’LL SEE.”

After a false start (Gordon is thinking about his wife and baby instead) the truth is revealed. “Like television?” “OR MIND READING...”

Gordon thinks back to the events, and in his mind The Shadow describes what he’s seeing. He sees the gunman, Lefty, sitting in the front of the car with Gordon. He sees Lefty reach up with a gloveless hand to adjust the rear-view mirror. “GORDON, NOW I CAN SAVE YOU.”

Sounds of a restaurant. Lefty and Red. "Red, you're a fool for coming in here again. This is the place where we picked up that kid that's burning tonight. Whatcha wanna come in here for?"

There's a telephone call for Lefty. He picks up the receiver and the Shadow laughs. "Who are you, what do you want?" "I WANT JUSTICE. JUSTICE FOR PAUL GORDON, LEFTY." The Shadow mentions the fingerprint on the rear view mirror of the car. "IF THE POLICE FIND THAT FINGERPRINT, YOU'LL BURN, LEFTY."

Lefty grabs Red and they head for Gordon's house. The car's in the garage and they've got to wipe Lefty's fingerprints off that rearview mirror.

Margot Lane has gone to Commissioner Weston, begging him to send some men to the Gordon garage, to catch Lefty and Red and see that justice is done.

MUSIC.

Back in the Death House, the guards have come for Gordon. The prisoners bid him farewell as they walk down the hallway. They're bringing him into the room with the electric chair. Gordon begs them not to take him. "Where are you...please come back..." He's talking to the shadowy figure who promised he'd be saved...

Just at that very second, another man runs up and tells the Warden that the governor is on the phone. He informs everyone that the police caught Lefty and Red in the Gordon garage, trying to wipe out some fingerprints.

"Gordon! Gordon! Did you hear that!" says the Warden, happily. "The Governor saved you."

"No it wasn't the Governor. It was somebody else... I never really saw him...he was only...a shadow...."

MUSIC.

Before another adventure with the Shadow draws to a close [whaddya mean, another? This is supposed to be the debut episode!] John Barclay, Blue Coal's heating expert, would like to say a few words. Mr. Barclay."

MR. BARCLAY: "Good evening, friends. If you are interested in having a more comfortable home this winter, be sure to call your local Blue Coal dealer for he's more than a fuel dealer, he's an authority on modern home heating. You see, for more than six years I've trained service men for these Blue Coal dealers. These men, known as John Barclay Service Men, have added thousands of families like yours to enjoy a greater degree of comfort and to save heating dollars too....[he goes on and on...]

The story you have just heard is copyrighted by The Shadow magazine. Real names are never used in these Shadow stories.

Theme music. "THE WEED OF CRIME BEARS BITTER FRUIT. CRIME DOES NOT PAY. THE SHADOW KNOWS. Hahahahahahahahaaha."

Street sounds. "Extra....extra....next week at this same time....The Shadow and the Red Micor. Extra! Extra! Extra. Next week at this same time...."