

# **CRIME UNDER COVER**

Maxwell Grant

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# CRIME UNDER COVER

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## CHAPTER I. MENACE IN WASHINGTON

THE throng from the train gate poured into the vast concourse of the Washington Union Station and melted away, much to the amazement of Jerry Croft, and to his annoyance, too. He had counted upon staying with the crowd, thereby keeping himself unnoticed; but it simply couldn't be done.

This was his first visit to Washington, and he had heard, but forgotten, that the concourse at the Union Station was large enough to contain an army of fifty thousand men. At this moment, Jerry felt that he needed about forty-nine thousand others in order to lose himself as he had planned.

His walk across to the main waiting room seemed like a one-man parade, and he felt that all eyes were upon him, until he realized that many of the other people were too far away to identify him, even if they knew him.

In a way, he was lost, after all, but it didn't occur to him, until later, that persons who might have spotted him at the train gate would look as though they were lost while they trailed him.

The waiting room was large, too, but it was fairly crowded, which was something of a help. Jerry found his way to the taxicabs, and hailed one just as someone else took it. He turned around and saw the dark-faced

man with the bulgy forehead step back from sight.

He was an odd-looking chap, as Jerry had noted on the train. Odd, that he had arrived at the cab rank as soon as Jerry; odder, that he had gone back into the waiting room.

Maybe he had forgotten something; perhaps he wanted to send a telegram. People did send telegrams from Washington, as Jerry could easily prove, because he had one in his pocket.

It was the telegram that had come from Professor Ulrich Ardlan, and it was the thing that had brought Jerry Croft to Washington. Jerry didn't have to look at the telegram to remember it; he knew its brief message by heart.

A cab pulled up and Jerry tossed his small but heavy suitcase into it, as he took another look for the man with the big, dark brow. Not seeing the fellow, he decided that it was safe to confide in the cab driver, so he told him to drive to the World Wide Cafe, the meeting place the professor had named in the telegram.

Why Professor Ardlan, whose chief diet was milk toast, should have picked a restaurant as a rendezvous, was something rather baffling; but then, Ardlan's ways were always curious, and Jerry had learned to expect almost anything from him.

Some people insisted that Ardlan was crazy, and Jerry had learned not to dispute them, rather than have himself considered a bit touched, too. In fact, through association with the professor, Jerry wondered at times whether he was still wholly sane, particularly when he found himself worrying about men with big foreheads and thinking they were on his trail.

The cab worked its way to Pennsylvania Avenue, and sight of that broad boulevard, glittering with light, intrigued Jerry. He was riding away from the capitol building, but in what direction he hadn't an idea, and when the cab turned off into a side street and swung along another, its passenger was totally confused. The cab stopped in front of a prosperous-looking restaurant that bore the sign:

#### WORLD WIDE CAFE

This, at least, was Jerry's destination. He alighted from the cab, paid the zone fare and entered the restaurant, carrying his suitcase. A hat-check girl wanted to take it, but Jerry shook his head and she smiled.

The girl had seen others like Jerry before. He was reasonably handsome, and very earnest, as if he had important business to handle, with the answer to it in the bag that he carried. He was looking for someone, as such arrivals in Washington usually did.

Jerry wouldn't have had trouble finding Ardlan, had the professor been in the restaurant. Professor Ardlan had much the appearance of a shaggy-maned lion, except that his hair was gray, and, in true leonine fashion, he bellowed at everyone who approached him, which usually meant the waiters when he dined in public.

There was no one in the cafe like Ardlan. Jerry was sure, because he knew that he would have heard the professor, even if he couldn't see him.

So Jerry took a table near a corner from which he could watch the door. He put the suitcase on another chair, where it was within easy reach. Containing, as it did, a collection of chemical formulas, mostly pertaining to gases, the bag was of importance to Jerry, especially as the formulas represented his own research of more than six months.

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PEOPLE were coming into the restaurant, but Ardlan was not among them. Jerry wondered if he really had remembered the telegram correctly. He pulled it from his pocket, and found that he was right. It said to come to Washington on the express that arrived at six thirty-five, and to meet Ardlan at the World Wide Cafe.

So Jerry put the telegram away and studied the menu, deciding to get a head start on his dinner before the professor showed up for milk toast.

Men were seating themselves at the next table, and Jerry could overhear their conversation. It wasn't in English, but Jerry had traveled around enough to know smatterings of other languages to the point of identifying them.

This happened to be one that he couldn't class, though it had snatches of familiarity. (Note: Unknown to Jerry Croft at this time, the language being spoken in the cafe is Esperanto. Jerry will learn the meaning of this restaurant conversation later in the story. Throughout the story; if the text itself does not make the meaning of the Esperanto clear, when it is spoken, a footnote will give the translation to the reader. For further information about Esperanto, please turn to the end of this story.) At least, the men spoke plainly, so that their pronunciation was recognizable.

"Mi sekvis lin el la stacio," said one. "Li estas la viro."

"Bonega," spoke another. "Ni observos lin."

Jerry looked toward the speakers and stared. One of the four was the man who had been on the train, there was no mistake about it. Viewing the fellow in profile, Jerry saw the big forehead and its bulge; as for the man's complexion, it was definitely dark, though the cafe was well lighted.

The others were speaking, and Jerry couldn't catch the odd words in the babble. Fortunately, at that moment a waiter approached their table. They silenced, without noticing Jerry, but even the sudden quiet was curious. They weren't worried about the waiter hearing them; they wanted to hear what he had to say, and it was in their own language!

"Oni audos vin," the waiter confided. "Se iu komprenas, gi estus malbona."

There were nods from the rest. With wary looks, they began to point out items on the menu, that the waiter jotted down while he nodded. By then, Jerry was behaving warily, too, but from the corner of his eye he was checking on the bulge-headed man's comrades.

They looked foreign, but of what nationalities, Jerry could not guess, except that they varied. The waiter, obviously a member of their group, looked more American than the rest, but his inset face, tawny in shade, marked him as a probable unknown quantity.

Sliding his hand in his coat pocket, Jerry found a little notebook and rested it on his knee. He had a stubby pencil handy, too, and he decided to jot down what he heard next, particularly if the bulge-browed man spoke it.

The fellow was the one who did speak, just after the waiter had finished taking the orders. He motioned to the waiter and said slowly, importantly:

"Alportu al mi ion florbrasiketo."

The waiter nodded, and repeated:

"Florbrasiketo. Mi memoros."

Pocketing the order list, he became a typical waiter as he strolled away, and Jerry, writing the words as well as he could remember them, was definitely sure of one: florbrasiketo. He regarded it as the most important thing that he had caught from the conversation.

Apparently, by mutual consent, the four men were saying little; when they did, they spoke more rapidly and kept their voices lowered; so that neither Jerry, nor any others close by, could overhear them, but their tones indicated that they were still using the peculiar language that they preferred.

A different waiter took Jerry's order, and while he ate, Jerry kept watching for the professor and speculating about the tribe at the neighboring table. It might be just a coincidence that the bulgy-browed man had come to the World Wide Cafe, and not a remarkable one at that, since the name of the place indicated that it was cosmopolitan.

Nevertheless, Jerry didn't like it, particularly when Professor Ardlan did not appear.

ARDLAN was somewhere in Washington; he had come to the capital to sell the government a wonderful idea that he considered to be of military value, and the fact that Ardlan was staying in Washington indicated that he was getting somewhere with it.

He had left Jerry with enough work to keep him busy indefinitely, instructing him to stay at it until further word arrived. The further word had been the telegram.

Jerry had enough money with him to stay at a hotel, but that wouldn't help to find Ardlan. The professor was absent-minded at times, but there were others with him, and one in particular, Trennick, wouldn't let him forget an important appointment. In fact, Trennick had probably sent the telegram for the professor, unless –

The thing rang home while Jerry was looking at the man with the bulgy forehead. Could it be that the telegram itself was a hoax? That someone in the queer-looking outfit had sent it, signing the professor's name, and that the man with the big brow had been assigned to pick up Jerry's trail along the way?

Professor Ardlan often had ideas that people were following him, but could never furnish proof. In Jerry's case, it was different. He couldn't say that the man had followed him to the cafe, but the fellow had come to the same place, which amounted to the same thing, and perhaps more. It might even mean that he had known where Jerry intended to go.

There was a way to find out. Jerry's waiter had left the check, and it came to an even sum, allowing for the tip. His hat and suitcase close at hand, Jerry reached for them under cover of the table.

He noted that the man with the bulgy head was busy over a plate of broccoli and figured it a time for opportune departure. Before any of them realized it, Jerry had his hat and bag and was on his way.

There was a cab outside, and stepping right into it, Jerry looked back. He saw the waiter – the one who talked the odd language – gesticulating to the men at the table, and they were coming to their feet, not bothering about their checks, which the waiter, as one of their crowd, could pay for them.

Men didn't bolt from the middle of a meal unless there was a fire, or they had chosen to go after someone who had left too soon.

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In this case, the early bird was Jerry. He didn't intend to waste his advantage hunting for worms. He was in the cab, his suitcase with him, when he heard the driver say:

"Where to?"

"Next corner," responded Jerry. "Turn left, then I'll give you the address. I'm in a hurry."

Hurry or no hurry, the cab was just turning the corner when Jerry saw the quartet tear from the World Wide Cafe and pile into a speedy-looking sedan that had pulled up to receive them. Then Jerry's cab was around the corner and the driver was asking:

"Where next?"

"Straight ahead," snapped Jerry, "and go like blazes!"

"But this takes us into the Potomac –"

"Then turn off wherever you can, but keep going. Look into the mirror; you'll see that somebody is after us."

The driver looked into the mirror and caught a glimpse of Jerry, as well as the car behind. Jerry struck him as all right, whereas the pursuing car didn't. The cabby needed no further urge.

He took the straightaway at his fastest clip, swerved finally into a drive that followed the river's curve. The other car did the same, and when Jerry looked back, he not only saw that it had gained, but had the sinking impression that still another pursuing car was coming along with it.

Grimly, Jerry Croft set himself to meet the unknown future, confident that when the critical moment arrived, all would not be quiet along the Potomac!

## CHAPTER II. BATTLE BY DARK

THE cab took a sudden swerve, ripped its way between two Japanese cherry trees, hooked another, skewed about, and wound up within a biscuit's toss of the river bank. Two doors shot open at once – one on the left front, the other at the right rear. The front door emitted the cabby, the rear one disgorged Jerry and his bag.

Staying on the road and stopping farther on, the pursuing sedan let loose its four-man quota. They saw Jerry and came after him, spreading out as they wrenched past the cherry branches.

Jerry tried to chuck the suitcase into the Potomac River, but it was heavier than a biscuit and wouldn't carry that far. He went after it, trying to kick it ahead of him. Failing he ducked around the front of the cab, hoping that he could scout up the cabby and enlist his aid in going after the four men, if they obtained the suitcase.

They didn't bother about the bag. They wanted to get Jerry, instead. Two rounded the front of the cab, as he had; the other pair cut in from the rear. Jerry saw the second car of the pursuit line, as it nosed in through the cherry-tree wreckage that the cab had caused. He'd only be cut off if he kept in that direction. Desperately, Jerry turned, and made his predicament immediate.

Four men were upon him, a pair from each direction, and they were swinging things that gleamed: guns. His hands up to ward off the blows, Jerry felt a surge of overwhelming blackness that struck like an avalanche. He went down beneath it, sensing blows that he thought must come from slugging guns, only to realize that feet were kicking him.

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Feet that went jouncing away in one direction, toward the river, as if one pair of attackers had driven back the others.

Staring from propped-up elbows, with his hands clapped to his head, Jerry thought that the four were fighting among themselves – which seemed incredible for the moment, but faded into simplicity at what he realized next.

They weren't fighting each other; they were battling blackness! Slugging wildly, guns were meeting others that Jerry could not see, but could hear by their clicks.

It was a shadowy struggle with an invisible foe, so far as Jerry could view it, until the swirl of battle carried the melee into the glare of the cab's headlights.

There, with invisibility denied him, the fighter who had taken on the odds declared himself, with a laugh that carried weirdly out across the river. It was a laugh of challenge, defiant in its mockery, threatening ill to the opposition, regardless of their number. Amid the swirl, Jerry saw the figure of the lone, intrepid fighter.

He was The Shadow!

Cloaked in black, a slouch hat upon his head, this terror to men of evil was sledging with a pair of automatics that were as large as bludgeons. His gloved fists were using their weapons with such advantage, that he was bashing down opposing guns and beating away warding hands.

Jerry had never seen The Shadow; in fact, did not identify him at the moment. He saw a being in black, a superhuman warrior, which was enough. He knew that The Shadow must have come from the second car; that he had been upon the trail of the pursuers themselves.

Those men who babbled in a strange tongue were not profiting by The Shadow's arrival, and recognizing it, they dropped their silent struggle.

Scattering like debris tossed by a tornado, they came about to blaze with their guns; they were in darkness, and they were shooting back at the light that fronted the cab, hoping that wild aim would clip their foe.

But The Shadow was no longer a target; he, too, had gone into darkness. Only Jerry glimpsed the long plunge that he thought, at first, had carried The Shadow over the river's brink.

FROM the water's edge, guns spoke. Their stabs told that The Shadow was not submerged; he was using the low entrenchments afforded by the bank to knife back his replies to futile shots.

Yelps from near the taxicab indicated that The Shadow was scoring hits. Jerry heard one man stagger past him, while the others ran. Rising, he tried to grab at least one fugitive, but all were past him, heading toward the road.

Again, The Shadow's laugh; this time, its trailing tone carried a warning that Jerry didn't understand at first. Another man was joining Jerry – the cabby, who had regained his nerve, now that he was with the hounds instead of the hares.

Somewhere behind them was The Shadow; confident of his support, Jerry thought that this pursuit was what The Shadow wanted.



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He found out differently when he and the cabby overtook the four men. Two were helping the staggering fellow, while the third, who happened to be the bulge-headed man, was carrying one arm rather limp, as though from a deep flesh wound. It was he who turned to brandish a revolver at Jerry and the cabby – at sight of which, they dived apart.

Instantly, The Shadow's gun spoke anew from somewhere in the background. Then did Jerry understand the folly of his own pursuit; the reason for The Shadow's warning. Not only Jerry, but the cabby, too, had blocked off The Shadow's fire. Otherwise, the cloaked marksman would have halted the four fugitives, to the final man, by means of his long-range fire. By now, it was too late.

Two of the men, unscathed, had put their stumbling companion into the car; the driver was starting it away when Jerry saw the fourth fugitive, the man with the big forehead, spring into the front seat.

The Shadow tongued a few shots after them, and they jabbed back, but his purpose was merely to draw their fire away from Jerry and the cabby, who were much closer to danger than The Shadow – if he could be regarded as in danger at all.

Intervening trees helped render futile the last exchange of shots, but Jerry was alarmed by the sudden way The Shadow's gunfire halted – until he heard sirens wail and saw motorcycles whirl in from a broad, curving driveway.

Police had heard the gunfire, and by allowing the escaping opposition the privilege of the last few wasted shots, The Shadow had dispatched the law along their trail.

The cabby was hurrying back to the cab, and Jerry decided to do the same, on the chance of meeting the mysterious fighter who had so ably rescued him. Finding The Shadow in the dark would be impossible, but Jerry hoped that his new friend might declare himself.

On the way to the cab, however, Jerry remembered the suitcase. He knew that the men who talked the strange tongue hadn't taken it, so it logically belonged at the place where Jerry had last kicked it.

Finding the place was the trouble. The cabby had turned off the headlights, in order not to attract any police who might come trailing after the first squad, so Jerry decided to ask him to put them on again. He reached the cab in the darkness; the driver heard him, and said:

"Hop in."

"The suitcase," began Jerry. "I had it with me –"

"It's here in the cab."

The suitcase was in the cab, and Jerry eagerly opened it, while the cab was backing around and nosing for the opening between the trees. The lights were on again, and Jerry saw that The Shadow's car was gone.

As swiftly as he had arrived, the mysterious fighter had departed, hoping, perhaps, that he could pick up the racing motorcycles, to find the fugitive car that was trying to outrun the police.

Jerry's formulas were just as he had packed them. The driver was taking to the curved drive, and Jerry saw that it skirted a roundish landlocked reservoir – the Tidal Basin, jutting in from the Potomac.

"Guess they kind of had us worried," piped the cabby, from the front seat. "You're a cool guy, though. I could tell that when you handed me the bag and told me to put it here in the cab."

"When I told you –"

"Yeah. Or, maybe" – the cabby paused, to peek at Jerry in the mirror – "or maybe you were still kind of groggy."

"I guess I was," acknowledged Jerry. "I don't exactly remember giving you the suitcase."

"I guessed maybe you didn't."

THE cab was swinging into a meshwork of streets where laid-out squares, simple in themselves, were rendered mazelike by the angular crossings of intervening avenues. The cabby knew his way around, for he performed twists that kept carrying the cab along one general direction, but why he was heading that way, Jerry couldn't understand.

Jerry was about to put a question, when a sudden idea struck him. Instead of asking the cabby where they were going, he expressed the query in another way.

"You know where you're going, don't you?"

"To the address you gave me," returned the cabby. "That is, if you remember telling it to me, the same time you passed me the suitcase."

"I remember that part," assured Jerry. "I just wanted to make sure you got it straight."

For all that Jerry knew, their destination might be in Timbuktu, not Washington, but at least he understood the answer to the riddle, as well as the puzzle of the suitcase.

It must have been the cloaked rescuer who had handed the cabby the bag and given him the address in a tone which could have been Jerry's. Up to that time, any tone could have been Jerry's, so far as the cabby was concerned, for their only previous conversation had been an excited one outside the World Wide Cafe.

Maybe the cabby was catching the discrepancy, now that Jerry was talking normally. Maybe not, but in either case it didn't matter. They were bound somewhere, at The Shadow's order, and Jerry Croft was willing to trust the mysterious friend whose fade-out had been as remarkable as his battle.

The cab swung into one of Washington's many secluded streets, where old houses stood half hidden behind rows of shade trees. The cabby poked along looking for the number that he wanted. Finally halting in front of the oddest house of all, he asked:

"Is this the place?"

"It looks like it," Jerry vouchsafed. "I guess you heard me right."

He paid off the cab driver; went to the door of the forbidding house, wondering suddenly whether he might be walking into another trap. The cab was lingering, as if through its driver's curiosity, and Jerry was remembering that he had only the cabby's say-so regarding the address given by the man he thought was his passenger.

Maybe the fellow was in the game and had taken Jerry to the river side so the pursuers could box him. With The Shadow gone, the cabby could have faked his yarn, and this very house might be the headquarters of the strange-speaking men who fled The Shadow's wrath!

If so, the cabby would give the alarm if Jerry welshed at entering the house. If not, he'd at least wonder. The door latch was clicking, and Jerry faced the barrier with tightened fist, hoping that he'd meet The Shadow, or someone who served him, rather than the bulge-headed man, or a similar enemy.

He met neither. Half stepping across the threshold, Jerry continued on a pace, staring in real surprise. His hand came up, its fist unclenched, to receive the clasp of a shaggy-haired man who greeted him with a pleased and booming laugh.

Jerry Croft had kept his appointment in Washington – or, rather, The Shadow had arranged that he should keep it. The man who was greeting Jerry was none other than his singular employer, Professor Ulrich Ardlan!

### CHAPTER III. THE GREAT INVENTION

INSTEAD of clearing the mystery, the meeting with Ardlan only deepened it for Jerry, though he was gradually to gain glimmers which he could recognize as facts.

Once the door was closed, Ardlan's laugh took on a triumphant tone, for the benefit of two men standing by. Jerry recognized one, a pale, dry-faced man with deep eyes and long chin, who happened to be Trennick, Ardlan's trusted servant. The other was heavier set, dark-complexioned, and mustached. He gave Jerry a close scrutiny while being introduced to him.

Professor Ardlan introduced the darkish man as Vic Marquette, from the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

"You see?" queried Ardlan, turning from Trennick to Marquette, "I did send the telegram, as I thought, because Croft is here!"

Marquette nodded, while Trennick gave a worried stare. It was Marquette who spoke to Jerry.

"Did anyone follow you here from the Union Station?"

The query was blunt, and it seemed a criticism of Professor Ardlan. Marquette seemed to want a direct answer, so Jerry gave one which was truthful enough.

He simply said: "No."

Satisfied with the reply, Marquette shrugged and turned away from Jerry, who decided, therewith, to withhold further details unless specifically questioned.

"It's still too bad you named this address in a telegram," said Marquette to the professor. "Nobody is supposed to know you're here. You should have let me contact Croft for you."

"Exactly what I told Professor Ardlan," put in Trennick, "and I was sure, sir" – this was to the professor – "that you didn't send the telegram –"

Another shrug from Marquette indicated that he considered the matter closed. But it wasn't so to Jerry. He was quite convinced that Ardlan hadn't sent the telegram, not only because of the professor's penchant toward absent-mindedness, but because the telegram in Jerry's own pocket did not match the one described. It had

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told Jerry to come to the World Wide Cafe, not to this obscure address.

There was only one answer: someone else had probably wired Jerry; perhaps the bulge-browed man, which would mean that he or some of his associates spoke English, as well as their peculiar, unidentified language. They had brought Jerry to the World Wide Cafe to waylay him before he reached this address.

It was possible that they did not even know where Professor Ardlan was.

How did that bring in The Shadow?

Jerry pondered his own mental question and came to the conclusion that The Shadow was someone who had been watching the group of curious linguists, and seeing them go after Jerry, had taken a hand to stop them.

But only The Shadow could have given the cabby this address, which meant that The Shadow knew much about Professor Ardlan, as well as where the scientist was located.

Those were things that Jerry ought to have told Vic Marquette. There was a reason why he didn't. It was because Marquette happened to speak first.

"I'M glad you're here, Croft," said the Fed. "According to Professor Ardlan, you're the one man he trusts –"

"I trust Trennick, too," insisted Ardlan, clapping his hand on the servant's shoulder. "But each man to his duty. Croft is my assistant in scientific matters, while Trennick attends to my personal affairs."

"Getting to the point, Croft," continued Marquette, "I'm here to make sure that the professor's invention is quite safe. He insists that it is, because Trennick is on watch. But I have no proof" – his tone was emphatic – "that there is an invention in this house!"

"I've shown you the room!" boomed Ardlan. "Down in the cellar, where I keep my Neutralizer –"

"But how do I know what's in the place?" demanded Marquette. "Maybe you're keeping a hippopotamus downstairs, or maybe nothing at all! I've asked Trennick; he doesn't know. He's seen the outside of your strong room, like I have, but not the inside."

Jerry smiled.

"The professor does have an apparatus that he terms the Neutralizer," he declared. "I have seen it, Mr. Marquette, and can assure you of its existence."

"Seeing is believing," reminded Marquette.

Turning to the professor, Jerry suggested that he show the Neutralizer to Marquette. At first, Ardlan was loath to agree, but at last he gave the nod and they went down to the cellar, with Trennick following. They came to a steel door which had a combination lock, like a safe. Ardlan crowded himself in front of the combination, so that not even Jerry could watch him operate it. When the professor opened the door, Jerry noted that the metal was only a sheeting, that the door it covered was of wood.

Marquette started to enter, but Ardlan held him back. He insisted that neither Vic nor Trennick step across the threshold; but he allowed Jerry that privilege.

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In the strong room, resting on a table, was the strangest contrivance that it had ever been Marquette's lot to see. Trennick, too, stared open-mouthed, for he had never been privileged to look at the Neutralizer before. Jerry, however, had seen the thing often.

Its center was a squarish box, not unlike that of a radio cabinet, except that it had a greater variety of knobs and dials, at least two dozen of them. The front was about four feet square, though the cabinet was less than that in depth. A row of lights, of different colors, ran along the top of the cabinet, and there were two diamonds of bulbs – red, yellow, green and blue – at each side.

Even more curious were the devices that topped the cabinet. They looked like small megaphones turned upside down, and they were drilled with holes. Each was capped with a glass bell, and in each crystal dome was a tiny fan, aimed downward. A chromium-plated bar ran along the tops of these bells, serving as a support for the axis of each fan.

The cabinet itself was flanked with cylindrical tanks about the size and appearance of small fire extinguishers, except that they were made of glass. Each contained a liquid, and the colors varied, from jet-black, through green and amber, to a smoky-white. These upright tanks, which formed two columns of four each, had pipes that led into the cabinet.

PRESSING a switch, Professor Ardlan caused the lights to glow; those along the top flickered, but the diamond groups remained constant. Another click, and the fans began to whirl in the glass bells, producing a sucking sound from within the inverted funnels. Ardlan tapped the odd-shaped stacks that topped the cabinet.

"The Identifiers," he explained. "They sort gases and classify them, automatically. The lights will then register."

Marquette rubbed his chin; Ardlan noted it. He stepped toward an old-fashioned gas jet in the corner of the windowless room; then shook his head.

"Not necessary," he said. "It would be too much trouble as a mere demonstration. Just step over, Jerry, and breathe close to the Identifiers. I am not sure which is the proper one, but we shall soon see."

Jerry complied. He was breathing against the third funnel in the row of eight, when the flicker of the lights stopped. Two colors remained along the top: yellow and blue.

"Carbon dioxide," said Ardlan. "Watch."

He manipulated a switch at the left, until only yellow and blue shone from the diamond at that side. Going to the right, he repeated the process. When he turned a central knob, two vents popped open, one in the middle of each diamond, and the buzz of new fans came from within the cabinet.

Jerry kept on breathing as the professor gestured, but it was no use. Though Ardlan had stepped away from the cabinet, the vents closed suddenly and the diamonds glowed anew with all four colors, while the lights at the top flickered again.

The professor was pointing to one of the tanks at the side of the cabinet; Marquette observed that its liquid had bubbled.

"Enough, Jerry," said Ardlan. "Don't get yourself out of breath." He turned to the door. "Mr. Marquette, you have seen what my Neutralizer does. It sucks in gases, identifies them, and provides a vapor that neutralizes them."

## CRIME UNDER COVER

"With any gases?" inquired Marquette.

"It could," returned Ardlan, proudly, "if I made it intricate enough. But I have confined it to known forms of harmful and poison gases, some of which are odorless and difficult to detect.

"Those large tanks in the corner" – he pointed to them – "contain such deadly gases as carbon monoxide and phosgene. I have experimented with all of them, along with chlorine and mustard gases. I regard them as playthings."

He was coming to the door, bringing Jerry along. Marquette, still looking at the tanks in the corner, gave a nod and said:

"I suppose that's why you keep the room locked."

"No," returned Ardlan. "I am more concerned about my Neutralizer. Look!" He stepped back to the cabinet, where he had already turned off the switches, and pressed two catches. As he tilted the device forward, the top lifted and showed the interior – an array of pipes, fans, wires, and coils, with dry-cell batteries perched on special shelves.

"Entirely self-contained," declared Ardlan. "And all the plans for it" – he was tilting the cabinet back with one hand, while he tapped his forehead with the other – "are locked right here. It would take me hours, perhaps days, to go over the mechanism, should anyone meddle with it. The misplacing of even a single wire would put it entirely out of order. That is why I allow no one to touch the Neutralizer."

MARQUETTE started upstairs with Jerry, while Trennick waited for Ardlan to lock the door. Drawing Jerry into a small parlor, the F.B.I. man asked:

"How long have you known the professor?"

Jerry replied, "A year or more."

"Did he ever let you handle the Neutralizer?"

"No," replied Jerry. "My work is research. I dope out chemical formulas for neutralizing compounds."

"He had the machine before you met him?"

Jerry nodded.

"Tell me," asked Vic, narrowly. "Had he been working on perpetual motion before he started this thing?"

The inference was plain. Marquette thought that the professor was a crackpot, despite the recent demonstration, which in itself meant nothing, because the machine could have been rigged to produce the result automatically.

Behind the thought was Vic's mistrust of the professor, which was reasonable, considering Ardlan's eccentric ways.

Smiling at Marquette's doubts, Jerry insisted that he, at least, had faith in Professor Ardlan; but, therewith, he resolved to make no mention of his adventures here in Washington.

## CRIME UNDER COVER

He doubted that Marquette would have any regard for the opinion of a man who talked of enemies who spoke an unknown tongue, and a friend in black who had fought them off and then vanished like a ghost. He didn't suppose that Marquette could believe in the existence of such a person as The Shadow.

That was Jerry's mistake. Marquette did know about The Shadow. It was a mysterious tip-off from the being in black that had brought Vic to Ardlan's. Had Jerry mentioned The Shadow, Marquette would not have doubted his sanity. On the contrary, he would have placed more confidence in Ardlan's young assistant.

Marquette left soon after Ardlan came upstairs, and it wasn't long before the telephone bell rang. Ardlan answered it, and Jerry heard him hold a blunt conversation. Returning, Ardlan announced to Jerry:

"It was Rufus Bradwell. You remember him?"

"The millionaire manufacturer," nodded Jerry, "who wanted to finance your invention. Is he here in Washington?"

"Yes," said Ardlan. "On a matter of some government contracts. He made me another offer, Jerry!" The professor's voice became a confiding whisper. "Half a million dollars for my Neutralizer, as it stands!"

"You turned it down, of course."

"Of course!" Ardlan leaned back and boomed a satisfied laugh. "My invention is for the benefit of all mankind, not as a thing of profit for Bradwell. Here is news, Jerry" – again it was a whisper. "The official test is set for the day after tomorrow."

Trennick was in the doorway. The dry-faced servant spoke remindingly to the professor.

"You wanted to call Congressman Anderton, sir –"

The professor laughed again.

"Anderton called me this afternoon, Trennick," he said. "Have you forgotten so soon? It is your memory that is at fault, this time."

Trennick retired, apologetically, closing the door as he went. Once in the hall, however, the servant no longer looked forgetful. Instead, his usually dull face was shrewd, as he sneaked to the telephone and dialed a number.

When a voice answered, Trennick spoke words that Jerry would have appreciated had he been present to overhear them, though he would not have understood them.

"Li alvenis sendangere," undertoned Trennick, "sed il rakontis nulo. Diru al mi, cu il evitis vin?" ("He arrived safely," undertoned Trennick, "but he said nothing. Tell me, did he avoid you?")

Trennick was using the same language as the men in the World Wide Cafe! He was being understood, for the reply that came from the receiver clicked away in the same tongue. Then:

"Ci tio estas grava," declared Trennick. "Illi estas preta provi la aparato. Morgau nokte estos nia fina okazo malebligi iln." ("This is important," declared Trennick. "They are ready to test the apparatus. Tomorrow night will be our last opportunity to stop them.")

Hanging up the receiver, Trennick took quick cat-footed steps along the hallway when he heard the creak of the parlor door. He was gone, into the kitchen, when Professor Ardlan and Jerry Croft appeared. They stopped at a table in the hallway, where Jerry had left his bag. He opened it to give Ardlan the sheaf of formulas.

Another door was opening, but it did not creak. It was the front door, which the professor thought was securely locked; it had been, until a few moments ago. Through the crack of the door, The Shadow saw Ardlan take the formulas; he could also hear a slight clatter from the kitchen.

"Trennick is preparing you some supper," the professor told Jerry. "He is thoughtful and faithful. I shall take these down to the laboratory, and return later. I feel quite safe, Jerry, now that you are here, along with Trennick."

The front door closed; its lock turned noiselessly under the probe of a special key provided from the other side. As far as The Shadow had seen and heard, all was well in the abode of Professor Ardlan.

How Trennick's unsuspected treachery was to change the situation, only the future could reveal – unless The Shadow, man of many methods, could gain his inklings elsewhere!

### **CHAPTER IV. JERRY MAKES A CALL**

LATE the following afternoon, Jerry Croft took a cab from near the professor's house and rode to an apartment hotel nearer the center of Washington, keeping sharp outlook along the way. He felt it safe enough to be at large, since nothing untoward had occurred since the adventure along the Potomac River.

It was better, too, that Jerry should make this trip than the professor – which was the only other alternative. Better, too, because Ardlan wasn't in the right mood to call on Congressman Howard Anderton, who was the object of the visit.

From things that Ardlan had told Jerry in the morning, Anderton must have found the old professor to be quite a Tartar; in fact, Jerry wondered how they had gotten together at all. With the test of the Neutralizer finally decided upon, it would not do to let Ardlan ruin his chance on the last day, so Jerry had gladly accepted the assignment.

Congressman Anderton had a little office in his hotel suite, where he received people after hours. It was not much more than a reception room, where a young man, apparently Anderton's secretary, was on duty. Jerry gave his name and was shown into a study, where he met the congressman.

Anderton was as big a man as Ardlan, but bald, instead of shaggy-haired. His face, though stern, was pleasant enough and his handshake warm.

"Glad you came, young man," announced Anderton. "I've had a deuce of a time with that professor friend of yours. Wish he wasn't from my congressional district. Yes, I actually do. Sometimes, I almost think he's crazy. You'll meet a man soon who really believes that he is."

Jerry didn't ask about the man in question. He merely wanted to know about the test.

"We'll hold it at the proving grounds," declared Anderton. "Ardlan says the apparatus is effective within a radius of thirty feet, outdoors as well as indoors, so we'll have the test outdoors, to let people look on. We're going to use goats. Souse them good with some poison gas and let the professor show that he can save them."



## CRIME UNDER COVER

There was a chuckle from the door. Jerry looked to see a tall, rugged man whose square face wore a smile, though it wasn't exactly a pleasant one. Somehow, those features looked familiar, with the grizzled hair above them.

Jerry remembered why, when Anderton introduced the visitor as Rufus Bradwell. Once Jerry had seen Bradwell when he called on Ardlan, but had not been introduced to him.

"So you're going to let the witch doctor have a try," chuckled Bradwell, referring to Ardlan. "He'll have to use plenty of hocus-pocus along with that mechanized brainstorm of his, or it will be tough on the goats. When is the test to be, Anderton?"

The congressman hesitated; then said:

"Tomorrow afternoon. We aren't announcing it publicly, though, because Ardlan preferred otherwise."

"He has a lot of crazy notions."

"I am afraid that he has." Anderton turned to Jerry. "Frankly, Croft, the professor has been a nuisance. For example, he insisted that Congress appropriate a million dollars before it was even tested, as a guarantee that it would really be put in use."

"He feels that it's a human benefit," said Jerry, "but he also told me that he was willing to take your word that the government would go through with it; if it worked."

"And would donate it to all the world," added Anderton, "so that peoples of all nations could be protected against the worst forms of chemical warfare. Don't forget that part of it."

"I know," smiled Jerry. "Ardlan said he would take your word for that, too."

Bradwell inserted one of his unpleasant laughs.

"A million dollars," Bradwell ridiculed. "Why, I wouldn't give another five thousand for the other half share!"

At Jerry's surprise, Bradwell explained. He said that he had loaned Ardlan five thousand dollars to start work on the Neutralizer, two years ago. He had letters to prove it, containing the statement that he, Bradwell, was entitled to half of whatever profits the device should bring.

Of course, if Ardlan chose to give the invention away, that would leave him owing Bradwell five thousand dollars, nothing more. But there was another angle to it.

"We agreed to develop the device," stated Bradwell. "If Ardlan doesn't, I can. I have some of his earlier plans, and basically, the thing has merit. But I think that Ardlan has gone off the track, as he always does. So I've put other men to work along the same plan. Perhaps they will succeed if Ardlan does not."

Jerry couldn't readily believe that Ardlan would have given anyone the rough plans of his earlier work; but he knew that there were things the professor had never told him. Moreover, Bradwell's statement, considered logically, fitted with something that Ardlan had said the night before; something in keeping with the professor's usual way of mixing matters.

The offer of half a million dollars hadn't sounded plausible, but now Jerry could reconcile it. If Bradwell already held a half interest, and Ardlan figured the government would spend a million dollars, that meant that

## CRIME UNDER COVER

the professor's own share was worth a half million.

Probably Bradwell had merely requested that Ardlan let him handle the whole thing, which would lead Ardlan, in his none-too-rational way, to consider that he had received an offer of half a million dollars.

"All I ask is this," said Congressman Anderton, wearily. "You produce the professor at two o'clock tomorrow afternoon, Croft, and have him bring his invention. I'll bring the goats, though he ought to be able to produce them, too. He's got my goat, and Bradwell's, and a dozen other people's, I suppose!"

Smiling at Anderton's jest, Jerry was still trying to figure out Bradwell. Obviously, the millionaire was trying to disassociate himself from Ardlan, at the same time claiming that the professor owed him something. Jerry was beginning to wonder just how much the invention, if really practical, might be worth to a far-seeing businessman like Bradwell, when Anderton brought up another point.

"I can understand Ardlan's fear of enemies," said the congressman. "If news of his invention spread too far, it might cause him trouble.

"There are certain governments that would prefer to keep poison gases as an effective offensive weapon, and they wouldn't care to have the Neutralizer get into circulation as a defensive measure. We know for a certainty that such nations have agents operating in this country. They may be the enemies that Ardlan talks about."

Jerry doubted that Ardlan was worried about foreign spies. The idea was too rational for the professor. But Jerry's own experience with men who certainly were not Americans gave potency to Anderton's statement. Jerry, himself, intended to be on guard.

About to leave, Jerry paused as a girl came through the door. She was very pretty, and trimly dressed, and Anderton introduced her as his daughter, Ruth. She was about nineteen, and worthy of the admiration that she seemed to expect, though Jerry didn't give it.

He appreciated her sparkling blue eyes, brown hair, and saucy lips, but classed her as a trifle snippy. He could tell that she was spoiled, too, from the proud way in which Anderton received her.

As for Ruth, she perched against the edge of the desk and looked directly at Jerry, as though to say that she was pleased because an eligible young man had chosen to visit her father.

The glance that she gave toward Bradwell was her way of classing him as a dodo. Maybe she thought that Bradwell didn't guess it, but Jerry could tell that he did.

SHAKING hands with Jerry, Anderton turned to his daughter to say, almost apologetically:

"Sorry, Ruth, but I have to discuss business with Mr. Bradwell."

"You do!" Ruth finished the exclamation with a pout, then turned to Bradwell. "But I'd been counting on you, Mr. Bradwell, to take me downtown in your car to the Club Fiesta. You said you would, you know. You have taken me there before."

"I know," said Bradwell, gravely. "My car is waiting, Ruth, with Winstle at the wheel. He is a fine driver –"

"And you expect me to ride alone?" Ruth interrupted, in horror. "Why... why" – she stared at her father, then looked pleadingly toward Jerry – "I never heard of such a thing!"

She might just as well have shouted what she wanted, as far as Jerry was concerned, and Bradwell, for that matter; though Anderton, the indulgent father, was quite deaf to such wiles. Jerry saw Bradwell smile.

"You should have let me finish," admonished Bradwell. "I was about to say that I was providing you with an escort, too. Your father's friend, Mr. Croft, will be very glad to accompany you to the Club Fiesta in my car."

Slipping from her angled position against the desk, Ruth took Jerry's arm and waved a good-bye to her father, who was nodding that it was quite all right. Bradwell gave Anderton a reassuring glance, and undertoned:

"I'll see them downstairs and speak to Winstle."

Bradwell did exactly that, but when he came upstairs again, he stopped in the reception room. He had noted that the secretary was gone, and Bradwell wanted to use the telephone. Getting the number he wanted, he spoke in a low voice:

"It worked... Yes, just the way I wanted it... No, there's plenty of time. Winstle is stopping for gas just around the corner. Oil, too. He can stall five minutes, maybe longer. The girl won't give Croft a chance to argue –"

"Yes. Before they get to the Club Fiesta. We've got to play it safe... Croft wants to get back to the professor's. He'll shake the girl by that time... The rest are with you?... Good! Get started."

While he talked, Bradwell was watching Anderton's door. On that account, he couldn't see the outer door of the apartment itself. It had opened and a man was standing on the threshold; he preferred to hold his steady pose, rather than ease the door shut. It was perfectly safe, since Bradwell was looking the other way.

Had Bradwell turned, which he didn't, he would have recognized the arrival as Lamont Cranston, a wealthy New Yorker and a friend of Congressman Anderton.

Tall, with a masklike expression on his hawkish countenance, Cranston watched impassively, hearing every word of Bradwell's conversation. Even its abrupt ending did not perturb the intruder, for he, like Bradwell, heard the creak from beyond Anderton's door and noticed that the knob was turning.

Away from the phone, Bradwell fairly bowled into Anderton as the latter was stepping from the study. In so doing, Bradwell created the impression that he had hurried back without stopping on the way.

It was during that encounter that Cranston closed the outer door. Disentangled from Bradwell, and accepting the grizzled man's apology, the congressman looked across the reception room, then glanced at his watch.

"I rather expected Cranston," he told Bradwell. "I guess I was mistaken. He always keeps his appointments punctually. He must have said that he was coming tomorrow, not today. You've met Cranston, of course. A remarkable chap!"

More remarkable than either Anderton or Bradwell supposed. Lamont Cranston, the hawkish gentleman who had so suddenly switched appointments, happened to be The Shadow!

## CHAPTER V. THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

JERRY CROFT wasn't allergic to women. He was simply choosy, and within reasonable lines. He liked them closer to his own age than nineteen, for Jerry was twenty-five. Moreover, he considered brains at least as valuable as beauty. He felt that Ruth Anderton was as short on one as she was long on the other.

## CRIME UNDER COVER

Winstle's delay at the gasoline station proved a nuisance, and so did Ruth. Jerry couldn't very well hurry Bradwell's chauffeur, and the girl dodged his suggestions to that effect. She said that there wasn't any hurry to get to the Club Fiesta. Jerry would like the crowd, of course, because Ruth did, but she rather preferred a longer while with Jerry before arriving there.

It was simply a case of getting properly introduced, though Jerry doubted that Ruth's definition of the term fitted with his own – or her father's.

Her questions were definitely to be approved; she wanted to know what Jerry did, where he'd been, and other things that she could mention to her friends when she and Jerry met them.

But the way she snuggled closer and kept lowering her tone, so that Winstle wouldn't overhear, was an indication that she wanted to tow Jerry in as a new trophy, to impress her friends with her ability at using glamour in a practical way.

Jerry didn't care to be a souvenir. If someone was to take someone else somewhere, he preferred to be the taker. Maybe that would have suited Ruth even better, but Jerry hadn't come to Washington to cut a figure among the local debs.

He was thinking of humanity at large, and specifically concerned with Professor Ardlan. Tomorrow, his mind would be on goats. He intended to keep it clear, until then.

Ruth could have her friends at the Club Fiesta, and to humor her Jerry was willing to let her think that he was anxious to meet them. She'd get her surprise when the limousine arrived there; maybe sooner, if circumstances so ordained. Telling people off was one of Jerry's habits, when they provoked him too much. He liked such opportunities.

Jerry was going to get one.

The limousine slowed for a traffic light that happened to be green, though it turned red very shortly. Jerry observed Winstle's lapse in not going through, and wondered about it. He didn't puzzle long.

Another car wheeled up beside the big one. A couple of men jumped out and grabbed the limousine door. Winstle began a protest; a third man arrived and poked a gun at him.

Jerry started to open the door on the right, to find that a fourth man had pushed up from the sidewalk. The fellow was masked, but he didn't show a gun. He was reaching for one, as he growled:

"Don't make a fuss, Bradwell. We're snatching you, old moneybags!"

Putting his foot right in the middle of the man's chest, Jerry drove him so far across the sidewalk that the fellow seemed to jar the bricks of the wall he bumped against. He sat down, but he had his gun in hand, so Jerry figured the other direction was better. He turned, to see the first pair of thugs gripping Ruth and stifling her screams.

She was yanking at their masks, and they were too busy handling her to pull their guns. Up front, Winstle was grappling with the only man who did have a weapon handy.

Lunging shoulder first, Jerry bowled Ruth right out of the car and sent the two masked men sprawling ahead of her. They took wide dives, and at that moment Jerry saw a cab, its door open. Its driver had seen what was going on and was offering a route to quick escape.

## CRIME UNDER COVER

Remembering the co-operating cabby of the night before, Jerry picked up Ruth and thrust the gasping girl into the yawning door. As he jumped in, the cabby slammed the door and was away, just as guns began to bark.

Jerry managed to look back, despite Ruth's stranglehold. The thing he saw amazed him. Those guns had started to spurt wildly after the cab, but had suddenly changed direction.

Four thugs were going into action against a fighter whose ability was sufficient to make Jerry's flight with Ruth unnecessary.

The Shadow!

FROM a rather amateurish preliminary, the thing had become a professional bout, though Jerry Croft wasn't on hand to witness the transformation. One thug had luckily spotted The Shadow springing from an arriving car and had yelled the word to the others, emphasizing it with his gun, before The Shadow's taunting laugh was given.

Now, with mockery as a challenge, The Shadow was blazing back, scattering his foemen as they fired their hasty shots. Here, under the changing glow of the traffic light, he had an opportunity to deal with enemies more effectively than on the night before. But Winstle spoiled it.

Only one man had gotten back into the other car. If Winstle had held his ground, the others would have been trapped flat-footed. But Winstle stepped on the gas and sent Bradwell's limousine roaring through the traffic light.

The fact that it was red didn't bring a collision. All other cars in the vicinity had darted away. The thing that counted was the fact that Winstle took three thugs along on his running boards – two from the street, the third, the half-groggy man, from the sidewalk.

To witnesses, it appeared that Winstle didn't want such passengers, but The Shadow knew better, for Winstle was Bradwell's chauffeur and this was Bradwell's game. Moreover, the speed that Winstle made with the big car, his deft way of rounding the nearest corner, where a hotel offered cover, showed that he wanted to save his pals.

In his own car, a coupe, The Shadow was in pursuit, but he saw the futility of the chase. This was a great spot for a getaway, thanks to the crisscross of avenues. Once clear, Winstle would simply let his passengers drop off, then come back to claim himself a hero.

What The Shadow wanted was a car that didn't know that it was being trailed. Doubling back on his course, he picked up one.

It was the car that had brought the thugs that Bradwell ordered. Its lone occupant, the driver, thought that Winstle had carried The Shadow off on another track.

His mask pocketed, the fellow was acting as though his car was just another of the lot that had scattered during the fray. He was driving timidly along an avenue, taking care not to violate traffic regulations, and The Shadow fell in behind him.

There were other cars, quite a few of them, in the forming procession; which turned the pursuit into a slow-motion chase. After several blocks, the car ahead turned into a numbered street, then into a lettered one, and finally headed into a parking lot.

## CRIME UNDER COVER

The Shadow did the same, but in an inconspicuous fashion, while the one attendant on the lot was checking in the first car.

The unmasked thug started through a little alley in back of the parking lot, and The Shadow followed. He saw the man enter the rear door of a small office building, and waited until a light appeared on the second floor.

Taking advantage of the darkness, which had settled before The Shadow left Anderton's hotel, the cloaked trailer entered the building and found a stairway. Getting into the office was easy. The man ahead had left the door unlocked.

The Shadow saw him plainly in the light of an inner office, part of a two-room suite. From the outer darkness, The Shadow reached the door and overheard the telephone conversation that the fellow was making to someone, who could only be Bradwell. The unmasked thug had a roundish face, but he looked quite tough, particularly because of the twist he gave his lips when he talked.

"Hello, chief... Yes, this is Hortland. Thought you'd be back home... Yes, we got Croft out of the way... No, he wasn't hurt, and neither was the dame, but he won't get back to the prof's for an hour, anyway. He fell for the cab stunt –

"We had trouble, though – The Shadow... Yeah, he showed up and went after Winstle... Don't worry, the boys will drop off at the right places... Winstle? He'll be a hero, like Croft. The whole thing is a set-up, the way it stands... Me? Don't worry. If I get in a jam, I'll call the right guys –"

HORTLAND was in a jam and knew it, as he hung up the receiver. Chance blackness had entered the room and encroached upon the desk, and the fellow was lucky enough to spot its silhouetted form just before it slid away. It was rarely that The Shadow approached too close, but on this occasion he did.

Perhaps because it didn't seem to matter at the moment. Hortland had told Bradwell that he could call the right guys – in a pinch, and "right guys" were usually made to order for The Shadow. If it meant bringing back some of those who had sped away with Winstle, so much the better.

Back in darkness, The Shadow waited. He saw doubt reflected upon Hortland's face. The fellow wasn't quite sure that he had spotted indications of The Shadow. Nevertheless, he picked up the telephone and dialed it.

The undertone that Hortland used was quite a contrast to his speech with Bradwell. Watching for the silhouette, Hortland was sure that The Shadow, if present, couldn't overhear. Still, Hortland was playing the thing doubly safe. He didn't know that The Shadow, by choosing a new angle, was hovering almost in back of him; but if he had, he wouldn't have cared.

Hortland was using the same language that Jerry had heard at the World Wide Cafe!

"Heh!" he began. "Malga!.. Yes; Hortland!"

That part was obvious; Hortland was announcing himself to someone named Malga. But the rest of his speech had the veil of the language that Jerry had not identified.

"La Ombrajo estas ci tie," spoke Hortland. "Malantau mi... Donu iu liberigi min... Rapidu.... Kio?... Ili sekvis lin!... Ili atendas la sonorilo... Mi sonorigas gi, venigi lin –" ("The Shadow is here," spoke Hortland. "Behind me... Send someone to aid me... Hurry... What?... They followed him!... They await the bell... I shall ring it, to bring them –")

HORTLAND was lowering the receiver with one hand, and The Shadow couldn't have seen the movement of the other, for it was hidden by the man's body.

Beneath the desk, Hortland's thumb was pressing a button which produced no sound within the office. It was connected with an outside bell that could only be heard in the hall.

Yet The Shadow wheeled as if actuated by the signal that he could neither see nor hear. Driving through the darkness of the other office, he was at the hallway door as it bashed inward to admit a surge of men, who were thrusting revolvers ahead of them.

As he went, The Shadow uncloaked a second gun, a mate to the one which he had used to cover Hortland. He sledged blows with both weapons.

Hortland heard the impacts as The Shadow's automatics cracked revolvers from the hands that gripped them and landed, like metal cudgels, upon the invaders themselves.

Twitchy-lipped, the round-faced man came full about, his hand fumbling his own gun as he pulled it from his pocket. For Hortland recognized the mistake by which he had himself warned The Shadow, and thereby ruined this snare.

The Shadow understood the language that Hortland had used across the telephone. In repeating aloud the statements of Malga, the man at the other end, Hortland had given The Shadow a cue to the presence of the invaders!

## CHAPTER VI. THE MAN WHO DIED TOO SOON

HARD and swift were The Shadow's blows, yet with those strokes his own impetus seemed to fail. The very men who were half staggered by his thrust were carrying him back into the darkened room, spinning the cloaked fighter as if he had been a thing of straw.

Others were shoving in behind them, and to all, it seemed that they had met The Shadow's drive and stopped it, until the last of them were in the darkness.

Then, they felt The Shadow whirl away and knew that he had tricked them. Bringing them clear into the room, some with gun hands numbed, others with aching skulls from which The Shadow's blows had glanced, the cloaked fighter had cleared the path for his own exit.

From various spots, the invaders turned to aim at the door; but, though there were four of them, not one was in a suitable shape to cut him off.

The rule didn't apply to Hortland. He had a grip on his gun and was aiming it toward the upright oblong of light that represented the outer doorway. As a sweep of blackness chopped across that space, Hortland jabbed shots in quick succession. Above the barks of the revolver came an evasive laugh that might have come from anywhere.

Anywhere, except at the fatal doorway!

The Shadow hadn't made off through the exit, to pick up Hortland's bullets on the way. The thing that had sliced into the doorway was the door itself, slammed by The Shadow. He preferred the darkness of the outer office, and was bettering it by cutting off the light from the hall.

## CRIME UNDER COVER

He was still in the room with the blundering invaders, and Hortland was among them. They had planned a trap for one, The Shadow; he had turned it into a snare for five!

As Hortland sprang back into the inner office and frantically yanked the cord of the desk lamp to put himself in darkness, he heard shouts from the outer room. Shouts so loud, that they drowned his own as he tried to stop the others from uttering them.

"Evitu la pordo!" ("Avoid the door!")

"Restu proksimi de la fenestroj! Ili estas pli sendangere!" ("Remain near the windows! It is safer!")

"Ni kaptos La Ombron –" ("We will capture The Shadow –")

Those were words The Shadow understood, though only Hortland knew it. Things happened very rapidly, to the surprise of the recuperating invaders. Wheeled full about, The Shadow hurled himself suddenly upon them at the other side of the room, where they were coming up from hands and knees beside two windows that opened into the court below.

They tried to spread, and stumbled across tables and chairs that they couldn't see, losing guns as they went. But they were clever enough to turn their blunders into good account. They began to throw the furniture that blocked them, and in that desperate effort, they bothered The Shadow more than they could have with guns.

Chairs and tables were big missiles. The Shadow could not escape them by dropping close to the floor, for they bounded all about him. He saw the shapes against the slight light from the window, and maneuvered handily enough to avoid them, but he necessarily had to dodge wide.

Nor did the chucking process give away the positions of the foemen, as gun stabs would have. Inadvertently, these enemies were using the best possible system. None of them stayed long in one spot, as they would have had they paused to fire. Needing more furniture, they went after it by the simple process of darting about, pell-mell.

That made them impossible targets, considering that The Shadow, himself, was also on the move, avoiding the articles of furniture that were constantly coming his way.

There were more shouts in the language they all knew, each man telling the rest to keep to the task. The missiles were increasing in size as they lessened in number, for the furniture was breaking apart against the walls. A table top smashed a window, carrying away all the glass, and the clatter gave someone an idea.

"Mi iras al la tero!" called a voice. "Gi estas pli amike ol La Ombro!" ("I am going to the ground," called a voice. "It is more friendly than The Shadow!")

POUNCING upon the shouter, The Shadow caught him close by the windows and flung him back upon the others, as they surged in the same direction. They were lashing about with heavy clubs – legs from tables and chairs – which had a longer reach than The Shadow's guns. But they were after the windows, not The Shadow. Smashing more panes from the sashes, they went rolling through.

The Shadow jabbed shots to stop them, but his gun hand was gripped by the man who had bounced back at him from the human wave. The Shadow saw the fellow; he was the man with the bulgy forehead, who had trailed Jerry Croft. Therefore, he could not be Malga, to whom Hortland had made the telephone call. The fellow was merely the head of the strong-arm crew that Malga controlled.



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The bulgy man was putting up a frantic fight, despite the fact that his left arm was bandaged. With others plopping through the broken windows like parachute jumpers, he wanted to do the same, since it had been his own idea.

He slashed at The Shadow with a handy chair leg, wrenched free to the window sill, and toppled across. Instead of hauling him back, The Shadow heeled the other way.

From the outer door came a shaft of light. The Shadow had counted three men going through the window; this fellow was the fourth. One other must have chosen the way through the hall, and the man was logically Hortland. To The Shadow, he was more important than any of the rest, for Hortland had talked to both Bradwell and Malga.

Half through the doorway, Hortland saw the last of the rescue crew go rolling through the window. Still gripping his gun, Hortland hoped that he would see The Shadow following them and get another chance at the fighter in black.

Hortland found his chance, but not as he expected it. Blackness itself came swooping in upon him from an unexpected angle.

That blackness was The Shadow!

Bodily, The Shadow bowled Hortland out into the hallway, shoving the fellow's revolver upward so that its spouting shots were as harmless as those of a popgun. Hortland tried to slug instead, and each time, The Shadow sent his arm jerking upward like a pump handle.

During that process, he was shoving Hortland along the hall in zigzag fashion, from wall to wall, each jounce knocking more breath from the fellow. Hortland's collapse was imminent, as they reached the stairway. The Shadow let him hover over the edge, then caught him to haul him back.

He knew that the thought of a fall wouldn't be pleasant to Hortland, otherwise the fellow would have chosen the window route, like the members of the so-called "rescue crew."

Sagging weakly in The Shadow's clutch, Hortland panted words in English:

"I'll... tell all I know! Let... let me live! I'll talk... I'll spill everything –"

The Shadow was drawing him back from the stairs, when Hortland chanced to look below. A new glitter came into his eyes; with it, he showed a burst of strength. Pulling away from The Shadow, Hortland gave a lunge toward the stairway, gleefully shouting a name:

"Kurd Malga!"

A gun sputtered; its bullet found Hortland's chest. But the gun was not The Shadow's. The shot was fired from below.

Malga, the man whose name Hortland had cried, was actually here in person, to learn how his crew had made out. Having heard Hortland's promise of a full confession, Malga had decided to dispose of the man who knew too much.

SPRINGING to the stair top, The Shadow saw Malga below. He wanted to get a good look at the man with the ill-sounding name, for tonight was not the first time that The Shadow had heard of Malga. The fellow

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was notorious as the hidden leader of an international group who worked for whatever country made the highest bid.

When The Shadow took a look at men of Malga's ilk, it was always along the barrel of an automatic. On this occasion, he applied the usual rule.

Below was a squatty man, standing with a smoking revolver; a vicious personality whose face looked like a grinning skull, except that it was dark, not whitened. Though deep in their blackish sockets, Malga's eyes had an evil glimmer; his lipless mouth was drawn in a death's-head grin. His gun, too, was lifted; he was looking for The Shadow.

Muzzles spurted from both ends of the stairway, as The Shadow and Kurd Malga began their duel. It was the sort that should have been settled instantly, according to whichever gained the split-second advantage, for The Shadow was a sure shot, and Malga rated as the same. But this was a duel with an obstacle that rendered first shots futile.

The obstacle was Hortland, bouncing in his crazy, halting tumble down the stairs. Mortally wounded by Malga's shot, the squealer was going through a convulsion that carried him from banister to wall and back again, in crazy pitching fashion. The Shadow had to side-step to avoid that flaying, downward perking form, and so did Malga. Both fired wide.

Again their guns blasted, as each made a shift. Malga's was first, because The Shadow knew his rival had miscalculated the direction of Hortland's next pitch. Hardly had Malga changed his aim, before The Shadow did the same.

Though Hortland had gone in the direction The Shadow expected, a slump of the tumbling body twisted it about, spoiling The Shadow's aim at Malga, too.

Crouched low, Malga jabbed a third shot upward, as Hortland took a long, unguided lurch for him. That shot was very wide, for Malga made an ungainly shift to deliver it. The mistake saved him, for The Shadow's blast, coming at the same moment, was placed where Malga should have been, but was not.

With those blasts, the duel ended.

Darting away under cover of Hortland's final lurch, Malga reached the court, to hasten after the four men who had plunged from the second-story window. By the time The Shadow reached the ground floor and looked from the outside door, his squatty, skull-faced rival was out of sight.

As an urge to Malga's flight, came the blare of police whistles and the wail of approaching sirens. This battle, almost in the heart of Washington, was bringing in the law.

Turning to the slumped form of Hortland, The Shadow lifted the man's head, which twisted crazily from a neck disjointed by the plunge down the staircase. Dying, Hortland might have forgotten his willingness to talk, so The Shadow reminded him emphatically, speaking in the language that Hortland had used earlier.

"Vi diris ke vi rakontos –" ("You said that you would tell –")

It was useless. Hortland's eyes were staring glassily from his flabby head. The man who knew too much had died too soon. Kurd Malga had at least seen to that before dueling with The Shadow.

Letting Hortland's dead form slump to the floor, The Shadow faded into the outer darkness. Gliding swiftly across the courtyard, he melted from the glaring flashlights of arriving police; who promptly stumbled upon what remained of Hortland.

By then, The Shadow was gone into the night, bound to another destination, where he knew – too well – that trouble threatened because of the designs of Rufus Bradwell and Kurd Malga.

Through Hortland's death, The Shadow had lost his chance to link definitely those two; but as to the game at stake, he had no doubt.

The Shadow's destination was the forgotten house where Professor Ulrich Ardlan lived, sole possessor of an amazing, yet unproven invention that might be a boon to thousands of helpless persons throughout the world.

To save that boon for humanity had become The Shadow's cause!

## CHAPTER VII. PROFESSOR ARDLAN'S VISITORS

AT the very time when The Shadow was starting for Ardlan's, Jerry Croft was thinking in terms of the professor, too. Jerry and Ruth were still riding in the cab which had so luckily plunged them out of danger, and the driver was darting around every corner which came his way.

The fellow was acting as if a batch of pursuing cars were close behind him, which didn't make sense to Jerry. Looking through the rear window, Jerry saw no one in pursuit, and began to figure what the answer really was.

Smart of Bradwell, Jerry decided, to have this cab show up just at the right time. He couldn't have let Winstle do a run-around all over Washington with the limousine, for that was something that could be traced back to Bradwell later.

Ruth was clinging close to Jerry, bothering him every time he turned to look back through the rear window. Her eyes had their saucy gleam, for she was enthusiastic, rather than frightened, over the adventure, and the mad ride that was still in progress.

"How thrilling," she murmured, "the way you fought them, Jerry, and brought me away! I don't care if they do overtake us. You handled them before, and could again!"

She spoke as if she believed it, but Jerry took it for flattery. There wasn't anything to worry about; no pursuers were on the trail, and Ruth knew it, for she had looked through the rear window, too.

Jerry was tired of the hero stuff, and considered himself a dupe, instead. The animosity he felt toward Bradwell, who had shoved him into this thing, was sufficient for Ruth to have a share.

If it hadn't been for the girl, Jerry would have stayed at the scene of battle. Instead, he had done just what Bradwell figured: he had seen to Ruth's safety ahead of everything else. She wasn't responsible for that part of it, but if she had minded her own business and gone to the Club Fiesta alone in Bradwell's car, instead of demanding an escort, Jerry would by now be at the professor's.

In fact, he intended to be there very soon.

The cab driver had finished his run-around and was bound toward the city limits, in a direction which Jerry was sure must be the opposite from Ardlan's house. Pushing Ruth aside, Jerry told the fellow to stop being

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foolish. When the cabby looked as though he didn't understand, Jerry put his hands through the front window and tightened them around the fellow's neck.

"Forget the gas and try the brake," urged Jerry. "If you don't, I'll see that you wreck this buggy, and it will hurt you just as much as it will us! Maybe more!"

Unable to breathe, the cabby was already handling the wheel in wobbly fashion, and the prospect of a head-on smash with a car from the opposite direction made him agree with Jerry. He applied the brakes, and Jerry relaxed pressure accordingly. The cab pulled over to the side of the avenue.

"Honest, I don't know who those guys were!" the cabby panted. "Someone, slipped me a ten-spot and told me I was to help a guy and a dame out of a jam. He told me where I was to be, and said to keep dodging, and then head for the limits after you got into the cab."

"Remember what he looked like?"

"No." The cabby shook his head. "He got into the cab where I was parked; then out again. All I heard was his voice."

Jerry didn't inquire if the man had a bulgy forehead, since the cab driver hadn't seen his face. He did ask if the man had talked with a foreign accent, or used any words in a language that couldn't be identified.

Shaking his head, the cabby said that the man had seemed like an American and had talked in very good English.

Giving the professor's address, Jerry told the cab driver to start there and make it fast. As they were turning around in the avenue, he asked if the Club Fiesta would be out of the way, and the cabby said it wouldn't be.

Jerry told him to stop there first, and as a result, he listened to a barrage of stormy protests from Ruth all during the ride.

Wherever Jerry was going, Ruth intended to go, too. If he thought it would mean more danger, and therefore wouldn't take her, he could compromise by stopping off at the Club Fiesta, where she still wanted him to meet her friends, more than before. Saying nothing until the cab stopped at the night club, where a doorman stepped up to meet the cab, Jerry suggested that Ruth get out. She said that she wouldn't unless he did, first, and gave an imperious gesture to emphasize the statement.

The gesture was her mistake. Jerry took Ruth's waist, hauled her across in front of him, and added a neat push that sent her out into the arms of the astonished doorman. Before Ruth could find her feet, Jerry pulled the cab door shut and ordered the driver to continue to his destination.

ALREADY, Professor Ardlan was receiving visitors. They had arrived while The Shadow was busy with battle and Jerry in the midst of undesired flight. There were three men in the party, and Ardlan had let Trennick admit them to the parlor, for they looked harmless.

One, their spokesman, called himself Mr. Crumpf; he wore glasses that were connected to a gold chain running to his vest, and he talked with a very sad, reproving tone.

Crumpf's companions were about on a par with their spokesman. Both were drab and serious-faced; they shook their heads in tune to Crumpf's remarks.

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"We cannot tolerate cruelty to animals," insisted Crumpf. "We are a committee opposed to such practices. You must not harm those poor goats, Professor Ardlan. If you will not listen to our protests, we shall take legal measure to prevent you!"

Crumpf's companions turned their headshakes to nods, at mention of legal measures.

"Who said I'm going to hurt the goats?" boomed Ardlan. "Nothing is going to happen to them!"

"But we have heard that they are to be subjected to poison gases –"

"Under the protection of my Neutralizer," interrupted the professor, "which makes harming them impossible."

Crumpf still was uncertain.

"We must have proof," he finally said. "Proof that this device of yours really works. We've heard arguments like this before, Professor Ardlan, and we always like to put a question of our own. Why, if all is safe, do not humans accept such tests themselves, instead of placing the burden upon helpless, ignorant animals?"

"The goats aren't my idea!" stormed Ardlan. "I'd undergo the test myself, if I didn't have to demonstrate the apparatus. It's just that people won't trust me, but goats will. Perhaps you gentlemen would be willing to substitute for the goats?"

"Perhaps we would," rejoined Crumpf, "if we knew more about your Neutralizer, as you term it."

"Then come along."

Ardlan told Trennick to show the visitors the way downstairs, but the professor did not immediately follow. He stepped to the front door, opened it, and saw a car parking across the way.

As he observed the man who alighted, Ardlan gave a beckon; leaving the door unlatched, he closed it and went downstairs. Trennick and the visitors were standing near the door to the laboratory.

Working the combination in the usual fashion, Ardlan opened the door, but held back Crumpf and the latter's companions. Gesturing for Trennick to enter, much to the servant's surprise, Ardlan followed him halfway across the room, then paused to whisper:

"You will find a gun in the desk, Trennick. Have it ready!"

Smiling, Ardlan turned to the group at the door. They started to enter; again, he waved them back. "My demonstrations," boomed Ardlan, "are always given under the proper auspices. I think it proper for everyone to show credentials. Turn around, gentlemen, so that I may introduce you to Mr. Marquette, of the Federal Bureau of Investigation."

They turned, to see Marquette standing with a drawn gun, displaying a badge with his other hand. It was Vic who had come from the car at the professor's beckon. Ardlan had been expecting him at the time when Crumpf and the others called.

"These gentlemen," Ardlan told Marquette, "claim they represent an animal-protection committee. Perhaps their spokesman – Mr. Crumpf – will be willing to show his own credentials."

"I have them," Crumpf acknowledged. "In my wallet –"

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CRUMPF was reaching to his hip, which didn't strike Marquette as unusual, as many people carried wallets in their hip pockets. But instead of producing a wallet, Crumpf jerked out a gun and sprang for Marquette at an angle that avoided the Fed's gun.

One of Crumpf's companions yanked a gun, too, as he joined the drive toward Marquette. The third man pulled a revolver to cow Professor Ardlan.

Only Trennick was forgotten. Coming back to the door, the servant was carrying the gun that Ardlan had told him to get, but he was stopping, stupefied, as though he did not know how to use the weapon.

Crumpf and the fakers with him had scored an absolute surprise, as two hurled Marquette to the floor, and a third drove Ardlan to the wall, with Trennick merely standing by.

A surprise that might have meant death for the defenders, had not intervention come. It was the sort that carried challenge to all men of crime, which Crumpf and his companions were.

The challenge was a mocking laugh that came from the stairway, bringing the men who heard it full about.

None could defy that mirth and live.

It was the laugh of The Shadow!

## CHAPTER VIII. CRIME UNDER COVER

TWO men had so far been mistaken: one was Professor Ardlan; the other, Vic Marquette. Both thought that Crumpf, the man with the gold-chained spectacles, and his drab-looking companions were spiritless individuals.

True, they had turned when trapped, but they had done so in a rattish fashion. With the situation suddenly reversed by The Shadow, the trio should have quailed.

They didn't; nor did The Shadow expect them to do so. He hadn't fallen into the error shared by Ardlan and Marquette.

He knew Crumpf for what he was – a tool employed by Rufus Bradwell to get at Professor Ardlan's invention; whether to destroy it, merely injure it, or simply learn its secret, were matters to be studied later. The case was obvious, considering that Bradwell had taken spectacular pains to remove Jerry Croft, the one man likely to see through the bluff put up by such visitors as Crumpf.

Certain it was that Crumpf and his pals were smooth and calculating workers; otherwise, Bradwell would not have hired them. At least, Crumpf was on a par with Hortland, and The Shadow could bear witness to Hortland's punch in a pinch. He knew instantly how Crumpf and the men with him would react when snared: they would attempt escape at any cost.

They did.

Crumpf didn't have to yell at the others. They were on the move as quickly as he. Marquette, Ardlan were forgotten. Three guns were swinging for The Shadow, shoved ahead of the men who held them, as all made for the stairs.

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They wanted to blast the foe in black, and get past him. The double desire was shortening the range, giving them a better opportunity.

Professor Ardlan, flattened against the wall; Trennick, gawking from the laboratory door, considered The Shadow doomed. Not so, Vic Marquette.

Though flat on the floor, his own gun out of reach, Vic expected The Shadow to survive. He knew how the cloaked marksman could beat others to the shot; he was sure that The Shadow would, in this case, nick two out of three and take his chances on the last.

Instead, The Shadow did not fire at all!

His leap from the stairs was something phenomenal. One quick step downward gave him impetus; with the advantage of a higher level, he must have traveled close to twenty feet in the broad jump that he made – or would have carried that far, if he hadn't encountered human obstacles on the way.

In the time space that Vic had allowed for The Shadow to beat two marksmen, the master fighter had outdone all three, for his flying drive carried him right into the surging cluster and scattered them wide.

Floundering backward, the men thwacked the walls and floor, their guns tonguing upward to the ceiling. The Shadow was through them, and beyond, when they rolled to their feet and made a mad dash for the stairs, not bothering to look back. They had good reason to decide that flight came first.

The Shadow was after them, his triumphant laugh ringing in their ears, promising them something much more dire than mere sprawls, should he overtake them.

ON his feet, Vic Marquette was following The Shadow. So was Professor Ardlan, a few seconds later. In the time that Vic took to snatch up his lost gun, Ardlan acquired a weapon, too, by snatching his own revolver from the frozen hand of Trennick.

Ardlan took the additional seconds to boom an order at Trennick, telling the servant to close the laboratory door and turn the combination dial. Then, with long strides, the shaggy professor was hurrying after Marquette.

During the trip up the stairs, Vic realized the soundness of The Shadow's strategy. The cloaked fighter couldn't have risked shots at Crumpf and the others when they surged. Had they been apart, in a room, The Shadow's system would have been to shoot at two, crippling them, while making a quick-fading dodge as a prelude to his duel with the third.

But the hall below was narrow; clustered, the crooks were partly shielding each other. In addition, the stairs had been an impossible place for The Shadow to stage a fade-away. It seemed that every time Vic saw The Shadow in action, it meant another for the book.

Vic was to learn more, very shortly; it was unfortunate that he didn't foresee the fact.

The front door was wide when the Fed reached it, and the fugitives were outside, scattering across the street. The Shadow was taking a long bound down the front steps, his automatic poised as though deciding upon a target.

Marquette halted, intending to take one victim that The Shadow didn't; and Professor Ardlan, arriving, copied Vic's example.

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Changing direction, The Shadow took a sudden dart between two trees. He wasn't after the nearest man; he was picking the most important fugitive, Crumpf. The Shadow fired, his laugh echoing with his shot.

Crumpf faltered, but did not stagger. The bullet had whined a half inch past his ear, enough to discourage anyone's idea of flight, which was what The Shadow wanted. His plan was to take Crumpf alive.

Vic's gun was talking now, but uselessly. He'd picked another man; too late. The fugitive was too far away and intervening trees too numerous.

Professor Ardlan wasn't shooting. From the way he squinted, he couldn't see very well in the darkness. The man that Vic failed to get reached a car some fifty feet down the street. Vic looked for the third man and spotted him.

Before Vic could aim, a young man sprang from an arriving taxicab and sprang for the third crook. He grappled with the fellow, trying to wrest away his gun. Marquette recognized the arrival as Jerry Croft and yelled for him to let the fellow go.

Jerry did, but only after a reeling struggle halfway to the waiting car, and it was only because Jerry tripped across the curb that he let the fellow get away.

Running beyond the trees, the fugitive reached the car and jumped into it. The car started, carrying the two men away. Marquette fired a few wild shots after it, and so did Jerry, for he had gotten what he wanted: a gun. He had taken it from the crook just before the spill across the curb.

With the fugitive car rounding the corner, Marquette thought of The Shadow; looking for the cloaked fighter, Vic saw him. The Shadow had overtaken Crumpf after that first shot, for Crumpf, the idea of flight scared out of him, had swung about to fight off the cloaked avenger.

They were grappling in what seemed a furious style, and Crumpf, to Vic's amazement, appeared to have the advantage. He was actually driving The Shadow ahead of him, back across the street toward Ardlan's front door!

It should have occurred to Vic that such wasn't the direction Crumpf wanted; that, in reality, The Shadow was hauling Crumpf back with him, intending to toss him, exhausted and defeated, right at Vic's own feet. Vic was to think out that point later, and keep it for future reference.

For the present, Vic's only idea was to help The Shadow; and the same thing occurred to Jerry, on the other side of the street.

Jerry saw his opportunity and fired, winging Crumpf, who was on the side toward him. The Shadow wheeled Crumpf about, thinking that Vic wouldn't make the same mistake; but the Fed did. He gave Crumpf a second bullet.

To offset further folly, The Shadow gave Crumpf a lunge, hoping he would sprawl and thereby show that he was helpless. Crumpf staggered, which was enough for Jerry and Vic, but his reel was in the direction of the house.

Recognizing Crumpf, but not realizing the fellow's pitiable condition, Ardlan inserted another walloping slug from his old-fashioned revolver.



## CRIME UNDER COVER

Crumpf collapsed in the middle of the front walk. Marquette dashed out into the street to commandeer Jerry's cab, and the young man joined him. Together, they sped away, hoping to overtake the other fugitives.

Professor Ardlan, stopping a few moments to look at Crumpf, continued as far as the sidewalk, but arrived too late to join the pursuit crew.

To all appearances, Crumpf was dead; but The Shadow had tried too valiantly to keep the man alive, to give up the last shreds of hope. He glided up beside Crumpf's coiled form; stooped, and lifted the fellow's head.

Crumpf's gold-chained glasses were gone, but they had only been part of his make-up. His gaze was clear, though he was coughing his last.

There was defiance in those eyes. The Shadow used the system that he had tried with Hortland.

"Vi venis al la domo," spoke The Shadow, in a low tone, "difekti la provo kio estas en la laborejo." ("You came to the house," spoke The Shadow, in a low tone, "to destroy the invention that was in the laboratory.")

Dying eyes still held their stare. Either Crumpf did not understand the language, or he was too obdurate to answer any questions, even from The Shadow. Again, The Shadow spoke, this time in English:

"It was Bradwell who sent you here?"

There was a glitter in Crumpf's gaze. His lips opened; then, between clenched teeth, he gritted:

"No... not Bradwell!"

The response did more than tell that Crumpf was familiar with English only. The denial was practically the same as "Yea," though Crumpf did not realize it. To really deny Bradwell's part, Crumpf should have shown no recognition of the name; but his fading intellect hadn't rallied to that point.

He was being loyal to Bradwell, who hadn't double-crossed him, as Malga had with Hortland. But loyalty, in this case, was a give-away.

At least, Crumpf's warped conscience helped to ease his death pang, for a moment later, his eyes went glassy and his head slumped, but his gritted teeth held an expression which might have been termed a smile.

THE taxicab was returning from a trip around the block, for Marquette and Jerry had found no sign of the fugitive car that had taken away Crumpf's two companions.

As Vic and Jerry joined Ardlan, The Shadow faded into the darkening shelter of the front trees. He watched them carry Crumpf's body toward the house, Ardlan hurrying ahead to call Trennick to help the others with the dead weight.

They were at the top of the steps when Trennick appeared. He helped get the burden into the parlor, then came back to close the front door.

Moving to the steps, The Shadow merged with the door's blackness. Finding the door still unlatched, he opened it a crack without having to trouble with the lock.

Vic and Jerry were still in the parlor, looking at the body. The Shadow saw Ardlan and Trennick, heard the professor speak to the servant.

"Did you lock the strong-room door?"

"Yes, sir," replied Trennick. "Immediately after you gave the order."

"Good!" Ardlan rubbed his hands warmly. "Our visitors failed even to see my invention. Tomorrow's test is certain to succeed, and you deserve a share of the credit, Trennick."

"Thank you, sir."

The Shadow let the door ease shut, because Trennick was turning to lock it. Gliding off into darkness, The Shadow gave a whispered laugh – a tone that might have been a knell for Crumpf, whose death was to be regretted, since he would have been more valuable alive.

But there was a tone of satisfaction in the final quiver of The Shadow's undertoned mirth. It certified Ardlan's opinion that all was secure for the coming test.

For The Shadow's easy glide, his pauses, proved that he did not intend to travel far. Instead, he was assuming a duty; he intended to patrol this neighborhood in person, and make certain that no new attempt would be made, by others, to complete the design at which Crumpf and his companions had failed.

UNFORTUNATELY, The Shadow's vigil did not include a watch within Ardlan's house, itself. He was leaving that to Marquette, Jerry and Trennick. But the first two were not keeping tabs upon the third.

Professor Ardlan had gone into the parlor to talk with Vic and Jerry. As a matter of course, Ardlan closed the door behind him.

It was Trennick's opportunity. Reaching the telephone, the servant dialed the same number as the night before; hearing the voice he recognized, he spoke in the strange tongue:

"Ili venis, sed ilia intenco trovigis... Mi restis en la laborejo en ilia loko... Lo Provo malsukcesos morgau –" ("They came, but their purpose was discovered... I stayed in the laboratory in their place... The test will fail tomorrow –")

As Trennick hung up, a sneering chuckle was audible from the descending receiver; it was identical with a tone that had similarly come across the wire to Hortland's office.

The tone of Kurd Malga, who had balked The Shadow by killing Hortland, and was confident that he had done the same through Trennick, who still lived.

## CHAPTER IX. AT THE PROVING GROUND

BY noon the next day, reports of Ardlan's coming test had spread through official Washington and reached the newspapers. Congressman Anderton had ended a dilemma by making the facts public. As he put it to Cranston, who dropped into the apartment around noon, there had been no other choice.

"The professor wants a million dollars appropriated for the benefit of humanity," explained Anderton. "At first, he wouldn't hear of doing things any other way. My mention of congressional committees made no impression on him."

"What I did tell him" – Anderton gave a rather pleased smile – "was that the act of voting through an appropriation would proclaim the facts too soon.

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"I argued that it would be better to prove the invention's merit, and deliver the apparatus to the government for safe-keeping. Afterward, the appropriation would come in due course – as I actually believe it will. Moreover, I see no reason why the war department would hesitate to give the device to other nations, as Professor Ardlan wishes.

"Our national policy is one of defense, and we have encouraged other nations along that line. America is opposed to war, and anything that can nullify the horrors of war should be extended to those who need it. My one hope" – he shook his head – "is that Professor Ardlan is not as crazy as he sometimes appears to be."

A scoffing voice interrupted. Rufus Bradwell had arrived, and the secretary had sent him into the study.

"You have only seen Ardlan in his milder moods," Bradwell told Anderton. "Like yourself, I hope that the test succeeds, but knowing Ardlan and his eccentric ways, I am short on confidence. By the way, Anderton, I brought Winstle up to the reception room. Do you want to speak to him?"

Anderton nodded, and Bradwell opened the door to call in Winstle.

This was The Shadow's first look at the chauffeur, and one glance told him that the fellow was a rat – a fact which Bradwell calmly ignored and Anderton failed to discern. However, when Anderton shook hands with Winstle, the chauffeur showed a modest manner, though in a crafty way.

"I really did very little, sir," said Winstle. "I fought off one ruffian and managed to get the car away, but I made the mistake of thinking that Miss Anderton was still safely in the car with Mr. Croft."

"They saw a cab and took it," explained Anderton. "Otherwise, they would have stayed with you. In any event, you drew the pursuers, Winstle."

Winstle started to say something, then glanced at Bradwell, as though taking a cue. The grizzled man clapped the chauffeur on the shoulder.

"You're going to drive us to the proving grounds, Winstle," he said. "That shows how much we think of you."

Soon after Winstle had gone, Ruth entered the study. The girl was jauntily dressed and her hair was freshly curled. There was no denying that she was attractive, though she would have described it as allure.

Her get-up was unquestionably for Jerry's benefit, because she passed by Cranston and Bradwell with a roving glance and looked questioningly toward her father.

"Isn't –" Ruth caught herself – "isn't the professor coming with us?"

"No," replied Anderton. "He and Croft are bringing the Neutralizer out to the proving grounds in a truck."

Without knowing it, Anderton had answered the question that Ruth really wanted to put: namely, why Jerry had not come. Bradwell looked toward The Shadow, who considered it good policy to supply the slight smile that suited the guise of Cranston.

THEY rode to the proving grounds in Bradwell's limousine, and as soon as they arrived there, Ruth strolled over to a parked truck and watched the driver open the doors in the back of it: She expected to see Jerry appear, but instead, a procession of goats came popping out.

## CRIME UNDER COVER

They didn't merely go "baaaaa!"; they lowered their horns and made for the spectators, and Ruth joined the general scramble for safety. However, the goats were wearing ropes, and their keepers hauled them in before they damaged any of the throng.

The goats were dragged to the center of the flat arena and tethered around a great sack that hung from a high pole. The thing looked like a cross between a giant hornets' nest and a small balloon.

Soldiers measured the ropes, to make sure that the goats were within the required radius, and before they had finished another truck came through the circle of surrounding cars and rolled up beside the pole.

This time, Jerry did step out, along with Vic Marquette and a few other Feds. Ruth couldn't find a chance to speak to him, because soldiers were ordering the crowd back. From the truck, Jerry and the others brought the professor's famous invention, and unveiled it directly beneath the mammoth hornets' nest.

The soldiers checked the ropes again, to make sure that the goats were not close enough to ram the machine upon which their lives would soon depend.

In fact, the goats had become quite ludicrous in behavior, and even tried to butt the truck when it pulled away from among them, much to the amusement of the crowd. Merriment increased when Professor Ardlan arrived on foot and had to dodge between the bewhiskered creatures that were to help his test.

Sight of the shaggy-haired professor, zigzagging between the goats, was really very funny to everyone but Ardlan. When the crowd echoed the "baaaaa" of the goats, Ardlan showed indignation. Forgetting the goats, he glared at the people – and the throng quieted suddenly.

This was to be serious business. Maybe the lives of these very onlookers would some day be in jeopardy, hanging by the thread that Ardlan's invention represented. The newspapers had rushed special editions, and hadn't missed a trick in covering the possibilities of the gas Neutralizer; hence everyone was familiar with the purpose of the new invention.

Poison gas, most horrible of war weapons, would be a forgotten menace if this test went through. There would be one in every home, in every bomb shelter; they could be used in tanks, submarines, and other military conveyances. Hospitals would find them a boon in protecting the wounded.

The Neutralizers, as experts pointed out, would be far more than a substitute for gas masks. They wouldn't just protect people against poison gases; they would eliminate the gases, through neutralization.

This was of vital importance, considering that certain deadly gases, as yet little used in warfare, were known to be odorless and therefore dangerous before gas masks were put on, or after they were taken off.

The Neutralizer, according to Ardlan's claims, could detect such gases automatically, and not only proclaim their presence, but dispose of them. So it behooved the people who watched the test to show more sense than did the unwitting goats.

Standing by Bradwell's car, The Shadow watched the professor's preparations. Bradwell was chatting with Congressman Anderton, but The Shadow noticed that Bradwell's eye was occasionally on Jerry Croft, who had come over to the car. At first, it had seemed that Jerry intended to speak to Anderton, perhaps to make some pointed remarks that Bradwell might have understood. But Ruth had flagged Jerry, and was talking to him so ardently that he couldn't get away, much to his annoyance.

## CRIME UNDER COVER

Maybe Jerry would have had a sharp eye for Winstle, too, had the chauffeur been around; but he was not. Winstle had run into some acquaintances – the chauffeurs of other cars – and had gone somewhere with them.

A LOUD-SPEAKER began to blare above the proving grounds, telling everyone to move back to a distance of at least fifty yards. Soldiers were putting the order into effect. As the loud-speaker lulled, The Shadow heard Anderton speak to Bradwell.

"They intend to use chlorine gas," said Anderton. "They tried a quantity this morning and made sure that it would not spread too far. There has been no increase in the wind since then, so the spectators will be quite safe."

"Does Professor Ardlan know what kind of gas is being used?" inquired Bradwell.

"Absolutely not!" emphasized the congressman. "He said that his machine will detect and eradicate any form of gas, so we are putting it to that test."

"But chlorine is a fairly common type of gas –"

"It makes no difference, Bradwell. As long as Ardlan does not know what gas is being used, he will have to be prepared for all."

"He appears to be ready."

Still surrounded by the goats, Ardlan had stepped back from his machine, which was now in action. Its hum, the whirl of its fans, could not, however, be heard at that distance; nor did the lights show against the sun, though they were actually blinking.

The professor pressed a final switch, and turned about. Two soldiers made a path for him, by tugging back a pair of goats; then they conducted Ardlan toward the spot where Anderton stood.

The professor's approach gave Jerry his chance to break away from Ruth. He spoke a reminder to Ardlan:

"You remembered to press the automatic switch?"

Ardlan nodded.

"Yes, Jerry." Then, to the others: "It was the last thing you saw me do. Ordinarily, I manipulate the machine during a test – first letting it identify the gas, then setting it accordingly. The automatic device was a later improvement, but it works, as you shall see."

A long cord had been carried from the gas bag atop the pole, to a spot where a cluster of army officers stood. The Shadow noticed foreign uniforms in the group, knew that the visitors were South American officers, at present visiting Washington. They had been invited to view this important test, which might prove so great an asset to the defense of the Western Hemisphere.

A stout colonel pulled the rope. A ripcord opened and the big bag spread, delivering a gush of greenish smoke that spread like a blanket over the tethered goats. The animals did not like the deluge; there was a chorus of a dozen baas, as the goats were lost amid the spreading fog of green.

Then, as the gas crept outward like an ugly monster, spreading itself in search of further, prey, the noise from its midst ended.

Professor Ardlan was staring with wild gaze, as the gas slowly dissipated. Even his short-sighted vision was capable of viewing the result that the other onlookers saw. The blanket had leveled to a mere layer along the ground, no more than a foot in depth, but no goats were visible.

The first signs of them came only when patches of gas cleared entirely away. Then, as the last shroud of the deadly stuff was gone, all the goats were visible.

To a goat, they were lying on the ground. The Neutralizer was still operating, for its blinking lights had shown against the background of the chlorine mist. Yet the gas had annihilated every creature within its range!

WITH a bellow of unbelief, Ardlan stumbled out toward his machine. Jerry leaped after him to draw him back, for the ground was not yet safe. Savagely, the professor tried to keep ahead, and it took two soldiers to help Jerry restrain him. Anderton turned to Bradwell and said, in a sorrowful tone:

"I think it is time for us to go."

Bradwell agreed. His face looked as long as Anderton's. Perhaps The Shadow might have noted that Bradwell's gloom was not genuine, but it happened that The Shadow was not about.

Winstle had just returned, and The Shadow was moving swiftly in the direction from which the chauffeur had come; though, as Cranston, he managed to keep his speed from being too apparent.

"Come, Ruth," said Anderton, to his daughter. Then, looking about, he questioned: "Where is Mr. Cranston?"

"He said he was going to meet a friend," the girl replied, "and ride back to town with him."

Ruth was looking toward Jerry, who was still engaged in humoring the professor. Ardlan was gesticulating, tearing at his shaggy hair, and to all appearances would be a real problem for some time to come. So, reluctantly, Ruth stepped into the limousine, along with Bradwell and Anderton.

Some cars were already leaving the proving grounds, and it was toward one of those that The Shadow hurried. He wasn't in time to overtake it, for it spurred through a gateway out to the road. But he was in time to spot two faces in the front seat.

One, that of the driver, was the grinning, skullish countenance that belonged to Kurd Malga; the other, bulgy of forehead, belonged to the man who served as leader of Malga's strong-arm crew!

There were two more of the tribe in the back seat, but The Shadow did not care about the odds. All that he needed was a car, and people who noticed Cranston saw him turn suddenly, and spring into a coupe that a young man was driving from the proving grounds.

The young man happened to be Harry Vincent, one of The Shadow's secret agents, posted here for just such an emergency as had occurred.

Other cars, however, intervened between Harry's and the gate. The delay made it impossible to overtake Malga and his men. Easing back in the seat, The Shadow spoke in Cranston's quiet tone.

"You saw what happened, Vincent," he remarked. "This does not mark the end of our interest in protecting Ardlan's invention. We may say that our cause has just begun."

There was a grim touch to those calm words, which told Harry that he could expect special instructions as to the part he was to play. So far, The Shadow had played a lone hand, seemingly to perfection, yet his efforts had not availed.

It would require more hands than one to get to the bottom of the riddle which had resulted in the failure of Ardlan's great invention; for the ways of the opposition were many. They had spoiled today's test, despite their apparent failure of the night before.

With such men in the game, neither Professor Ardlan nor his invention would be safe until the perpetrators of secret crime were rendered helpless.

The Shadow knew!

## CHAPTER X. A FRIEND'S FRIEND

JUST after dusk, Jerry Croft entered the World Wide Cafe and took a table in the corner. This was the second time he had been in the place, but this evening he did not expect to meet Professor Ardlan.

Jerry had just left the professor at his house; he had come here hoping to meet the men that he had found instead of the professor, on that first evening in Washington.

That the man with the bulgy forehead and his companions were in some wise responsible for the failure of Ardlan's Neutralizer seemed quite obvious to Jerry. As obvious as the fact that Rufus Bradwell, the grizzled millionaire with the too-wise smile, must be the man behind the whole dirty game.

Things had looked all right last night, when Crumpf and a couple of stooges had come to grief trying to get at the Neutralizer; but it was Jerry's opinion – and one that seemed indisputable – that Crumpf and his pals had merely been a blind.

Their visit, Jerry decided, must have been intended as a failure; because, by their fluke, they drew suspicion from the real effort that had actually put the invention out of working order.

If Jerry had ever seen Kurd Malga, the man with the grinning death's head, he would have credited, or discredited, the fellow with having done the job, for Malga looked the part of the arch-conspirator that he was. Yet, there would still have been the riddle of how Malga, or anyone else, could have gotten at the professor's invention.

It never occurred to Jerry that the thing might have been an inside job, engineered by Ardlan's faithful servant, Trennick.

None of Malga's strong-arm men was around the World Wide Cafe, though Jerry looked everywhere. He listened for snatches of the strange language that he had previously heard, but no one was speaking it. Even the tawny-faced waiter was absent; either it was his night off, or, more likely, he had quit the job.

A chair scraped beside Jerry; he turned with a start, reaching for the gun that he had been carrying since last night. His expression changed from challenge to exasperation.

Ruth Anderton was sitting down beside him.

## CRIME UNDER COVER

Superficially, the congressman's daughter had a mood to suit every occasion, with an extensive wardrobe that matched. Last night, she had tried to impress Jerry by being coy, convivial and, finally, trusting.

Not having clicked, she had used a new technique this afternoon – a straight girlish pose, tending toward the outdoor type. She hadn't made a dent; to Jerry, she had simply been part of the scene, like the lamented goats.

Her present course was to appear confidential and mature. Stunningly gowned; Ruth was a creature of loveliness, her eyes dancing, her smile friendly instead of saucy. Her snub nose was offset by the tilt of her chin, and, in all, Ruth was putting on an excellent act. But it was an act and nothing more, as Jerry could tell, even after so brief an acquaintance.

Ruth was out to make a conquest, and was using every wile. It was plain that she wanted to break down Jerry's reserve, or indifference, whichever it might be, before she began to cast new eyes upon eligible young men who came her way. Hence Jerry, quite sure that he saw through the game, did not feel at all honored by Ruth's attention.

Nevertheless, he covered his annoyance and became quite polite. He accepted Ruth's pretext that she had just chanced into the World Wide Cafe, though he was quite sure that the restaurant did not belong on any fashionable route that she and her society friends followed.

He'd tried to indicate that his lack of interest was actual; and since Ruth wouldn't accept that answer, Jerry would have to try some other plan. Courtesy seemed the best opening move.

FINDING that Jerry had a welcoming smile, Ruth tried her confidential tone.

"I thought surely that you would come to father's apartment," she said. "He doesn't blame you because the test failed. He only blames Professor Ardlan."

To Jerry, that was as bad as if the blame had been placed on himself, but he didn't say so. He foresaw that if he let Ruth talk long enough, he would eventually have cause to tell her off. So Jerry inquired, quite blandly:

"Your father called Professor Ardlan?"

Ruth nodded.

That told Jerry something else. Jerry had told Ardlan that he was coming to the World Wide Cafe, though he hadn't mentioned why. Ardlan must have informed Anderton, which was how Ruth had located Jerry.

"What did the professor have to say?" asked Jerry, casually. "Anything important?"

"I don't know," returned Ruth. "He was busy trying to get his silly invention working, as if it ever could! Dad talked mostly to a Mr. Marquette, who happened to be there."

The news pleased Jerry, even though its bearer did not. He wouldn't have left Ardlan at the house if he hadn't known that Marquette was due. In Jerry's opinion, Trennick wasn't enough protection for Ardlan.

Had Jerry known of Trennick's affiliations, he would have realized that the servant was no protection at all. But Jerry's discovery of that point was to come later.

Most important, in Jerry's mind, was the fact that Professor Ardlan was overhauling the Neutralizer, testing its series of complicated wires and gadgets, one by one.



## CRIME UNDER COVER

On the way back from the proving grounds, Ardlan had become himself again, and stated, with a positiveness that impressed Jerry, that someone must have switched portions of the integral mechanism without actually injuring it. In a case of straight sabotage, the professor argued, the Neutralizer would not have operated at all.

Such logic could not be disputed. Neat tampering, of a sort that even Ardlan had not recognized, smacked of Bradwell's work. To Jerry, it also pointed at others – the man with the bulgy forehead and his company – who, despite their strong-arm tactics, were subtle enough to use a mysterious language whenever they conversed in public.

Jarring Jerry's reflections came Ruth's voice, which someone else might have likened to a lovely coo, but which, to Jerry, was as unwelcome as a raven's croak.

"You haven't ordered dinner yet," the girl said. "Why don't you come and have dinner with us? I know that dad would be glad to see you. He said so."

Jerry was almost inclined to accept the invitation, simply because it would afford him other company than Ruth's alone. He felt, too, that Ruth's attentions toward him could easily be interpreted as an infatuation, even by Anderton.

By making the case evident, it might be possible to convince the congressman that his very charming daughter should bestow her affections upon someone other than Jerry Croft. So Jerry, seeking a direct way out, began a slow nod, which Ruth regarded as a halfway acceptance of the invitation.

Just then, a waiter approached the table. He wasn't the phony that Jerry had been watching for, but he was quite a welcome sight, for he looked at Ruth and inquired:

"Miss Anderton?"

The girl nodded, a bit surprised.

"You are wanted on the telephone," said the waiter. "This way, please."

"It must be dad!" the girl exclaimed. "I'll tell him you're coming to dinner."

JERRY sat back with a sigh of relief. He was watching Ruth navigate around the corner that led to the telephones, admitting, despite himself, that she did have charm, when he heard another scrape of the chair.

Turning, Jerry saw a young man, not much older than himself, sitting down beside him.

The fellow looked affable. When he extended his hand, Jerry gripped it and felt that the shake was sincere.

"My name is Vincent," remarked the stranger. "Harry Vincent. I framed that telephone call. Suppose we slide out of here together, and talk over some matters more important than those that Miss Anderton wants to discuss."

The idea intrigued Jerry. He'd been looking for a way to irk Ruth, and no other could be better. Furthermore, he judged that Harry might have something important to say.

Still, as they walked from the cafe, Jerry was on guard, until he saw that his new acquaintance was simply piloting him to another restaurant around the corner. As soon as they were seated, in a small booth, Jerry asked:

"You've met Miss Anderton, before?"

He wanted to find out if Harry happened to be a real rival for the girl's affections, or simply someone who had been taken over the hurdles like himself. Hence, Harry's reply actually astonished him.

"No," returned Harry. "I never even saw her before this evening."

"Then, why –"

"Why did I drop in on you?" Harry smiled. "I did so at the request of a mutual friend."

"You mean –"

"The Shadow."

The term explained itself. Jerry knew at once that Harry referred to the black-cloaked fighter who had intervened on three occasions in behalf of himself and Professor Ardlan. Inasmuch as he trusted The Shadow, Jerry felt that he could trust Harry.

Only for a moment did Jerry's thoughts flicker back to the World Wide Cafe, where he could picture Ruth Anderton being as greatly annoyed by his departure as he had been by her arrival.

Jerry should have seen more of that picture.

In the cafe, Ruth was irked even before she left the phone booth, for the wire had been dead. She had kept saying hello until she was out of temper, as well as breath.

When she left the phone booth to look for Jerry, only to find him gone, Ruth stared, puzzled, at first; then smiled.

Quite confident of her charm over men, she merely supposed that Jerry had accepted her invitation and started to the Anderton apartment, misunderstanding that she intended to accompany him. So she went back to the phone booth, called the apartment, and spoke to the secretary.

"Hello. Raymond?... This is Miss Anderton. If Mr. Croft arrives; tell him to wait... Yes, I shall be there soon. And remember, Raymond, you are to state what I told you earlier... Yes, that Professor Ardlan is in conference with my father –"

Satisfied that such misinformation would keep Jerry at the apartment until she arrived, Ruth left the phone booth. Continuing out of the World Wide Cafe, she almost brushed shoulders with a stocky, mustached man, whose darkish face wore a frown as he looked over the various tables.

The darkish man happened to be Vic Marquette. Jerry thought that he was at Ardlan's but Vic wasn't. Having learned that Jerry had gone to the World Wide Cafe, Vic had come there to find him; because the restaurant, though Jerry didn't know it, was already marked as a place to be watched.

Like The Shadow, the Feds had learned much about a foreign operative named Kurd Malga, and had spotted the World Wide Cafe as a place that Malga and his followers frequented.

MEANWHILE, in the restaurant around the corner, Jerry and Harry were progressing nobly. As a friend of a friend – namely, The Shadow – Harry had aroused Jerry's entire confidence.

When Harry asked why Jerry had originally gone to the World Wide Cafe, Jerry produced the telegram that had presumably come from Professor Ardlan. After reading it, Harry nodded.

"That's how the bunch picked up your trail," said Harry. "Tell me, what do you know about them?"

"Not much," rejoined Jerry, "except that they spoke a strange language, one that I couldn't identify."

"Do you remember anything about it?"

Nodding, Jerry reached for his notebook. He felt that he was on the verge of discovering something important – which was, in fact, the case. For Harry Vincent, agent of The Shadow, was quite qualified to interpret the tongue in question. Yet there was something that neither Jerry nor Harry recognized.

While problems of the past were being discussed, problems of the future were in the making. Problems that were to bring death and disaster to the best of plans.

Including the plans of The Shadow!

## CHAPTER XI. THE RACE WITH DEATH

RUTH ANDERSON, flaunting from the World Wide Cafe, was but a pawn in the game that was to come; yet her moves, though seemingly innocent, were to prove of vital consequence. Still, she hadn't an idea of the grimness behind her mild flirtation with Jerry Croft; how it was to be used as an instrument of murder.

In fact, Ruth was not only gay, but confident, as she called a cab and told the driver to take her to the apartment hotel. She was sure that Jerry had already started there, and that soon she would have the opportunity to make him pay some actual attention to her, after which, she could cross him off the list.

Vic Marquette was another pawn. He had been moved out of position. He should have stayed at Ardlan's, where he was supposed to be.

Vic had made a bad mistake by coming to the World Wide Cafe, and he simply added to the error when he sat down and ordered dinner, in the belief that Jerry Croft would show up. In placing suspicion upon Jerry, Vic was carrying himself far from the trail that involved a known fox, Kurd Malga, and an unknown one, Rufus Bradwell.

Two other pawns were Jerry Croft and Harry Vincent, but they were at least progressing in the Rendezvous Restaurant, which was the name of the place where they had chosen to dine, in preference to the World Wide Cafe.

Partly from memory, partly by reference to his notebook, Jerry was repeating words that he had heard Malga's men use in their conversation.

Harry nodded when he heard the words, and stated:

"Esperanto."

"Esperanto!" exclaimed Jerry. "I've heard of it. An international language, isn't it?"

"Precisely," replied Harry. "Perfectly suited to Kurd Malga and his tribe of spies. They are international themselves, hence they have become educated in a common tongue. Besides concealing their individual

nationalities, it gives them the extra advantage of having a means of communication which the ordinary listener, no matter what his race, cannot fully fathom."

" 'Mi sekvis lin el la stacio,' " repeated Jerry, lamely. " 'Li estas la viro.' "

" 'I followed him from the station,' " translated Harry, who knew his Esperanto. " 'He is the man.' " Then, after a momentary pause: "They were referring to you, Croft."

" 'Bonega.' " Jerry hesitated. Then: " 'Ni observos lin.' "

" 'Excellent. We shall watch him.' "

"The waiter said: 'Oni audos vin,' " recalled Jerry. "I remember the words 'komprenas' and 'malbona' –"

" 'People will hear you,' " interpreted Harry. "Probably the rest was: 'If anyone understands, it would be bad.' What else did they say?"

Jerry studied the notebook. This time, he was positive that he had struck the crux of the thing.

"The man with the bulgy head said: 'Alportu al mi iom florbrasiketo,' and it must have been important, because the waiter repeated it. He said: 'Florbrasiketo. Mi memoros.' Tell me, Vincent: what does 'florbrasiketo' mean? What was Bulge-head talking about?"

Harry smiled, despite himself.

"He was ordering broccoli," he said, "because that is what 'florbrasiketo' means. The waiter was simply saying that he would remember it."

Jerry shoved the notebook in his pocket. He remembered, only too well, that the waiter had brought an order of broccoli. What Jerry had considered to be his best bet had turned out to be a dud.

REALIZING that he had heard the last of Jerry Croft's notations on the Esperanto conversation, Harry switched the discussion to another topic.

"Tell me about Professor Ardlan," he suggested. "Does he still think that he can get his invention working?"

"Absolutely!" returned Jerry. "He's been working on it all afternoon. He's going to give it a private test this evening."

"What do you think made it go wrong?"

"Someone must have tampered with it. And yet – well, Crumpf and the pair with him didn't get at it."

"Then who could have?"

Jerry caught a point to the question, and met it very directly.

"I could have," he admitted. "Only I didn't."

"No one else could have?" queried Harry. "Not even Trennick?"

"Not even Trennick." Jerry paused suddenly and snapped his fingers. "Wait, though! Trennick could have! The professor left him in charge of the lab, last night, while it still was open. Marquette mentioned it."

"But he told him to close the strong door." Harry was repeating facts given him by The Shadow. "Or did he?"

"He did," assured Jerry. "But Trennick was just coming up when Marquette and I came back from the chase."

Harry was elated. This was the very point that The Shadow had wanted him to check. Analyzing the invention's failure, The Shadow had considered the inside possibilities and had divided them between Jerry and Trennick. Trusting Jerry, he had naturally doubted Trennick.

"You're sure that the professor is safe at present?" queried Harry. "That Trennick, if working with Malga, will not be able to harm him?"

"How can he?" returned Jerry. "Marquette is there, down in the lab with the professor. Ardlan expected Marquette to join him. Since the invention failed, Ardlan is less secretive about it."

"Then you could introduce me to the professor?"

"Of course. We can go to the house as soon as we finish dinner. Ardlan will be glad to receive any friend of mine."

Harry decided to telephone The Shadow, to tell him how well he had progressed. Learning Jerry's story, and arranging an introduction to the professor, had been the two things which The Shadow had told Harry to accomplish, if possible.

SEATED in the reception room at Congressman Anderton's apartment, Lamont Cranston reached for the telephone when Raymond, the secretary, handed it to him. He heard Harry's report, and approved it in his quiet tone, without letting Raymond catch enough of the conversation to know what it was about.

Finished with the call, and having told Harry to get over to Ardlan's as soon as convenient – which Harry said would be very shortly – The Shadow turned toward Raymond, made a Cranston gesture in the direction of Anderton's study, and queried:

"How long will Professor Ardlan be with Congressman Anderton?"

"I really don't know," replied the secretary. "You see, when Mr. Bradwell came –"

"Bradwell is in there, too?"

"Yes. That is, he came after the professor arrived – or perhaps before. I'm... I'm not exactly sure –"

Cranston's eyes caught those of the secretary and held them with hypnotic effect. Under the accusing gaze, Raymond broke down.

"I... I lied to you," he confessed. "Professor Ardlan isn't here. He didn't come at all. I wouldn't have told you so, Mr. Cranston, except – well, except for certain instructions –"

"Call Ardlan's," spoke The Shadow in Cranston's firm, but calm tone. "I wish to talk with him."

Hurriedly, Raymond dialed the number, hoping to lessen the wrath of those burning eyes.

"Either to Ardlan," The Shadow added, "or to Marquette."

Clinging to the telephone receiver, Raymond nodded. He hoped that the number would hurry and answer; but it didn't.

In the midst of those pressing moments, the door of the apartment opened and Ruth Anderton entered. She saw that Raymond was using the telephone; ignoring Cranston, she hurried over to the secretary's desk.

"If it's Mr. Croft," the girl exclaimed, "tell him that Professor Ardlan is here, and wants to see him. It's very important, Raymond. I hope you haven't forgotten. But don't mention my name!"

Raymond's despairing glance turned to a savage glare in Ruth's direction. Like Jerry, the secretary felt inclined to wring the swanlike neck that emerged from the collar of Ruth's brocaded gown.

An hour or more ago, Ruth had instructed Raymond to tell all callers that Professor Ardlan was in conference with her father; her purpose having been to include Jerry in the hoax, and thus bring him to the apartment.

Having applied the rule to Cranston, who had finally uncovered the deception, Raymond's plight was worse than Jerry's, for the secretary felt that the girl's meddling in his business might cost him his job. Ignoring Ruth, Raymond turned to The Shadow, to say:

"The number doesn't answer, Mr. Cranston. I'm terribly sorry! Really, if I'd only realized that you wanted to see Professor Ardlan, not Congressman Anderton, I wouldn't have misled you. Since the number doesn't answer, I don't know where the professor is."

"It's not your fault, Raymond," returned The Shadow. "I understand who is to blame."

Ruth threw a piqued glance. She wasn't going to take criticism from anyone, not even from this Mr. Cranston whom her father seemed to regard as important. In importance, Ruth came first, or, at least, she thought she did, until she was suddenly nonplused by Cranston's next statement.

With only a passing glance at Ruth, The Shadow said to Raymond:

"Call Mr. Marquette. You will probably find him at the World Wide Cafe. Tell him to return to Ardlan's at once. You won't have any trouble getting Marquette. They page people very promptly at the World Wide Cafe, particularly those who have no reason to be there."

Ruth's ruby lips opened to deliver a gasp of surprise. How Cranston could have known where she was rather amazed her, as did his insight into Jerry's sentiments toward Ruth, an attitude which the girl was reluctantly beginning to recognize.

But Ruth had no time for a reply, even if she could have thought up one. Turning, Cranston was gone with rapid strides.

THE SHADOW had reason to be off. Dusk had come again to Washington, and night was a time when crime would be on the move. Protection of Ardlan was paramount, much more so than the guarding of the professor's invention, which could be duplicated from his own brain, so long as Ardlan lived.

Hoping for a chat with Anderton, who might have furnished certain leads, The Shadow had left Ardlan's protection to Jerry Croft, and later to Vic Marquette. Though learning, at Anderton's, that Jerry had gone to the World Wide Cafe, and suspecting that Vic might follow, The Shadow had still remained in the belief that

Professor Ardlan was in conference with Anderton.

But Ardlan hadn't come there at all. By rights, he must be at his own house, where there had been no answer to The Shadow's call. Ardlan alone with Trennick, the man that The Shadow mistrusted as crime's worst tool!

In a car that he had parked near Anderton's, The Shadow was speeding for Ardlan's, no longer in the guise of Cranston. He was cloaked in black, the garb that he might need when he reached his destination.

Though Ardlan's test had failed, the professor's persistence was the sort that would win him another chance, if men of evil allowed him to live.

The Shadow was running a race with Death!

## CHAPTER XII. THE TRAITOR'S THRUST

EVER since Vic Marquette had left the old house, Professor Ardlan had been coasting toward the brink of death, though he did not realize it. In fact, Ardlan's mind had been solely concerned with thoughts of life. He was alone in his laboratory, with the door locked, and he had his invention working.

Colored lights were responding to the dials that he manipulated, while a tank in a corner of the room was emitting a sizzle of mustard gas – ordinarily deadly, but neutralized when the professor's machine was in proper tune, as at present.

On a table was a box of guinea pigs; Ardlan plucked one of the cavies from its nest and held it close to the gush of gas.

When the guinea pig showed no ill effects, Ardlan laughed and stepped past the flow himself. He put a tag around the guinea pig's neck, labeling it as a specimen of life that had survived mustard gas.

Turning off the corner tank, he went to another large one that bore the deadly legend: "Phosgene." He watched the bubbling cease from a glass container at the side of the Neutralizer, then turned on the phosgene. Thumbing the dials of the machine, he waited calmly for its identifiers to show results upon the blinking lights.

At that moment, above the slight hum and swishy whirl of the Neutralizer, Ardlan heard a knock at the door.

Ordinarily, Ardlan didn't answer knocks while busy with a test. His lapse on this occasion was almost accidental, occurring probably because he had just finished with one gas and was starting with another. Stepping to the door, he boomed:

"Who is it?"

"Mr. Marquette has returned," came Trennick's voice. "He wants to see you."

Ever cautious, Ardlan would have asked Marquette to speak for himself, except for two chance factors. The first was that Ardlan, far from suspecting Trennick to be a traitor, trusted the servant much more than before, for he considered Trennick's actions on the previous night to have been a display of loyalty.

The second factor was the phosgene. Not only was Ardlan's mind back to the dials of his machine, but he remembered that Marquette had once asked him if his invention could neutralize phosgene. This was just the time to gain one supporter who would believe in the Neutralizer.

## CRIME UNDER COVER

Professor Ardlan pulled open the door.

It wasn't Marquette who entered. The man admitted by Trennick was thickset like the Fed, but he had a much different sort of face. One, indeed, which could scarcely be classed as a human countenance.

Thrust boldly into the light, it looked more like a grinning skull, until Ardlan squinted and saw that it did have human features, of ghastly gray complexion.

This was Ardlan's first meeting with Kurd Malga, who had decided to take a personal hand in matters, having learned that the coast was clear.

PROFESSOR ARDLAN was active, as he had demonstrated when he dodged the goats. He shot a long arm forward, so rapidly and suddenly, that he had barely time to close his fist before it struck squarely in the center of Malga's skull-like face.

As Malga jolted backward, Ardlan grabbed the door and tried to slam it.

Malga stopped the slam, almost getting the door in the jaw. He had come back from Ardlan's punch as if actuated by a springboard, the reason being that there were two men behind him, who propelled him forward as they lunged themselves.

One was the bulgy-browed man that Jerry hadn't liked; the other, the tawny-faced waiter who had formerly worked at the World Wide Cafe. Darting away from the ugly three, Ardlan made for the desk in the far corner.

From the hallway, Trennick shouted:

"Li havas pafilo en la skriptablo!"

Trennick was telling Malga that Ardlan had a gun in the desk. Had the professor recognized it, he could have gotten the weapon, for Malga and the other two were trying to corner him in crafty, rather than hasty style.

But Ardlan didn't understand the language, whereas the words in Esperanto were plain to Malga and his men. With a united leap, they fell upon Ardlan just as he grabbed the desk drawer.

Professor Ardlan had shown power that afternoon, when he had started a suicidal dash toward the dead goats. He demonstrated it again, flaying his attackers right and left, almost landing them against his precious machine, which was humming away, its lights still blinking, while a hiss came from a corner of the room.

Skirting the contrivance, Trennick reached the desk and grabbed the gun from the drawer just as Ardlan came reeling back to get it. The professor changed his motion to the servant's direction.

Coming in from a chance angle, Malga intercepted him. With bony hands that suited his skullish face, Malga caught Ardlan's chin and neck and gave a hard two-way twist. Ardlan spun as if Malga had twirled a top, and Trennick, a moment later, received evidence of the jujitsu skill which the master of the spy ring possessed.

Trennick, about to pour bullets into the coiling form of the shaggy professor, found his hand numb, his fingers askew, with the gun barely dangling from them. Malga had given the traitor's wrist a neat twist.

"Malsagulo!" snarled Malga. "Vi malbonigus nian celon!"



He was calling Trennick a fool who would spoil their purpose, and the fellow understood, very shortly. While stooping to pick up the revolver, Trennick stared at Ardlan and saw that the shaggy man was lying, quite stunned. Then, one of Malga's companions, the tawny ex-waiter, was pointing to the Neutralizer and exclaiming:

"Regardu!"

Malga looked, and widened his lipless grin. The lights on the device had stopped blinking. Malga snarled suddenly, as the machine behaved automatically, diamond lights on one side of the dial matching those on the other; but when he beckoned to Trennick, the servant settled that little matter.

Trennick knew where the right switches were, and he pulled them. He thumbed dials to make the lights change. Still, Malga wasn't satisfied. Harshly, he said:

"Faru iom plu!"

It meant "do some more," and Trennick did, by tilting the top of the machine and changing the first plugs that came to hand.

Professor Ardlan was staring up from the floor, for his eyes had opened; but as yet, he could not move. Malga's twist had temporarily paralyzed him.

All the while, Trennick was panting words in Esperanto, telling Malga that a deadly gas was filling the room.

Satisfied, Malga beckoned for the servant to come along. As they joined the others, who were out in the hall, Malga threw a savage glance at the professor, whose eyes, by then, had closed again, purposely.

SCARCELY had Malga slammed the door and started to twist the combination dial, when an answering echo came from upstairs. Someone had entered the front door, closing it hurriedly.

Trennick gasped that it must be Jerry, and Malga gestured to the gun that Trennick held, telling him to use it. Trennick understood.

Raising the weapon, he gave a shout for help and fired at the ceiling. Like racers, Malga, and his two pals were off at the crack of the gun.

They went up the stairs brandishing their own revolvers, only to be met by two men, instead of merely one. Jerry had brought Harry along, and what was more, both had guns. All that fooled them was the clatter from the stairs; it sounded as if Malga's outfit numbered at least half a dozen.

Accordingly, Harry and Jerry made a wise dodge for the parlor, as they fired their first shots.

Those shots were wide, but it didn't matter for the moment. The parlor was dark and afforded perfect shelter, from which they poked their guns anew. The shots had halted the arrivals from below, and Harry yelled out.

"Up with them, or we'll drill you!"

From the doorway, Harry saw Malga and recognized the fellow from the glimpse of that afternoon. In his turn, Jerry spotted the bulgy-headed man and the tawny waiter, hence knew that the halted men were members of the international spy group.

Hands were going up, guns drooping from loosening fingers, when Malga pulled the unexpected.

The unexpected happened to be the dangling light cord in the hall, which came luckily into the grasp of the leering man's left hand. Total darkness followed.

Guns blasted in that blackness, with men dodging everywhere, Harry and Jerry among them, for they heard one man, probably Malga, come diving forward, hoping to take a pot shot into the parlor.

Harry, more used to battle than was Jerry, knew that the front door was the proper target, for it was the probable exit that the spies would choose. But as he swung, Harry encountered Jerry and had to give him a hard shove aside, for fear he would block the path of aim.

At that moment, the front door rattled open and men made a dash to freedom. Piling after them, Harry and Jerry were halfway down the steps when shots sounded from behind them. Trennick was at the door, faking the part of an honest servant by shooting after Malga and the other fugitives.

Jerry, not trusting Trennick, wheeled. Harry grabbed Jerry, rather than let Trennick know that he was suspected. That brief delay produced a change.

Guns blazed from the street. Men came springing in from among the trees; not just Malga and two more, but a crew that totaled eight. Malga had brought two cars, each with a quota of reserves. His flight had been intended to lure Harry and Jerry into a trap!

It looked as if the best that Harry and Jerry could do would be to chop down a few before they were overwhelmed, for with Trennick on the steps, retreat was cut off.

Aiming grimly at the first figure he saw, Harry fired, hoping he'd score a hit and that the target would be Malga. Jerry, at that moment, was aiming with similar hope, while Trennick, copying Malga's leer, was lowering his gun, hoping to stab both defenders in the back with bullets.

The laugh that came from darkness could not have been more timely; but it was matched by the sudden spurts that a brace of automatics supplied. Those shots were delivered by a fighter who sprang from the wheel of an arriving car.

His taunt was a token of his prowess; it was a challenge that could not be ignored. For Malga and his men knew the sort of wrath that this avenger could deliver.

With one accord, they forgot the two trapped men who were at the house steps, and turned to meet The Shadow!

### **CHAPTER XIII. DEATH'S DOUBLE DEAL**

TO Jerry, it was amazing the way The Shadow's shots scattered Malga's crew. It seemed that at least a half-dozen spurts had come from the two guns before Jerry could pull his own revolver trigger. By then, he didn't have a target to shoot at. The spies were gone.

It didn't amaze Harry. He knew exactly what had happened. Instinctively, The Shadow's foemen had dodged for cover as they fired, and the cloaked marksman hadn't given them time to stop. Every man in the charging cluster, Malga included, thought that the swift stabs were meant for him, alone, and none wanted to bear the brunt of The Shadow's attack.

## CRIME UNDER COVER

The Shadow wasn't halting his motion, nor his fire. He was skirting in toward the house, his guns going full blast. Only one shot seemed really wild; it nicked the front door in back of Trennick's ear, and in so doing fulfilled the most important mission of all.

It stopped Trennick's original intention – to shoot at the backs of Harry and Jerry, the men just below. Dodging back into the doorway, Trennick decided that he'd better square himself.

Harry was pumping shots in the general direction of the Malga group, and Jerry was just a trigger pull behind him. Trennick joined their barrage, pushing out into plain sight to convince The Shadow that he was quite loyal. Of course, Trennick was firing wide purposely, but he didn't make it too evident.

Malga and the rest were out in the street, a few of them stumbling badly. They were lucky, very lucky, and probably Malga knew it. If it hadn't been for the plight in which The Shadow found Harry and Jerry, the ranks of the spies would have been thinned by half, with most of the victims permanent examples of the cloaked fighter's skilled gunnery.

The Shadow had rushed matters in order to put his foemen on the run, knowing that they then would fully forget their intended victims. In so doing, he had also obtained the sharpshooting services of Harry and Jerry, both of whom were capable. The trouble was the trees, which had helped Crumpf's men to flee the night before. Malga's tribe was also finding them advantageous.

Besides, The Shadow, having put the crooks to flight, was leaving the last touches to Harry and Jerry. He had turned to place another shot at Trennick, so close that it almost scorched the fellow's cheek. It was a hint for Trennick to get indoors, and he took it, but not quite soon enough.

Another cue had come at the same moment, a strangely worded shout from across the street, given by Malga to his men. From their moving cars, they blasted a firing squad at Trennick, who was now their only possible target.

Most of the bullets merely found the door into which Trennick had started, but a few winged the servant and brought him reeling outward, to topple from the house steps.

Trennick had played his part of pretended loyalty to Ardlan; very aptly, Malga had decided to give it the genuine touch.

The Shadow could have used the delay that Malga made, to wheel out to the street and take sure shots at the departing cars, but he hadn't forgotten the major issue: the fate of Professor Ardlan.

Springing up the steps, he started into the house; and Harry grabbed Jerry, telling him to follow. Downstairs, in the lighted passage, they found The Shadow hammering with a gun handle at the strong door. There was no response.

Reversing his automatic, The Shadow blasted away the combination lock and chunks of the door's steel sheathing with it. Fired from a few inches distance, the slugs from a .45 were handier and quicker than any other method of entry. The door gave, and as it slung inward The Shadow reached out to restrain the two men behind him.

THE hiss of gas from the corner was louder than the whirring hum of the professor's Neutralizer. The room wasn't safe, though Ardlan, on his feet beside the table that held the machine, was definitely alive.

Holding his breath, The Shadow sprang across the room, whipped Ardlan from beside the contrivance and sent him on a long reel through the doorway, into the arms of Harry and Jerry, who hurried him toward the stairs.

Meanwhile, The Shadow reached the phosgene tank and turned off the gas. His breath still held, he took a look at the Neutralizer as he passed it, saw that the device was not working. Grimly, The Shadow kept on his way, knowing full well what he would see when he arrived upstairs.

He found the professor in the grip of three men, not two, for Vic Marquette had arrived just after the fray. In fact, from what Vic was telling Harry as they steered the professor toward the parlor, the Fed had reached the bottom of the stairs in time to see The Shadow shoot out the lock.

Other Feds had come with Vic, but he had sent them after Malga's men, and was naturally anxious to know who the fugitives were.

Such things could be kept until later; the important matter at present was what Ardlan might have to say, for his time was very short. At least, Jerry recognized it, for The Shadow, coming from the stairs, observed that Jerry's head was tilted so that he could hear whatever Ardlan spoke.

The professor's voice was coming weakly:

"Only a few wires, Jerry. That's... all I had... to fix. Should have... turned off the gas... first. But I forgot. Had it... going for a while. Top plugs... on the right... try every combination –"

Ardlan paused to take a long, deep breath as he was lowered to a couch. Harry had turned on the parlor lights; from the doorway, The Shadow saw a smile come to Ardlan's lips and freeze upon them. That was the way with phosgene. Too many whiffs of it, and afterward the stuff would show its effect.

Professor Ardlan was dead.

Odd circumstances had contributed to his passing – from Ruth's meddling in Jerry's business, to the professor's own folly. At least, Ardlan had died happy, for his whole aim in life had been to prove his invention, and he knew that it hadn't really failed.

Still, The Shadow felt himself responsible for what had happened, for it was his way to calculate all possible elements in a situation; and in this case, some had slipped by him.

There was one that he intended to remedy, as far as he could. That element was Trennick. Moving out through the front door, The Shadow found the dying servant just below the steps, where Marquette had passed without seeing the sprawled form. Trennick was still alive.

Lifting Trennick's head, The Shadow met a pair of defiant eyes.

In a low tone, The Shadow spoke words in Esperanto:

"Illi perfidis vin. Vi paroles."

### **CHAPTER XIV. THE SHADOW'S PLAN**

"THEY betrayed you. You will speak."

Such, to Trennick, was the significance of The Shadow's statement. Had the words been in English, Trennick would have ignored them. A crook at heart, he would have preferred to keep whatever he knew to himself.

But he had been used to taking commands spoken in Esperanto, and habit could be an important factor in a dying man's mood.

To a degree, reason played a part with Trennick. He judged that The Shadow's use of the special language indicated a closer knowledge of matters than anyone supposed; that The Shadow might even have a hold upon reactionary members of the group controlled by Malga. Such shattering of Malga's prestige made Trennick willing to renounce his treachery toward Ardlan.

Except for occasional choking coughs, Trennick spoke slowly, steadily, his words a jargon, for he was mixing English with Esperanto.

"They came here," he said. "Malga and the other two: Baushon and Zuvar. Ili venis detru!"

"They came to destroy," translated The Shadow. Then, his eyes revealing a sharp glint: "To destroy both the professor and his invention."

"La profesoro unua," spoke Trennick: "The professor first. Poste, eble – la inventaĵo."

"Afterward, perhaps – the invention."

Repeating those words, The Shadow showed by intonation that he understood them fully. Malga's system had been crafty; by getting rid of Professor Ardlan, he had sought to dispose of the Neutralizer, too. He wanted it to look as though Ardlan had died while attempting an unsuccessful test. Such a result would probably schedule the machine for the junk yard.

Had Malga and his two pals, now named as Baushon and Zuvar, been able to leave the house before others arrived, the scheme would have worked. Harry and Jerry, by their arrival, had precipitated battle, which was unfortunate; for The Shadow, coming so closely afterward, could have saved the situation skillfully and silently.

That, however, was a thing of the past. The Shadow was concerned with the future. He spoke to Trennick.

"Should anyone, Croft for instance, put Ardlan's machine into working order, then Malga –"

The Shadow left the statement for Trennick to finish. The dying man picked it up.

"La revenos," croaked Trennick. "Yes. Malga will return. Li stelos la Senefikiganto –"

He was saying that Malga would steal the Neutralizer, "Senefikiganto" being the coined Esperanto name for the device. Then, in English, Trennick coughed out:

"Malga will steal it... to destroy it... but he will hide his methods, as always. Malga has much other work to do. He likes to keep his ways... unknown."

There was a long gasp before the word "unknown." The Shadow propped Trennick to a better position beside the steps. He leaned close, to hear the words that the dying man mumbled.

"I called Malga the night when Croft came. I told him that Croft had arrived safely; which surprised me. I said that the invention was soon to be tested; that the next night would be the last opportunity to act –"

"And Crumpf came the next night," prompted The Shadow, as Trennick faltered. "His purpose was to tamper with the invention, and merely spoil the test."

Trennick nodded.

"When Crumpf failed," added The Shadow, "You did the task instead. But you had never seen Crumpf before –"

"No, never."

"Nor heard of him –"

"No."

"Malga told you to let Crumpf proceed, but not to advise him that you, too, were in the plot –"

Trennick inserted a weak nod, his eyes wide, at recognition of The Shadow's uncanny full knowledge. Trennick would have stared harder, had he known that The Shadow was reasoning out facts that he had not yet proven.

"There was another man," reminded The Shadow. "His name was Hortland. He worked for Malga, but that was all you knew about him. You never saw Hortland –"

"Neniam."

The word meant "never," and it was the last that Trennick uttered. His head fell back, as if recoiling from the gasp, and The Shadow propped it against the steps.

THE lights of cars were swinging into the street. As the cars stopped, Feds hurried from them, back after a futile chase wherein Malga had enough head start to slip them.

They found Trennick's body against the steps, but they saw no sign of the gliding shape that was moving through the darkness. Nor did they catch the low, parting whisper that The Shadow uttered.

The cloaked investigator had profited from Trennick's dying statements. They had revealed facts which fitted with The Shadow's own conjectures, though Trennick, himself, had not realized the importance of the statements!

Within the house, Vic Marquette was pacing back and forth, glumly considering what to do next. He had met Harry Vincent before, and connected him definitely with The Shadow, which was very fortunate for Jerry Croft. Otherwise, Vic would have placed Jerry under immediate arrest, for he didn't like the way the young man had deserted Ardlan and gone to the World Wide Cafe.

Still, Vic was reasonable enough to recognize that he had made a mistake, himself, in following Jerry. Hence, he was giving Jerry some benefit of the doubt.

Jerry wanted to talk, but Harry wouldn't let him. In fact, Harry managed to insert a few words of definite advice while they were going downstairs with Marquette and the other Feds, to have a look at the laboratory,

from which the phosgene, by this time, had cleared.

Feds were telling Vic that they had found Trennick's body, bullet-riddled, by the steps outside. Vic nodded.

"It's plain enough," said Vic, as he surveyed the laboratory. "The prof couldn't get the Neutralizer working, even though that bunch who came here thought maybe there was something to it."

Marquette was at the desk in the corner; he looked into its open drawer, saw nothing, so shoved the drawer shut.

Jerry, who happened to know that Ardlan had kept his revolver in that drawer, was about to blurt the fact. A nudge from Harry halted him. It was better to let Marquette have his say, and correct his opinions later, after reporting to The Shadow.

However, Jerry did have a chance to speak, when Marquette swung about and asked him to give his version of the entire fray.

Jerry put the facts as he had witnessed them, knowing that Harry would testify later and would probably fail to include any embellishments, or theories. Those facts, Jerry realized glumly, fitted with Marquette's own idea.

Trennick had been shooting when Jerry and Harry arrived; from all indications, the servant had been driving off the invaders. Having had only a brief look at Malga and his two companions, before the leader snatched the upstairs light cord, neither Jerry nor Harry could very well identify them.

They told of battle outdoors: how The Shadow had routed the reinforced invasion crew. It was necessary, though, to admit that Trennick had also been shooting after the fugitives. Thus, when Marquette led the way upstairs and outdoors, neither Jerry nor Harry were surprised to hear the Fed's comments when he gazed at the dead servant's body.

"Tough," said Vic. "Killed while trying to save Ardlan, who was practically committing suicide down in the laboratory. Too bad The Shadow couldn't get down there in time for a rescue. The way he blasted that door, would have been a help a little sooner."

Indeed, Jerry would have been inclined to accept the theory, lifting Trennick from all suspicion of earlier treachery, if it hadn't been for the open drawer of Ardlan's desk. He mentioned that point to Harry as they were riding to Congressman Anderton's, where Marquette had told them to meet him, for further conference.

"They must have gotten into the lab," insisted Jerry. "They attacked the professor, and probably left him senseless for a time. Only, he would have opened the drawer – and besides, how could Trennick have gotten the gun later, if he hadn't been in the lab?"

It was sound logic, that Jerry backed by repeating Ardlan's dying statement. As Jerry reasoned, Ardlan wouldn't have turned on the phosgene if the invention hadn't been working. The gadgets that needed fixing were obviously ones that Trennick had altered hurriedly, after Malga and the others had overpowered the professor.

"If Trennick had only talked –"

THE remark was Jerry's. Harry already was sure that Trennick had talked, to The Shadow. The next thing was for Harry to report other details to his chief. That opportunity was presented him at Anderton's.

## CRIME UNDER COVER

Cranston was there, and Harry was able to mention the facts before Marquette arrived. He added that Vic had left Feds on duty at Ardlan's, which was important, since Harry knew that The Shadow still regarded Ardlan's invention as worth-while.

Meanwhile, Jerry was telling the news to Anderton and Bradwell. In his deceptive way, Rufus Bradwell seemed to share the congressman's grief over the passing of Professor Ardlan. It wasn't until Marquette arrived that Bradwell showed his double nature, and even then, his way was too subtle to be criticized.

Marquette declared that the invention was definitely useless, basing his argument on an added finding – that of dead guinea pigs in the laboratory.

"All tagged with the names of different gases," reported Vic, "and all dead. The Neutralizer must have failed every time."

Actually, it was the phosgene that had eliminated the guinea pigs that had survived the earlier tests. But Jerry didn't dispute Vic's theory. What Bradwell said was more important.

"We should at least honor Ardlan's memory," Bradwell declaimed, "by placing his invention in storage and keeping it for posterity."

In storage, so that Malga could steal, or permanently ruin it! The thought rifled home to Jerry. He wanted to object, but hesitated, which proved fortunate. For Marquette, accepting the notion, turned to Jerry and queried:

"You can attend to that matter, Croft?"

Eagerly, Jerry nodded. With Harry as a pal, Jerry was willing to defy any thrusts that might come from Bradwell, even if Malga proved to be the instrument. Jerry knew that both he and Harry could depend upon The Shadow.

It was Harry who suggested that they return to the professor's house, and Marquette agreed. They started, only to pause in the reception room, where Raymond, the secretary, spoke to Jerry.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Croft," the secretary said, "about my saying, this afternoon, that Professor Ardlan was here. I wouldn't have, if Miss Anderton had not insisted –"

The connection struck home to Jerry. Leaving the apartment, he wished he could run into Ruth and tell her what he thought of her idea of smartness. Ruth's flippancy had gone too far, when it became a contributing force to tragedy, and Jerry was resolved to counter with stern measures.

Those would have to wait, however, for he and Harry did not meet Ruth as they left. Evidently, she had crossed Jerry off the book for this evening and had gone out with someone else.

Shortly, other visitors left Anderton's. One was Rufus Bradwell; he wore a knowing smile as he stepped into his limousine to ride away, with Winstle at the wheel.

The chauffeur, darting a look back, caught Bradwell's expression and developed a shrewd grin of his own. Both expressions were noted by Lamont Cranston, who, at that moment, had stopped in the doorway of the apartment hotel.



Going to his own car, The Shadow slid into cloak and hat and drove in the direction of Ardlan's, to patrol again the area of the house where Harry and Jerry had gone.

Tonight, at least, all would be well within the house itself, now that Trennick was dead; but The Shadow regretted that he had not spotted the traitor earlier.

Still, there were others, alive and busy with their plotting: Rufus Bradwell, the millionaire who wanted Ardlan's invention; Kurd Malga, the superspy who had gone after it, and such smaller men as Baushon and Zuvar. The Shadow had a plan for all of them.

A plan that boded ill for men of evil, judging from the sinister tone of The Shadow's whispered laugh!

## CHAPTER XV. THE TRAIL REVERSED

NOT only did Rufus Bradwell issue a public eulogy in behalf of Professor Ardlan; he paid a visit to the dead man's house, bringing a copy of the statement that he had issued to the press.

Reading it, Jerry could almost believe that Bradwell regretted Ardlan's passing. The tribute described Ardlan as a humanitarian of vision, whose work might some day serve as an inspiration for other men of inventive genius.

It was afternoon when Bradwell made his visit, and he went to the laboratory to look at the professor's queer invention. Sadly, Bradwell said to Jerry:

"I don't suppose that it could ever really work. Something was lacking, that other minds will have to supply. Are you interested in making such experiments, Croft?"

"My work is chemical research," replied Jerry. "I know very little about the professor's invention."

"Ah, yes," nodded Bradwell. "I had forgotten. I was going to say that I might use you, as a technician, along with others who are working on a different kind of Neutralizer. I may have a place for you, anyway, Croft. See me, after you have finished with your task of straightening poor Ardlan's affairs."

He handed Jerry a card stating his home address, in a fashionable section of Washington. When Bradwell left the house, Jerry watched him enter the limousine that Winstle piloted.

Turning to Harry, Jerry said: "He's itching to get hold of it!" – referring to the Neutralizer. "But he's probably decided to wait. The Crumpf stuff was clever; the Malga business too strong."

Harry did not interrupt Jerry's comments. He simply beckoned him toward the stairs down to the laboratory.

"It would be worth a million to Bradwell," continued Jerry, "if he could introduce the Neutralizer as a new device, one that he himself had developed. That's why he wanted the professor to fail. Don't you agree, Harry?"

"Without a doubt!" Harry's tone carried such positive assurance, that Jerry recognized that his friend must be repeating an opinion from The Shadow. "It would be worth a million, or more, to governments that dread gas attacks."

"And perhaps still more to ruthless nations," added Jerry. "The ones that Malga and his tribe work for. I could forgive Bradwell for a lot, but not for tying up with those boys. Personal profit may be justifiable, but never

to a point where humanity is disregarded."

They had reached the laboratory. Gesturing to the Neutralizer, Harry inquired:

"How long do you think it would take to fix it?"

"I looked it over this morning," replied Jerry. "There are six plugs in the group the professor mentioned, each with a wire. Those are the ones Trennick switched around. It means seven hundred and twenty combinations."

"With a gas test necessary for each?"

"No other way, Harry. I might test as many as twelve combinations in an hour. That cuts it to sixty hours, or five days, on a twelve-hour basis. But I can't work here. You said yourself that I'm on a somewhat ticklish spot with Marquette."

"That's one point," agreed Harry. "Another is that we've bluffed Bradwell, so far, and don't want Malga moving in on us. The Shadow would prefer to look up Malga on his own. That's why we're sending the Neutralizer to storage, right after dark."

It was all rather cryptic to Jerry, until dark came.

WITH dusk, a truck arrived, a very large one, considering that the moving job was small. Harry told the truckers that they had made a mistake; that the furniture belonged in the house and wouldn't be taken along.

However, since they had brought the big truck, they decided to use it. The Neutralizer went into the back, along with the professor's gas tanks.

Marquette was around, and so were some curious-minded strangers who looked on from parked cars. Terry had a hunch that some of them might represent Malga. Then Harry beckoned him into the rear of the truck, and as it started, Jerry was surprised to find that the truck already contained a load – in the shape of a bulky, shrouded object that filled the interior by more than half.

The next surprise was even greater. When Harry pulled away the covering cloth, he revealed, of all things, a trim coupe of an undersized make of automobile, which was pointed toward the closed rear of the truck!

"Get the Neutralizer into the baggage compartment of the coupe," ordered Harry. "It will hold one of the gas tanks, too. The others will have to squeeze in with us."

Watching through a peephole in the rear of the truck, Harry kept tabs on cars that picked up the trail. They were on a road outside of Washington, turning a long curve, when Harry passed the word to the truck driver and then sprang into the coupe, where Jerry already was.

What happened next, was proof why The Shadow regarded Harry as a capable man.

The truck driver was Cliff Marsland, another of The Shadow's agents. Cliff picked up speed on the curve; leaving trailers quite out of sight. Veering into a side road, he used the air brakes, bringing the truck to a sudden stop. At the same moment, Harry released the brakes of the coupe. The rest was automatic.

A slight forward jolt of the truck sent the coupe rearward. The truck's whole back went downward on a hinge, forming a ramp down which the coupe shot in a rapid coast.

## CRIME UNDER COVER

Harry had the car in gear as it hit the road; released, the truck's rear wall went up again on powerful springs, once relieved of the coupe's weight.

As two cars swung into the side road, they passed Harry's and took it for a chance car coming the other way, since the truck was rolling ahead, slackened apparently, because the side road was rough.

Harry and Jerry were safely away with the precious Neutralizer, while mysterious pursuers were on the trail of an empty truck!

Veering back into Washington, the truck rolled into a garage, where Cliff and a companion left it. Other cars had arrived; men from them watched the departure of the supposed truckers, then sneaked into the garage.

Faces showed in the light – those of Baushon and Zuvar. They felt that they were absolutely safe, because they were sure that no cars had been on their own trail.

Boarding the truck, the pair found the Neutralizer and the gas tanks missing, with no sign of Harry or Jerry. Nothing but an empty truck, which greatly mystified them until Baushon said to Zuvar:

"Ni perdis la teron. Ci tiu estas la malprava sargvagona."

He was stating that they had lost the trail; that this was the wrong truck. Zuvar agreed, since it was the only plausible answer. Rejoining men who awaited them, the ugly pair left in their car. Since no one had followed them along the wrong trail, they did not think in terms of followers, which was a mistake.

This was the right trail, and instead of trailing, The Shadow had simply waited at the end of it for these dupes to come along. The car that actually followed Baushon and Zuvar was The Shadow's own, with the cloaked driver at the wheel, keeping close to them with dimmed lights.

It was an important trail, too, one for which The Shadow had cleverly planned.

It led to a house not unlike Ardlan's, but in a different, and more antiquated, section of Washington.

WHEN the others left their car, The Shadow did the same, from half a block away. He followed them on foot, into the rear of the house. A sallow-faced guard conducted them down a flight of steps to the cellar, and since the way was temporarily unwatched, The Shadow followed.

The returning guard failed to see the gliding form that faded into a gloomy corner of the cellar. It was as well for him that he did not, for The Shadow had drawn an automatic and was ready to sledge it hard to the fellow's skull, had the guard attempted to call for aid.

With the way clear again, The Shadow tried the door through which Baushon and Zuvar had gone. It was unlocked; opening it a chink, The Shadow peered through.

Malga was present, with three or four others, among them a woman. She was sleek, catlike, dark of eyes and hair, the very sort who might figure in schemes of international intrigue. Malga addressed her as Freda, and seemed to value her advice.

After hearing what Baushon and Zuvar had to say, he asked Freda what she thought of it. She replied in the language that all were using: Esperanto.

Freda's opinion was that Baushon and Zuvar had been deliberately tricked. Somewhere along the line, another truck must have curved in and played a game of cross-tag with the first, taking Malga's men off the right trail.

Both men argued otherwise, but Malga preferred Freda's opinion. Yet the skull-faced spy master was not critical of his two aids.

"We are safe enough," he said, in Esperanto. "We have influence in certain circles, thanks to Freda" – he grinned in her direction – "so we can bide our time. But not too long! It may be that Croft will try to remedy the damage that Trennick did to the Neutralizer.

"Our only policy, therefore, is to find the machine and destroy it. At first, it was easier to have things move the way that Bradwell preferred, but having shown ourselves too openly, last night, we must go to the full extreme. I would say" – Malga's deep eye sockets revealed a shrewd glare – "that the original truck came back into the city, too."

Malga had risen from his chair. He paced the floor, staring about the group, then turned and gestured to the walls of his headquarters. The walls formed a veritable arsenal, having shelves lined with pineapple-shaped bombs, as well as weapons from revolvers to machine guns.

"Tomorrow night, we shall all be present," announced Malga. "Before then" – he was emphatic – "we shall find the invention, so that we can destroy it for all time! Yes, we shall find it before Croft can repair it. He and Vincent will die, silently, efficiently, for these will be our weapons!"

He picked a few sample bombs from a shelf, remarked that they were gas bomb, of the deadliest sort, which certain warring nations had developed and were holding for later use.

Malga seemed gleeful because he might be the one to give the devastating devices their first trial. As he put the bombs back on the shelf, he pointed to gas masks that hung in a corner.

"We shall wear those, of course," added Malga. "All of us. Afterward, if necessary, we can go to our other headquarters, outside the city."

By that time, The Shadow had given up thought of an immediate attack. A lone drive into Malga's arsenal could prove foolhardy, even for The Shadow. Besides, from what he had heard, The Shadow saw that he could play for a much larger stake tomorrow night.

Then, all Malga's workers would assemble; by proper tactics, it would be possible to meet them between one headquarters and the other and cut them off from both.

"I shall put searchers to work," decided Malga. "One who will be most valuable is Winstle. As Bradwell's chauffeur, he can scour Washington thoroughly, without suspicion. Yes, I shall arrange to use Winstle."

He reached for a telephone and began to dial Bradwell's number; then halted.

"No," declared Malga. "It would be unwise to call. One of the other servants might answer. Besides, our friend, The Shadow" – he spoke the term "La Ombro" with a sneer – "may be on watch at Bradwell's. I shall wait until Winstle calls me."

By then, The Shadow was moving away. He did not go up by the stairs; instead, he worked his way through the cellar, probing with a tiny flashlight. He found a loose window, wormed up through it, and rolled out to

the ground. From there on, it was an easy circuit to the spot where he had left his car.

A whispered laugh in the darkness presaged new plans in The Shadow's mind: ways whereby he could trap Malga and the spy group, in very thorough style. Success seemed sure.

Sometimes, success could come too soon. In fact, one sort of success might block another that was more important – as The Shadow was to learn!

## CHAPTER XVI. JERRY STRIKES LUCK

IT was high noon, and the upper waters of the Potomac River were gushing merrily beside the little cabin on the shore. But Jerry Croft, engaged in scientific research, was too busy to look from the window and enjoy the scene. He liked the open window only because it cleared the cabin of gas every time he gave the Neutralizer another trial.

Harry Vincent, entering the cabin, asked Jerry how he was making out. Jerry pointed to a chart that he was keeping, showing the various wire combinations. He had already disposed of fifty out of the required seven hundred and twenty.

"We're quite safe here," Harry assured. "If we were not, I would have heard from The Shadow. I think I'd better run into Washington. I'll certainly be back before dark."

"Stay as long as you like," returned Jerry. "The only way I can get this job done is to keep plugging at it."

Smiling, Harry departed. Jerry heard the small coupe pull away, and returned to his task. He figured on another hour, then a few sandwiches, of which there was a plentiful supply. But Jerry stopped just short of the hour.

He was trying combination fifty-eight. It brought results. Blinking lights stopped; red and blue indicated acetylene gas, which Jerry was using, and the ether dial tabbed. To his amazement and delight, Jerry realized that he had struck the right combination!

He spent a short while longer, proving the result. Then, firmly clamping the top of the machine, he turned off the switches and walked out into the open.

Never had outdoors seemed more delightful. He could feel a thrill that fought off the ever-bitter memory of Ardlan's death. Jerry had won out, for the professor!

This happened to be the success that came too soon.

Bothering with sandwiches was a waste of time, to Jerry. He could not hold back his bubbling enthusiasm. He wanted to get hold of Harry, to relay word to The Shadow. The only way was to go to Washington.

Grabbing his hat, Jerry put a padlock on the cabin and started along a path that he knew led to a road.

Hitchhiking into town was something of a problem, especially as cars weren't frequent along the Potomac road. Seeing a service station, that was combined with a small store, Jerry stopped there. He bought a pack of cigarettes, pocketed the paper matches that came with them. Then he opened conversation with the rather dour proprietor.

"Nice place you have here," remarked Jerry. "First time I've been around Riverview Corners. I'm staying at the log cabin a quarter mile back."

The proprietor nodded.

"Expected a friend out from Washington," resumed Jerry. "Only, he hasn't come. Guess he's forgotten where I am. It's pretty important for me to see him."

"In that case," suggested the dour man, "you ought to go into town. It's only about an hour."

"By car, yes," agreed Berry. "The trouble is" – he gave a troubled smile – "my friend is the one who has the car."

As Jerry spoke, a delivery truck pulled up in front of the store. Its driver was coming in to get cigarettes, and Jerry made the most of it.

"Sorry there's no taxi service out here," remarked Jerry, to the storekeeper. "It would be worth a couple of dollars, maybe more, for a ride into Washington."

The truck driver took the bait.

"You want to go to Washington?"

Jerry nodded.

"Come on, then," the fellow said. "I'll take you up for a couple of bucks. But I'm in a hurry:"

HURRY suited Jerry. They reached Washington under the estimated hour, and Jerry insisted that the delivery man take an extra dollar. Transferring to a cab, Jerry rode to the hotel where he knew that Harry Vincent had been stopping, only to find that his friend had checked out.

Of course, Harry had! Jerry should have thought of it before. Harry was staying in the log cabin on the Potomac, just as Jerry was.

There was no other way to reach The Shadow. Trying Vic Marquette was totally out of the question. So Jerry decided that the only thing to do was leave a message for Harry to call him somewhere, in case Harry came back to the hotel to see if there were any letters.

But where should he have Harry call? Debating that question, Jerry suddenly had an answer.

Congressman Anderton's!

He knew that Anderton had kept confidence with Ardlan, and greatly regretted the professor's death. He would be glad to know that Jerry had set out to vindicate Ardlan, and had obtained some success. The only danger, as Jerry saw it, lay in the chance that Bradwell might be at Anderton's.

Finding Bradwell's card, Jerry noted the telephone number, and used the simple expedient of calling the house. Hearing Bradwell answer, Jerry hung up. Bradwell was not at Anderton's, which was all that Jerry wanted to know.

Riding to Anderton's by cab, Jerry was chuckling over that little stunt, but his laugh ended as he reached the apartment hotel. The first person he met was Ruth Anderton, who was tripping breezily from the doorway in very sporty costume.

Before Jerry could side-step the girl, she had him by the arm and was gesturing toward a roadster parked by the curb.

"You're coming out to Pimlico Racetrack with me!" she exclaimed, saucily. "You can't dodge me this time! I have a lot to talk about, and I know that you're no longer busy. If you try to get out of it, I'm going to follow your cab wherever you go.

"You promised me a date, and I'm tired of waiting for you to keep it. We'll have dinner when we get back, and then go to the Club Fiesta."

She meant it all, as Jerry could tell by the firm expression of her lips. Such persistence could mean trouble, particularly since Jerry had begun to remember, after calling Bradwell, that various people in Washington, specifically Malga Co., might be on the lookout for him. They might just happen to be watching Ruth, which would be very unfortunate.

"I'll have to see your father first," suggested Jerry. "You'd better come up, too, just so you can tell him that we're going to Pimlico together."

Ruth came along, a very confident smile on her face. She was sure that her father would have no objection if Jerry accompanied her to the races. He had spoken of Jerry and regarded him as a very earnest and capable young man. Had Ruth known what Jerry really had in mind for her, she wouldn't have been so blithe.

They found Anderton in his study, and Jerry had hardly shaken hands before he gave the reason for his visit. It was not the one he had originally planned, but a new one, which had struck him on the way up to the apartment.

"Mr. Anderton," said Jerry, bluntly, "I want you to prevent your daughter from annoying me any further."

Anderton's long face mingled outrage with amazement, while Ruth gave the most surprised gasp that Jerry had ever heard.

"She kept me away from Ardlan's," persisted Jerry, "twice, when I was needed there. The first time was excusable; it was the night of the holdup. But the second time, well" – he threw a glare at Ruth – "her deliberate falsehood prevented persons from getting to the house in time to save the professor's life!"

It was Anderton who glared at Ruth. Lies were something that he would not tolerate. Knowing it, the girl began to stammer that she didn't understand, so Jerry explained.

"Ruth said that Professor Ardlan was here," he told Anderton, "when he happened to be at his home. It was a ruse to bring me here!"

Brazenly, Ruth tried to climb out of it, by matching one falsehood with another, which proved riskier than she expected.

"I never told anyone such a thing –"

"Ask Raymond," suggested Jerry, by way of interruption. "He was the person involved."

## CRIME UNDER COVER

ANDERTON stepped out to question the secretary, while Jerry watched Ruth wilt into a chair. She hadn't supposed that Jerry would press the case so far, and if Raymond talked, disaster would be sure.

In fact, when he saw Ruth's horrified collapse, Jerry was almost sorry for her, particularly when her father came striding back. The purple hue of Anderton's face told that Raymond had confessed.

"Go to your room!" stormed Anderton, confronting his daughter. "I'll attend to your case later."

Ruth tried to rally, very weakly.

"But my car is downstairs," she began. "I was going to Pimlico –"

"You are going to bed!" roared Anderton. "To stay there until tomorrow! If you need any further persuasion –"

He was fumbling in the desk for a ruler, and Ruth, fearing more forcible chastisement, went flinging from the room, with her father calling after her that he was giving her just ten minutes to get to bed.

As soon as the girl was gone, Anderton picked up her car keys, which were lying on the desk where Ruth had dropped them.

"You can do me a favor," he said to Jerry, "by putting the car away. In fact, you can use it for the next few days, if you wish. The best punishment for Ruth will be to deny her the car, which will keep her from gadding about the way she has."

"I didn't mean to start all this," began Jerry. "Ruth didn't realize –"

"Save your sympathy for Raymond," interposed Anderton. "He thinks he's going to lose his job, but he won't. I shall confine my discipline to Ruth."

Going out, Jerry stopped at Raymond's desk to give the secretary some encouragement. Then, realizing that Anderton might wonder, later, at his abrupt departure, Jerry said:

"If Congressman Anderton wants to see me, I'll be at the World Wide Cafe at seven o'clock. You can call me there."

Outside, another car had pulled up in back of Ruth's roadster. It was Bradwell's limousine, and Jerry noticed it. Winstle was at the wheel, but he was busy with a little book.

Thinking that Winstle hadn't spied him, Jerry slid into Ruth's roadster and started the motor.

It happened that Winstle's book was a vocabulary of Esperanto; he was memorizing certain words, then looking up from the book while he repeated them. In one of those glances, Winstle observed Jerry in the roadster.

Ruth saw Jerry, too, from the window of her room.

Really fearful of her father's further wrath, Ruth hadn't lost a moment in obeying his mandate. She'd gotten to bed in so few minutes, that she, herself, was really surprised. Then, knowing that she had found refuge, she regained her wits, along with her breath.



## CRIME UNDER COVER

Comparing her present attire – a nightgown – with the sporty clothes that she had so hastily discarded, Ruth was piqued because she had heaped grief upon herself.

Hoping that she could wheedle her father into letting her return to circulation, Ruth remembered the car as a possible argument, so she went to the window to see if she had luckily placed it where she could later call attention to it.

The car was in sight, all right, but no longer an argument. Ruth gave an angry gasp when she saw Jerry at the wheel, driving the roadster away.

Her last hope spiked, Ruth glared angrily at the sunlight, wishing that she had gone to Pimlico without inviting Jerry. She should have taken it as a lesson to mind her own business, but she didn't. She hated the bright afternoon, but couldn't be glad when it ended, because she was to miss an evening at the Club Fiesta, too.

She detested Jerry and her father, and felt that she should despise everyone in sight; so she was applying the rule to Winstle, when she saw the chauffeur leave the limousine and come into the apartment hotel.

Perhaps Winstle had come to take her father to Bradwell's. Ruth decided to find out, as it might prove valuable, later.

Having at least four minutes left, she stole from her room, went along the hall and peeked into the reception room. She saw Winstle enter and speak to Raymond.

"Was Mr. Croft here?"

"He just left," replied the secretary. "Did you wish to see him?"

"Mr. Bradwell does," Winstle replied. "You don't know where Mr. Croft has gone?"

"He will be at the World Wide Cafe at seven."

HEARING the door of the study open, Ruth scampered back to her room and was in bed, appearing quite subdued, when her father appeared.

Anderton gave his daughter a lecture on the evils of telling lies and meddling in other people's business. Ruth not only listened patiently, but inserted a few sobs. The tearful attitude didn't deceive Anderton; he was no longer willing to be bluffed by his darling daughter.

Summoning the housekeeper, he told her to make sure that Ruth stayed in bed, and to give her crackers and milk for supper.

As soon as her father had gone, Ruth tightened her lips in defiance. Since she was being treated like a child, she'd show her father that she was a very smart one. She'd show Jerry, too, by appearing somewhere when he would least expect her.

Ruth was thinking in terms of seven o'clock.

So was Winstle. Back in the limousine, the chauffeur drove a few blocks, stopped at a telephone pay station and made a call. He mentioned Jerry by name; then spoke hesitatingly in Esperanto, referring to his little book.

"Li estos en la kafejo," informed Winstle. "Je la spe hora –"

He had to repeat the message to make it plain. Having finally impressed Malga with the fact that Jerry would be at the cafe at seven o'clock, Winstle added a few lame sentences as to how and where he had picked up the trail.

He listened to Malga's reply; remembering the words he didn't fully understand, Winstle looked them up in the book after he returned to the car.

Malga had commended him, and given some new instructions. Having received the day off, with Bradwell's approval, Winstle had made himself very useful. However, the chauffeur considered himself smart, rather than lucky, in having sopped at Anderton's on the chance of spotting Jerry Croft.

He didn't know, of course, that Jerry's chance fixing of Ardlan's Neutralizer had brought it all about.

Nor did The Shadow, when he stopped at Anderton's a short while later. The congressman had gone out, and not seeing Ruth's car, the visitor supposed that the girl had gone somewhere, too. Only Raymond was in the place, and the secretary was taciturn, particularly when he saw Cranston.

To have mentioned Jerry's visit would have been to bring up something that Raymond wanted to forget. He still looked worried, and The Shadow took it that Raymond feared his deception of the other day might become known.

Actually, Raymond was troubled because the storm had already broken. He didn't care to gloat over the deserved discipline that Ruth had received, because he feared that his job was still hanging in the balance.

So The Shadow left Anderton's without learning of the recent tempest, wherein Jerry had temporarily solved the minor problem of Ruth, only to produce much greater difficulties, which could produce a permanent effect.

Crossed circumstances, loose links in an important chain, were threatening to ruin The Shadow's plans beyond reclaim!

## **CHAPTER XVII. ONE WASTED AFTERNOON**

TWISTED in the Washington traffic, Jerry Croft pulled the roadster to a space beside the curb and paused to think things over. He had quite a lot to think about.

Not much more than an hour ago, he had been trying to hitchhike in from Riverview Corners. At present, he had a car, and a very sporty one, which would take him wherever he pleased.

The question was: where to go?

Back to the cabin on the Potomac seemed foolish, for his work was done there, and Harry Vincent probably wouldn't return for a while. No use in going back to the hotel from which Harry had checked out.

Driving around the boulevards of the capital to look for Harry's car would be even more foolish, for Jerry realized only too well that he, himself, might be the object of a search conducted by Malga, Baushon, Zuvar, and others.

He thought of driving out to Pimlico, but felt it foolish to waste time at the races. It would be nice to leave some stubs of racing tickets in the car, for Ruth to find when her father again allowed her to use the roadster; but the idea was too trivial.

Jerry didn't feel vindictive; he considered Ruth's punishment sufficiently severe, and was interested chiefly in the fact that she wouldn't be able to bother him until his present work was through, at which time he intended to leave Washington.

Beside, having recognized Ruth's shallow flippancy, Jerry knew that she would misinterpret anything that showed the slightest thought concerning her. Probably she would regard the ticket stubs as a billet-doux, rather than a comic valentine.

Reflecting, Jerry lighted one of the cigarettes that he had bought out at the Corners. He was dropping the pack into his pocket, along with the matches, when his mind flashed to Winstle.

Maybe the chauffeur had seen Jerry outside Anderton's. If so, the word had certainly been passed along. Malga and his tribe would already know that Jerry was in town, probably with something important on his mind; otherwise, he wouldn't have called at the congressman's apartment.

Not knowing that Winstle communicated directly with Malga, Jerry took it for granted that news of his advent must have reached Rufus Bradwell, the head man.

It was then that a daring idea struck home.

Bradwell certainly wouldn't have wanted men, like Malga, hanging around his pretentious home by day. Amid the scene where crime was hatched, Bradwell's would be an oasis. Say, better, a spider's web, with Bradwell the incumbent.

Spiders liked flies, but not such challengers as bumblebees, and Jerry, knowing all he did, felt that he could carry plenty of buzz and sting.

The right stunt was a trip to Bradwell's, to see the millionaire and tell him off for the crook he really was. Jerry was sure that he could deliver a verbal broadside strong enough to leave Bradwell flabbergasted for a while to come, but he'd confine it to criticism of such unethical practices as having Professor Ardlan murdered by undercover specialists under the leadership of a dirty spy, named Kurd Malga.

He'd leave Bradwell shivering in his oversized boots, but without any idea that Ardlan's Neutralizer was again in proper operation.

At least, such was Jerry's intent. He didn't realize that he'd be putting himself in the position of a tightrope walker on a high wire. He was more interested in getting to Bradwell's. He had the address, but how to drive there in a city where the streets ran every way at once, was quite a problem.

Jerry figured that a dizzy dame like Ruth Anderton wouldn't be able to find her way around Washington without a street map; though, at that, she'd probably have to ask someone to interpret it for her.

Anyway, the map ought to be in the car, somewhere; and it was. Jerry found it in a compartment among sortie lipsticks, powder boxes, cigarette holders, and other gewgaws.

LOCATING his present whereabouts, Jerry zigzagged for Bradwell's, getting off streets and onto avenues, then back and forth again, until he finally pulled into the driveway of a very imposing mansion that had

pillars and a porte-cochere.

The driveway split, and one portion went around the great brick mansion, so Jerry took that route.

As he parked the car, he noted a garage, large enough for three or four cars, well to the rear of the house; it had a driveway leading to another street, which Jerry remembered for future reference.

Ringling the bell of a rear door, Jerry was answered by a dumb-looking footman, who seemed shocked because any visitor could have arrived by the rather private door. When Jerry asked to see Bradwell, the man shook his head, so Jerry, figuring him a fellow too dumb to be a member of the spy ring, simply pushed him to one side and started through the hall.

Another horrified servant rushed up to stop him, and in the commotion, a squeaky voice from upstairs demanded to know what was the matter. Dodging between the blundering servant and a large grandfather's clock, Jerry saw a pale man at the top of the stairs. The fellow looked frail and studious, so Jerry reasoned that he must be Bradwell's secretary.

Without more ado, Jerry dashed upstairs coming upon the squeaky secretary as he was about to dart back to the door of a side room.

Sweeping the fellow aside, Jerry opened the door himself and strode into an office, where Rufus Bradwell was rising from behind a desk, holding a sheaf of letters which he had taken from a drawer.

For a moment, Bradwell's eyes showed glitter; then his squarish features took on their habitual smile. With his free hand, Bradwell waved the timid secretary back from the door and studied Jerry. To the visitor's annoyance, the grizzled millionaire seemed actually amused.

"So it's you," chuckled Bradwell, a raspy note in his deep tone. "Tell me, have you already given up your idea of making Ardlan's invention work?"

"What makes you think I had that idea?" snapped Jerry, suddenly on the defensive. "The Neutralizer went to storage, last night."

"Of course," agreed Bradwell, "along with some tanks of gas which would be very useful for experimental work. I happened to drop in at Ardlan's house again, today."

Jerry doubted that Bradwell had. He was quite sure that the millionaire had obtained his information from Malga, after the latter's bloodhounds had lost the trail through Vincent's trick of taking the coupe from the truck. While Jerry was groping for a logical reply, Bradwell made the most of the start that he had gained.

"Your intention was quite plain," he told Jerry. "You refused my offer of a job, because you wanted to vindicate Professor Ardlan. I, too, am grieved because of Ardlan's death —"

"Is that why you had him murdered?"

With that blunt query, Jerry thrust forward, intending to clear the desk and get at Bradwell if the grizzled man made a denial. The back step that Bradwell took made him appear fearful and defenseless, but he was neither.

With the jerk, Bradwell let go of the letters he had taken from the desk drawer. Spilling away, the sheets of paper revealed a revolver that he had brought with them, under cover.

Jerry stopped abruptly, for Bradwell, with the desk as barrier, had him quite at his mercy.

"Your impetuous entry gave you away," sneered Bradwell, "so I was properly prepared. Murder is a harsh word, Croft! Anyone who speaks so hotly requires a little cooling!"

Raising his sharp eyes a trifle, Bradwell saw the secretary peering through the doorway, and ordered:

"Summon the servants, Peterton."

THE two servants came up from the ground floor, with a third to boot. While they were binding Jerry's hands and feet, Bradwell approached the chair where the young man had been thrust, and demanded:

"In what storage house have you place Ardlan's invention?"

"I don't know," retorted Jerry. "If I did, I'd never let you know!"

"So?" Bradwell turned to Peterton. "I think you had better search Croft's pockets."

Peterton searched them, while Jerry was being gagged. Bradwell told the servants to put the prisoner in the wine cellar, and while they were lugging him away, Jerry turned his head to glare back. He was quite sure that Bradwell would never guess about the cabin on the upper Potomac.

It was three o'clock, for Jerry could hear the grandfather's clock striking, and every hour that Bradwell wasted would simply bring closer the time when Harry would learn that Jerry was gone, and inform The Shadow.

But Bradwell wasn't wasting time. Viewing the exhibits from Jerry's pockets, he came upon one that pleased him. It was the pack of paper matches that Jerry had received with the cigarettes. Its printed advertisement read:

E.G. THRENK

General Merchandise

Riverview Corners

Bradwell summoned Peterton and asked him if Winstle had telephoned lately. Winstle hadn't, so Bradwell said:

"I shall take the sedan, Peterton. Arrange to have dinner held until eight o'clock, because I shall not return until after dark. If anyone calls, simply say that I am out."

In the basement, in the dank darkness of the wine cellar, Jerry was getting very well cooled. He was sure that he heard a car go out from the drive, but supposed that it was Ruth's and that Bradwell was having someone take it away.

From then on, Jerry heard nothing except the regular quarter-hour chimes from the grandfather's clock on the floor above. Occasionally, he strove against his bonds, but the cords were too stout, too tight, and too many. He couldn't make headway with them.

At times, Jerry compared his present plight with Ruth's. She was probably moping because she had been put to bed, and fuming at the sunlight from her windows, hating the day because it was so glorious. If so, she

## CRIME UNDER COVER

didn't know how well off and how comfortable she was.

Jerry wished that he could get just the most trifling gleam of sunlight, and with the cutting bonds and the stone floor, he became more cramped and uncomfortable as the afternoon waned.

Perhaps the quarter-hours should have seemed shorter; but, as they paraded, they seemed longer apart. Hearing a half-hour chime, Jerry suddenly remembered that the hour before it had been six. His mind flashed ahead to seven o'clock. If he could only call the World Wide Cafe, somehow, and leave a message there on the chance that Congressman Anderton might phone!

To get to a telephone, he would have to escape, so Jerry made another effort at the bonds. For the first time, he rolled about, and in so doing lost his balance. Shoulder first, Jerry struck a thin post in the dark; one that supported a shelf.

There was a clatter; a bottle fell from its perch and smashed on the stone floor beside the prisoner. A wine bottle, as Jerry could tell from the smell of its splashed contents; but Jerry, though thirsty, didn't care about the loss of the beverage. Rolling over, he groped with his pinned hands and found a chunk of glass. With its edge, he worked at the rope.

He had luck. The piece of glass was long and jagged, as good as any knife, as proven by the cuts that Jerry gave himself. He had severed one rope in a few minutes, and the result gave him enough slack to get at the others.

Soon, Jerry was ungagged, and carving at the ropes that bound his ankles. Another chime from above told that he had managed it all in a quarter-hour.

GROPING, Jerry found a stairway and followed it to the top. He came upon a door, that gave outward several inches, showing a hasp and padlock on the other side. Dim light from a kitchen entry showed Jerry's wrists. At first, he thought that they were gory from the cuts, until he observed that wine, not blood, was largely responsible for the crimson stain.

Gathering himself, Jerry struck the door shoulder first, right by the padlock, hurling all his weight at what he hoped would be a weak spot. It was. The padlock gave, but the hasp broke and the door flung outward, taking Jerry with it.

He heard a startled shout from the kitchen; was on the point of turning back to the wine cellar to get a bottle as a weapon, when a door came open and one of Bradwell's servants confronted him.

Jerry went at the fellow, this time with punches. He had boxed while in college, and had a very short, neat uppercut which he used, hoping it would be easy on his fist. It was, but for the first time, Jerry saw what that punch could really do when he wasn't wearing a glove to deaden it.

The servant was on the floor, while Jerry was still looking for him, which was very good, considering that another man was springing in through the kitchen. The second servant thought himself a bit of a fighter, but Jerry got past his guard and jerked his chin with the same neat poke. It sagged this one as it had the first.

On the way out, Jerry ran into the liveried footman who had first admitted him, and flattened the lethargic fellow before he had a chance to resist. But Peterton, in the hallway, wasn't to be taken by surprise.

He came bounding in, swinging one of Bradwell's canes, which, in other hands, would have been an effective weapon. Jerry managed to ward off Peterton's swings and grip the fellow's arm. Then, as the secretary's pale

face came about, Jerry tried his one reliable punch, using the other hand for a change.

The way Peterton shut his eyes and wagged his head, was ludicrous. Letting him sag to the floor, Jerry went out by the rear door, saw Ruth's car where he had left it, and sprang to the wheel.

The key was still in the ignition, for in his earlier hurry to meet Bradwell, Jerry hadn't bothered to remove it. At this moment, Jerry's recollection of a car that departed earlier seemed so long ago, that he didn't waste time thinking about it.

He wanted to be away before Peterton and the servants rallied from the knockout punches he had given them. Combined, they would be formidable, and on guard against further uppercuts. So Jerry sped the roadster out through the rear driveway that led to the other street.

Seven o'clock.

It was dark along the streets, and Jerry knew that Harry was probably getting back to the Potomac cabin. But the only way to reach him was to go there, himself, which would mean a long delay before getting word to The Shadow.

Something would have to be done sooner, in order to trap Bradwell before the millionaire learned that Jerry had escaped and was out to denounce him.

Almost seven o'clock, the hour when Jerry had said that he would be at the World Wide Cafe. Perhaps Congressman Anderton would phone there, or even stop by. At least, Anderton would listen to Jerry's story, and probably believe it when he heard how Jerry had wasted an entire afternoon in Bradwell's wine cellar, under bondage.

It was worth the chance, so Jerry, picking streets as best he could, drove for the World Wide Cafe in hope that he could start the law's machinery working toward trapping Bradwell, Malga, and the rest – a task which Jerry, very regretfully, was taking from his friend, The Shadow.

### **CHAPTER XVIII. WITHIN THE LAIR**

THE same darkness that shrouded Jerry's flight from Bradwell's was furnishing cover for stealthy figures that approached the old house which harbored Malga's headquarters. But slinky though those figures moved, they were visible – with one exception.

An exception in two senses of the word, for the unseen glider was not a member of the spy ring, nor did he use the same entrance that the others chose.

He was The Shadow.

Malga and the rest were sneaking in through the doors of the house, whereas The Shadow was taking his own chosen route by way of the loose cellar window. Arriving outside the underground meeting room, he looked in to see Malga in session with some followers.

No more were present than at the previous meeting; in fact, the total numbered less. Freda was present, and so were several others, but such stand-bys as Baushon and Zuvar had not yet arrived.

It made The Shadow's position rather precarious, since newcomers might appear at any moment from the stairs behind him. Nevertheless, this was the situation that he wanted. His purpose was to learn as much as

possible before the entire ring assembled.

It was nearly seven o'clock, and from Malga's glances at a watch, The Shadow decided that seven was to be the zero hour. An odd fact, considering that many members of the clan were still absent, and that Malga's search for Ardlan's missing invention could scarcely have carried to the cabin on the Potomac where The Shadow had shipped the device.

When Malga spoke, in Esperanto, his words explained much, revealing details which had so far escaped The Shadow.

"The World Wide Cafe is no longer safe for us," Malga said. "Perhaps Croft knows it, and that is why he intends to be there at seven. The more he knows, the better" – Malga's tone carried sarcasm – "because our absence will enable us to decoy him away."

Not all of the listeners understood the word "trom plogi," which meant "to decoy," so Malga, repeated the last phrase, employing the term "logi," signifying "to lure," as a substitute.

That brief delay gave The Shadow a chance to consider why Jerry happened to be in Washington. He must have come of his own volition, since he was still at large, according to Malga's statement. There could only be one logical answer, and it flashed to The Shadow's mind just as Malga resumed.

"Once we have captured Croft," declared Malga, "we can persuade him to tell us where the machine is stored."

The words proved that spies had not found the Potomac cabin; also, that Malga had no idea that Jerry had already started to put the Neutralizer into condition. In fact, from his contemptuous tone, Malga had seemed to doubt that Jerry was capable of such a work. Malga turned to Freda.

"I have a task for you –"

Malga was reaching for the telephone, and it buzzed as he picked it up. Answering, he listened a few moments, then snarled:

"Parolu pli klare!"

He wanted the caller to speak more clearly, which indicated to The Shadow that Winstle was on the line. Such proved to be the case. After Malga received the report, he ordered the caller to come to headquarters; then turned to the others and told them to whom he had been talking:

"Gi estas Winstle."

They could tell that Malga had received unusual news. He gave the details; his speech, as The Shadow translated it, ran as follows:

"Winstle returned to Bradwell's," said, Malga. "He learned from the servants that Croft went there earlier and threatened Bradwell, who took him prisoner. Bradwell went away, intending to return at eight. But in the meantime – in fact, just before Winstle arrived there – Croft escaped."

THERE was a buzz of interest and speculation. Malga silenced the interruption, and the lull proved fortunate for The Shadow.



Hearing creaks from the stairs behind him, he glided away from the door and was in darkness, when two newcomers passed. After they entered the meeting room, The Shadow returned to the door and picked up the thread of Malga's talk.

"So we shall go first to Bradwell's," Malga was saying, "and be prepared for whatever may happen when he returns. No need to wait for the others. Winstle can stay outside and tell them where to go. As for Croft, we shall decoy him, as I said."

He turned to Freda again.

"Winstle tells me that Croft is quite infatuated with Ruth Anderton," declared Malga. "They are such friends, that she lent him her car this afternoon, probably because she was going elsewhere with her father. You have met Ruth Anderton, Freda?"

"Often, at the Club Fiesta."

"You could imitate her voice, as you have others?"

"Perfectly!"

Malga reached for the telephone, but pressed Freda back.

"Not yet," he said. "I shall first call the Anderton apartment, to make sure that the girl had not returned there."

There was no answer to the call, and as that became apparent, Malga's teeth showed wider in his lipless smile.

Meanwhile, The Shadow was considering this new factor, and from it, he knew that Winstle must have slipped badly on one point. No love existed, or was lost, between Jerry Croft and Ruth Anderton – certainly not on Jerry's side.

It made the matter of a car something of a riddle, even to The Shadow, though he felt quite sure that Anderton, rather than his daughter, must have been the one who supplied it to Jerry.

Hanging up, Malga dialed another number, speaking to Freda during the process:

"Tell Croft you have been captured. Coax him to the other headquarters, where we are going later. It is a perfect trap; he will be taken as soon as he passes the gates."

The World Wide Cafe was on the line. Freda asked for Jerry. Hearing his voice, she spoke in the dulcet but affected tone of Ruth Anderton – a perfect imitation, albeit Freda added a touch of breathless, repressed excitement. Her words, of course, were in English.

"I'm in terrible trouble, Jerry!" Her pause was very short. "I'm being held for ransom. By the same men, I think, who attacked Mr. Bradwell's car the other night... No, they don't know I've found the telephone – and listen, Jerry, there's a light in the room where I'm supposed to be... Yes, one that I can blink –"

"Of course I know where I am. The old Arramac Inn, which used to be a roadhouse. Anyone can tell you where it is. Come through the gates and around the building... On which side? The left. No, the right, as you come in... I'm sure the window is barred on the outside, which means that you can open it... Yes, on the ground floor. If you come alone, in my car –"

## CRIME UNDER COVER

The call ended abruptly, and Freda hung up triumphantly. She turned to Malga and said, in the other language:

"From his haste, I am sure that he will be there soon."

Malga was taking gas bombs from the shelves. He distributed them among his followers, assuring them that they soon would have occasion to use them.

This time, The Shadow's slide to cover was necessary for two reasons. Newcomers were not only coming down the stairs; Malga's larger crowd was moving from the meeting room. Supplying the new arrivals with bombs, Malga told them to come along. The whole tribe, Freda included, went up the stairs.

THE last footsteps had scarcely dwindled before The Shadow was in the meeting room, where Malga had left a light burning. A better view of the arsenal showed him that the departers had taken other weapons than the gas bombs.

Picking up the telephone, The Shadow called the F.B.I. and, in Cranston's tone, asked for Vic Marquette.

But it was the voice of The Shadow that Vic heard, when he spoke over the wire. Instantly, Vic was agog.

Small wonder. The Shadow was telling Marquette that Malga and the ring of international agents had two strongholds: one in Washington, the other outside. The Shadow named them: one, the house where he was at present; the other, the old Arromac Inn.

"Get men to both places," said The Shadow, "and be careful at the inn, because guards are hidden just inside the gates. Croft is starting from the World Wide Cafe. Flag him on the way. He thinks Ruth Anderton is a prisoner at the inn, but she is not.

"The town headquarters can be entered from a cellar window, the second one from the front wall, on the right side of the house. Be careful, in case some of Malga's men happen to be there. Check on a possible guard on the ground floor above the cellar stairs."

Finishing the call, The Shadow paused to listen; then called another number. He spoke to his contact man, Burbank, who had been with Cliff Marsland in the truck, the night before.

He gave Burbank instructions, to be relayed to the Washington police shortly before eight o'clock. Then, learning that Burbank had a report from Harry Vincent, The Shadow waited to hear it.

Harry had gone back to the cabin, to find that Jerry had left. Moreover, the door was broken open and the Neutralizer had been stolen. There were tire tracks of a large car close to the cabin. Other details, which Burbank was about to add, were left unspoken when The Shadow whispered:

"Report received!"

With that, The Shadow slid the receiver on its hook, but shifted his body to hide the action. At the same time, he began to speak again, but no longer in English.

"Bonega, Malga!" said The Shadow. "Mi helpos vin. Nur malsagulo pensis ke La Ombro estas amiko de la lego!"

Literally, those words in Esperanto meant:

"Excellent, Malga! I shall help you. Only a fool thinks that The Shadow is friendly to the law!"

There were slight sounds indicating that The Shadow was handling the telephone. In fact, one of his hands held an object upright; the other, something toward his ear. Those hands had come from beneath The Shadow's cloak. Instead of the telephone and its receiver, he was gripping a brace of automatics.

The Shadow's position resembled that of Hortland, the man whom he had once trapped. Creeping sounds proved that intruders were moving up behind him. But instead of sending, or even pretending to send, a call for outside aid, The Shadow was playing a much neater game.

He was faking a call to Malga, the chief these arrivals recognized, using the language that the spy ring had usurped, and actually arming himself while he played the bluff!

It had made his enemies hesitate; made them hold back the death thrusts that would have struck, had they not caught those words in the tongue they understood. Yet The Shadow knew that he was carrying their credulity to the limit; that this game could be quickly overdone. Doubt would follow swiftly.

The Shadow could be swifter. He was.

FLINGING upward, backward from the table, he swept his arms wide as he spun about. One man, he was sure, was at his right, and the back-swing of his automatic hooked the fellow.

It was Baushon; he didn't duck his bulgy head in time. The Shadow's right fist, weighted by the gun, flattened him effectively.

At the same instant, The Shadow's left hand, diving under his right arm, stabbed a shot to the rear. It was meant for a man on The Shadow's left, and it skimmed Baushon's teammate, Zugar. The spurt of the .45 made Zugar dive away. Both of The Shadow's thrusts were needed.

A knife clattered from Baushon's down-driving fist, as the bulge-headed man hit the floor. Another blade, tossed by Zugar's darkish hand, barely missed The Shadow. Zugar's dive was the reason for the wideness of the toss.

Instead of settling the pair, The Shadow made a lunge for the door to meet the guard from the floor above. He had followed Baushon and Zugar to the cellar and was aiming for The Shadow with a sawed-off shotgun.

Beating him to the shot could hardly suffice, for The Shadow knew the deadly spray of sawed-off shotguns at close range. With an automatic, he bashed the shotgun downward; when the short barrel blasted, its load found the floor.

On their feet, Baushon and Zugar sprang for the shelves, while The Shadow was wresting the shotgun from the guard. Another man came dashing into the meeting room as The Shadow and his grappling opponent reeled from the door.

The new man was Winstle; seeing that Baushon and Zugar were snatching bombs from a nearer shelf, he grabbed a somewhat larger one from a ledge inside the door.

Knowing that they couldn't gas The Shadow while they, too, were still in the meeting room, Baushon and Zugar fled, with Winstle dashing ahead of them. Outside the room, Baushon and Zugar turned to hurl the bombs back.

## CRIME UNDER COVER

A mocking laugh greeted them; they saw The Shadow almost upon them. He had slugged the guard; and had simply faked the last moments of the struggle to start them on their way.

For The Shadow wasn't anxious that a gas-filled "pineapple" should be dropped in the cramped confines of the meeting room while he still was there. Either by accident, or through sheer desperation, one or the other might have made a slip.

With the stairs ahead of them, and Winstle halfway up, Baushon and Zuvar decided upon flight. On the steps, however, they turned again to fling their bombs, for they were above the danger level.

Not for long.

The Shadow stopped those throws with bullets. His shots, his only way of saving his own life, clipped both his foemen and brought them bounding to the bottom of the stairs. The dropping gas bombs burst, with clouds of purplish smoke engulfing the pair and rolling upon The Shadow like a monstrous, clutching flow.

Deadly stuff, that gas, which was getting its preview earlier than Malga had planned. It snuffed the lives of Baushon and Zuvar in a trice.

From the top of the stairs, Winstle saw the spreading puffs and knew that the two spies were doomed. On the chance that the gas hadn't reached The Shadow, Winstle flung his bomb deep into the spreading cloud.

Winstle hadn't picked a gas bomb.

The thing he threw exploded. Its blast rattled the cellar, but didn't damage the meeting room; otherwise, the whole house would have gone up in gas and flame. The explosive bomb cleared the smoke away and showed the open floor. Winstle gave a very ugly gloat. He was sure that he had finished the career of The Shadow.

Hustling out by the ground floor, the only way he knew about, Winstle reached the limousine in front of the house. He couldn't afford to be seen in this vicinity, and he had no reason to wait around. The reserves that he was supposed to bring along – Baushon, Zuvar, and the guard – were dead.

Safely from the neighborhood, Winstle looked in the car mirror to make sure he wasn't being followed. The back seat of the big limousine was dark, very dark. Too dark, in fact, for Winstle couldn't even see the rear window because of the blackness that lined the interior of the car.

Winstle was halting at a traffic light, wondering why his eyes deceived him. Before he could guess, blackness enveloped him – living blackness: that of a cloaked foe, The Shadow!

A fierce laugh whispered in the chauffeur's ear as he succumbed under the pressure of black-gloved hands that closed around his windpipe.

Hidden by the cloud of deadly gas, The Shadow had reached his cellar window before Winstle flung the explosive bomb. Waiting in the limousine, he had allowed Winstle to drive off. Also clear of the territory to which he had summoned the Feds, The Shadow was taking over the limousine, and Winstle with it.

Good reason for The Shadow's mirth!

## CHAPTER XIX. THE DEATH SNARE

MALGA'S call to Anderton's apartment had not been answered, but it was not proof that no one was at home. Ruth was at home, though she was not receiving visitors or telephone calls.

She was in bed, with the lights out, another of her father's orders. He wanted her to see how pretty the bright glow of Washington was, when viewed from her window and not from the interior of a night club. After ten minutes or more, the telephone bell began to ring again. This time, Ruth was quite sure of an earlier guess: that she was the only person in the apartment. Her father was out, and Raymond had gone home, but Ruth was worrying about Martha, the portly housekeeper, who still should have been around.

Evidently Martha thought that Ruth was asleep, so had gone out a while herself, which was exactly what Ruth had hoped would happen. Of course, Martha had first locked all the bureau drawers and the closet, a ceremony which Ruth had witnessed.

All of Ruth's clothes had first been put away; at least, all that Martha knew about. But there were others, in an unpacked trunk in the big linen closet.

Stealing out, Ruth found that Martha had not locked the linen closet. She opened the trunk and brought out the clothes. They were outmoded, and had a scent of camphor, but they would do.

The trunk contained everything that Ruth needed, even a pair of old evening slippers. Rapidly, she dressed, hoping that she could still keep what she regarded as a seven-o'clock date with Jerry.

In Raymond's desk, Ruth found a few dollars in stamp money, took the cash along, and hailed a cab as soon as she reached the street.

Had Jerry Croft really cared a jot about Ruth Anderton, he wouldn't have been at the World Wide Cafe when she arrived there. Even without caring, he might not have stayed if he had trusted the facetious girl.

Jerry had fallen perfectly for Freda's bluff; he really thought that he had listened to Ruth over the telephone. But Malga had set the trap with the wrong bait.

In Jerry's opinion, Ruth's call was a hoax. Learning where he was, the girl had probably tried to square accounts by sending him on a wild-goose chase out to the Arromac Inn. Maybe she figured that he would get a night in jail for trying to break into the place.

So Jerry had resumed his dinner, still hoping that Congressman Anderton might appear. In that case, Jerry would suggest a trip back to the apartment, just to make sure that Ruth was still there.

However, Anderton didn't appear, and Jerry began to wonder how he could explain things if Ruth really had been abducted. After all, it would have been true to form for her to get out of bed and leave the house against her father's order. In that case, she really could have been grabbed by some of Malga's crowd.

The thing worried Jerry, so he went to a phone booth, when he finished dinner, and called the Anderton apartment.

There was no answer. Jerry came from the booth, very worried, and was stepping to the check room to get his hat, when a pair of hands gripped his arm.

Jerry stared, to see Ruth Anderton.

## CRIME UNDER COVER

SHE wasn't as nattily dressed as usual, and her hat looked too sensible to be of recent style. But those points made no dent on Jerry. All he noticed was the way Ruth greeted him, as though she had worked a very clever trick on someone and was proud of it.

"I'm famished," announced Ruth. "All I had for dinner was crackers and milk. Let's have a real dinner."

"Here?" queried Jerry. "Or out at the Arromac Inn?"

"At the Arromac Inn?" laughed Ruth. "Why, it's a horrible place! If I ever told anyone that I'd been there, I wouldn't expect them to believe me!"

She put it so snippily, that Jerry gave the statement an extra significance. He thought that Ruth was politely admitting her part in the hoax, but brazenly expecting him to accept such a thing as part of her special privilege. In her turn, Ruth didn't like Jerry's glower. She decided to be smart – too smart.

"You thought I'd stay where I was put," scoffed Ruth. "Didn't you? Well, I didn't! I'm here, so what are you going to do about it?"

She lifted her face to look at Jerry. Her eyes were defiant, her nose snippy, her lips too smartly confident in their tight smile. The thrust of her chin showed that she expected something. She was asking for it, so Jerry gave it: the uppercut.

Ruth had curled halfway to the floor before Jerry scooped her to her feet and held her there. No one else had witnessed the delivery of that farewell token. Beckoning to the head waiter, Jerry gained his aid in getting the limp burden toward the door.

"Congressman Anderton's daughter," confided Jerry. "She shouldn't have come out tonight. I don't think she's well, because she's supposed to be in bed. Looks like she's fainted. You'd better send her home in a cab."

The head waiter agreed. They put Ruth in a cab, and one of the hat-check girls was deputized to accompany her. The cab had gone and Jerry was turning back into the restaurant, when a firm hand clamped his arm. Jerry heard the familiar voice of Vic Marquette, but its tone was friendly.

"Glad you didn't start out to the Arromac," said Vic. "That call was a hoax."

"A hoax?" queried Jerry. "Then Ruth Anderton –"

"She didn't call you," interposed Vic. He hadn't seen Ruth's departure in the cab. "Someone else did. What I'd like to know is: who was in back of it?"

"Rufus Bradwell!" exclaimed Jerry. "He's in back of everything! He even bribed Malga and the spy ring to go after Ardlan's invention and murder the professor!"

"Bradwell?" queried Vic, amazed. "He wouldn't hire Kurd Malga. Bradwell couldn't afford to be mixed in any rough stuff."

Jerry exhibited his wrists, which still bore the markings of ropes and the scratches of glass.

"I got those this afternoon," he said, grimly, "while I was tied up in Bradwell's cellar. That's where he put me, so he could go and steal the Neutralizer."

"Is Bradwell back yet?"

"I don't think so."

Vic said: "Come on."

They got into Ruth's car and Jerry took the wheel, while the Fed pointed out the shortest route to Bradwell's. It led past the apartment hotel where Anderton lived, and Jerry smiled as he noticed the cab out front, and looked up to see a light in Ruth's window. He hoped that she hadn't gotten over her surprise.

In fact, Ruth hadn't. Martha was back, and the helpful housekeeper had undressed Ruth and put her into bed again, where the girl was just beginning to wake up. Ruth could not understand why Martha was chiding her, yet promising not to tell Ruth's father that she had gone out against orders.

Ruth couldn't remember having gone out. She felt sleepy, and she recalled a bad dream wherein a mule had kicked her in the jaw, so heavily that it still ached. She asked Martha if it was after seven o'clock, and when the housekeeper said yes, Ruth decided to go to sleep again and forget everything, including Jerry.

MEANWHILE, the sporty roadster was approaching Bradwell's. Hearing more of Jerry's story, and deciding that it meant something, Marquette decided that a car that showed so well at night was not the proper medium of approach. Jerry mentioned the rear route to Bradwell's garage, and Vic considered it.

"We'll stop on the back street," the Fed decided, "and go the rest of the way on foot. I think we can handle this alone, Croft. The available men have gone out on other jobs that I'll tell you about, later."

It sounded good to Jerry. When Vic asked if he had a gun, Jerry shook his head. He had left the revolver out at the Potomac cabin. So Vic produced a spare automatic, showed Jerry where the safety catch was, and told him to have the gun handy.

From the moment that they started their creep in through the rear drive, Jerry sensed danger. There was much shrubbery around Bradwell's, and each bush looked as if it hid a man. Fortunately, the drive was very dark, and its gravel was pressed hard, so that it didn't crunch.

But a new menace threatened as Vic and Jerry neared the front of the garage.

A car swung in through the rear drive. It was Bradwell returning. Ducking around the front of the garage, Vic and Jerry were again in danger of detection when the car came the same way.

Fortunately, Bradwell was dimming the lights, as the approach of the car opened a garage door by an automatic device. At the same time, the lights within the garage came on, and Vic, nudging Jerry, told him to follow.

Bradwell was stepping from his sedan, when the two men accosted him with drawn guns. He made a dart for the door, and they stopped him short. Then, suddenly, all three turned, as another car came spurting in from the front way. Its headlights were ablaze and showed a startling scene.

From bushes all around, men were rising, more than a dozen of them, their leader the skull-faced spy master, Kurd Malga!

In their fists, the members of the murder crew held bomb-shaped objects, which they were ready to fling at the victims in the garage doorway. The glare from the arriving car was the only light that the killers needed.

Then, by some freak of chance, death was postponed. The car came too far; its driver, applying the brakes, skidded it crosswise to block the front of the garage, temporarily separating trapped men from their intended killers.

The car was Bradwell's limousine; recognizing it, Malga shouted in English:

"You fool, Winstle!"

For answer, a laugh came from the car: a strange laugh, fierce, yet mocking. The mirth of a challenger who had brought rescue to doomed men when they needed it most.

The laugh of The Shadow!

### **CHAPTER XX. THE CURE FOR CRIME**

BIG automatics talked a sequel to The Shadow's challenge. The stabs of those guns came from the window of the limousine and pointed straight to unwary members of the spy ring, who had put themselves too much into the light. But those shots, delivered by The Shadow, were comparatively few.

Bombs were already scaling toward the limousine, to burst around it and send up purple wraiths of deadly gas that clouded the darkness like growths of evil, vaporous fungus. The tosses were coming from angles, as killers scattered, and there was no way of spotting the throwers, as The Shadow could when he saw spurts of enemy guns.

Moreover, The Shadow was in a fixed position, that he could not alter while still in the limousine. But it wasn't danger to himself that brought him from the big car, on the side toward the garage. Other men, who didn't know the deadliness of weapons being used against them, were in serious plight.

Vic, Jerry, and even Bradwell, the man they had forgotten, were shooting wildly, hopelessly, at foemen they could not see. When a big bulb smashed beside them and sent up its cloudy, purplish ghost, they didn't realize its menace until The Shadow seized them.

Vic first, then Jerry, went reeling into the garage under The Shadow's shoves. Grabbing Bradwell, The Shadow hauled him, too, ordering him to get the door shut, which he did.

Guns were talking now, outside, shattering the windows in the garage door, above the level of the defenders. Those shots seemed foolish, until their purpose became plain. A bomb came through the space where glass had previously been and broke upon the floor. This time, its purple cloud, vivid in the garage lights, spoke of menace.

Shying from it, Vic, Jerry and their companion, Bradwell, went in the direction of The Shadow's call. He was in the sedan that Bradwell had driven into the garage, and from the rear seat, he was promising safety. A slight promise, even when voiced by The Shadow, for more bombs were coming through the gap and striking the sedan, itself.

Seen from outside, the interior of the garage became a billow of magenta fumes that rolled like great sea waves. Enlarging, the massy cloud of death became so huge, so thick, that it was pouring back through the ruined windows.

Malga's crew, wild in their enthusiasm at having trapped The Shadow, were unwilling to desist. They had chucked a score of bombs into confines where a mere few would have sufficed.



## CRIME UNDER COVER

Shouting for them to stop, Malga ordered a few picked men to put on special gas masks, the only sort effective against the new supergas that the murderers had used. Peering through the window of his own mask, the chief killer yanked open the garage door and led his chosen squad into the preserves of death.

They were groping through the heavy curtain of purple, when Malga halted, frozen with amazement.

From the midst of that deadly mass – in fact, from the very center – came the challenge of the amazing master fighter who would not die. The laugh of The Shadow!

A waver of wind dwindled the purple veil. Around the sedan Malga saw a sphere of clear air, an isle of safety, in the very midst of a deadly sea. Blinking through the goggly window of the mask, Malga couldn't understand – until he heard a hum, to the accompaniment of whirs, that dispelled the silence of the clearing purple shroud.

The tones came from a strange machine that was in Bradwell's sedan. Strange to some who saw it for the first time, but not to Kurd Malga. The device was the famous Neutralizer, the legacy of Professor Ardlan, a bequest that was saving the lives of men who were threatened by the very murderers of the old inventor!

It was the Neutralizer, operating as Ardlan had known it could and had intended that it should!

AGAIN The Shadow's taunt, a signal that called for a reversal in the game of doom. The Shadow's own guns blasted, accompanied by the spurts of three others.

Of the masked invaders, only Malga managed to dart out to safety beyond the shielding bodies of his sagging men. Ripping off his gas mask, the master of the spy ring howled for the remainder of his followers to use their guns.

The command was too late. Through the last vestiges of the dispelling gas came the ace of all marksmen, The Shadow. He handled each .45 like a pet that spoke at call, nudging bullets right to their marks. With him were others, who seemed inspired by his masterly aim.

Malga's mob of international cutthroats was on the run, if such a term could be applied to frantic men who stumbled at one step and sprawled at the next.

One car had a machine gun. Malga reached it, took charge of the weapon himself. But as he swung the muzzle and reached for the trigger to put it into play, a blast of withering bullets hit him, rolled him headlong from the car, to hit the gravel on his skullish face.

That landing did not hurt. Kurd Malga was dead before he made it.

Sounds of motors told that a few members of the leaderless horde were away to flight. Sirens responded, announcing that police had taken up the chase. Burbank had made the call, as ordered by The Shadow, a tip to cover trouble in the vicinity of Bradwell's just before eight o'clock.

Turning, The Shadow went into Bradwell's garage, where the Neutralizer was registering with corresponding lights. It had identified the unknown gas and nullified the deadly vapor. Ardlan's device had proven itself a cure for crime.

But there was a greater cure, also present – the person who had operated the machine and then provided poison, in bullet form, for the defeated murderers.

## CRIME UNDER COVER

That human cure was The Shadow.

LATER, seated behind the big desk in his office, Rufus Bradwell made his plea, to a group of listeners who were not wholly sympathetic.

Vic Marquette was present, with Jerry Croft. So was Harry Vincent, who had arrived just after the battle, to find The Shadow's companions wondering where the black-cloaked avenger had gone.

Into the conference came two others, summoned by telephone: Congressman Anderton and his friend Lamont Cranston.

"I wanted Ardlan's invention," admitted Bradwell, "because I thought I had a rightful interest in it. He wanted to give it away, I wanted to sell it. Such was our bone of contention. You must believe me, though, when I swear that I would only have sold it to governments recommended by our own."

The listeners believed that much, in light of what had happened. So Bradwell continued.

"If the invention failed," he said, "I felt that I could influence Ardlan. So I hired some men who were questionable, I admit. One was Hortland; the other, Crumpf. Hortland was to cover things outside, while Crumpf found a pretext to get at the invention and put it out of order.

"Hortland worried me. In fact, I shelved him – until you came along, Croft" – Bradwell swung to Jerry – "and looked like an obstacle to my plan. No one really tried to kidnap you and Ruth. It was just a bluff to delay your return to Ardlan's."

Vic Marquette had something to say.

"That man Hortland," he stated, "happened to belong to Kurd Malga."

Bradwell gave a horrified stare. Such an expression, coming from him, could not be anything but real.

"By which I take it," put in Cranston, quite calmly, "that Malga was using Hortland to keep track of Bradwell?"

"Yes," returned Marquette. "I've talked to Winstle. It's lucky for you, Bradwell, that The Shadow kept him alive."

"You mean" – Bradwell sputtered – "that Winstle... was in it, too? Why, I thought –"

"That Winstle was in your confidence? He was. That is why Malga took him up, in Hortland's place. He had to have somebody who could pin things on you, Bradwell, when needed."

There was the slightest of smiles on the lips of Cranston. The Shadow had analyzed these facts long before. He had found the real crux early: why should Malga, anxious to destroy Ardlan's invention, have dallied as long as he had?

The answer was that Malga had preferred to let Bradwell try a while. He had supplemented the Crumpf failure through Trennick, another worker who had been drawn into the spy ring. Later, Malga had made a thrust himself, the night when he had murdered Ardlan. Even then, he had tried to keep the finger pointing to Bradwell. A master of undercover work, Kurd Malga preferred to keep his own tracks hidden.

## CRIME UNDER COVER

Things clicked suddenly to Jerry Croft. He should have realized, from the comparatively easy treatment he had received this afternoon, that Bradwell wasn't behind the game. The case was plain: Bradwell, who simply wanted to acquire the Neutralizer and bring it out as something new, was very minor when compared to the real head of insidious crime, Kurd Malga.

The Shadow had seen all that before, from the obvious indications. He had surmised that Jerry's trip back to Washington today could only mean that the Neutralizer was working, and that Bradwell, going out to seize it, would return with the device intact.

But Malga had not suspected that the device was in order again. Knowing that Malga's attack with poison gas would be against Bradwell, who had gotten possession of the Neutralizer, The Shadow had seen a sure way of defeating the blow, by depending upon the machine itself!

BRADWELL'S telephone bell was ringing. Marquette answered the call and held a brief conversation.

"We trapped the bunch that got away," said Vic. "They went right where The Shadow knew they would, out to the old Arramac Inn. We were holding the place when they got there."

Vic turned to Bradwell.

"You're a lucky man," said the Fed. "We've got to give you credit for bringing in the Neutralizer. You saved your own life, and some others, besides. By the way" – Vic paused, to look at the device with the tanks and lights, which was standing on a table in the corner – "do you still claim a share in this invention, Bradwell?"

Bradwell spoke sincerely, when he declared:

"Not a share!"

"I suppose you'll have no charges, then," said Vic to Jerry. "We've got the man we wanted, the real king of the game, Kurd Malga. You can give the Neutralizer to the government, just as Professor Ardlan wanted."

"With your permission, Croft," boomed Congressman Anderton, "I shall attend to that part."

With a smile, Jerry agreed. He knew that Anderton attended to things well, as he had done in Ruth's case. But a punch in a pinch could help, as Jerry knew.

In the case of the Neutralizer, Jerry was thinking what a mess of hopeless junk it would be at present, if The Shadow had not been around to insert the punches, with guns, whenever Malga and his tribe had tried their tactics.

There was a smile on the lips of Lamont Cranston. Only Harry Vincent knew that the silent expression stood for the laugh of The Shadow!

THE END

ESPERANTO

Esperanto, the artificial language which appears in the story, was devised in 1887 by Dr. Ludovic Zamenhof, of Warsaw, Poland. It was intended as an auxiliary tongue for international use, and its name, in the Esperanto language itself, means "One Who Hopes." That the hopes of Dr. Zamenhof have been fulfilled is proven by the fact that Esperanto is, today, in use throughout the world as a common mean of correspondence

and communication among persons of many varying nationalities.

Though Esperanto has not replaced existing languages, it should be remembered that such was not the intent of its originator. Its widespread usage, rather than any localized adoption of the tongue, is largely in keeping with its purpose.

The prime advantages of Esperanto are its simplicity and its regularity. It is not, as many persons erroneously suppose, a conglomeration of many languages, but rather a language of its own, incorporating the best features of other tongues, and wherever possible, the word roots common to most. From there on, Esperanto includes many helpful points specially invented for its own development, all to the advantage of its users.

Similar to the English alphabet, that of Esperanto modifies certain letters with accents, as a guide to pronunciation. Some letters take uncommon pronunciations, notably the letter "j," which is pronounced more like "y" – or, specifically, like "j" in the word "hallelujah." However, once the pronunciations are acquired, they are highly useful, because all words are pronounced as spelled, with accent always on the next to last syllable. Thus, once learned as a written language, Esperanto can easily be acquired as a spoken tongue.

The definite article "the" is *la*. There is no indefinite article "a." From there on, the forms of speech take regular rules. All nouns, or substantives, end in "o," as *domo*, a house; *pomo*, an apple. For plurals, "j" is added (pronounced "y") making houses, *domoj*; apples, *pomoj*. Adjectives end in "a," as *bona*, good; *granda*, great.

With adjectives, we observe the effective simplicity of Esperanto. The prefix *mal* is used to denote an exact opposite. Thus: *malbona* means bad; *malgranda*, small. For comparatives the word *pli* (pronounced *plee*) signifies more; while most is *plej* (pronounced *plehy*). Thus, from *bona*, good, are obtained: *pli bona*, better; and *plej bona*, best.

Verbs are no problem in Esperanto. An example shows why. From the verb *paroli*, meaning "to speak," we gain the following forms, by dropping the final letter "i." *Paroles* signifies "am speaking"; *parolis*, "spoke" or "did speak"; *parolos*, "will speak." The conditional "should speak" is *paroles*; while the imperative "Speak!" is *parolu!* Other verb forms follow similarly established rules, without any troublesome exceptions.

Adverbs end in "e." Thus, corresponding with *rapida*, quick, we find *rapide*, meaning quickly; likewise, *bona*, good, is paralleled by *bone*, meaning well. Pronouns, such as I, *mi*; you, *vi*; he, *li*; we, *ni*; they, *ili*, are regularly formed, and simply add "a" to denote possessives, as: *mia*, my; *via*, yours, etc.

One feature of Esperanto which has been unsoundly criticized, is its use of the accusative, or special form to denote the object of a verb. Thus, to say: "I saw the dog," would be "*Mi vidis la hundon*," the letter "n" being added to *hundo* signifying "dog."

The reason for this is that it allows for any arrangement of the sentence, thus enabling persons whose own languages have peculiarities to understand each other in Esperanto. The sentence above given could also be phrased: "*Mi la hundon vidis*," or even "*La hundon vidis mi*"; yet in every case it would be plain that "I saw the dog." If "the dog saw me," the words would be "*La hundo vidis min*," the added "n" for the object being applied to *mi* instead of *hondo*.

While not complete, the rules given above cover the fundamentals of Esperanto in considerable measure. But it should not be assumed therefrom that Esperanto can be acquired without considerable study. If the language stopped at this point, those learning it would be forced to acquire a tremendous vocabulary of words, as with most languages.

## CRIME UNDER COVER

To offset this; and other problems, the originator added many remarkable short cuts and systems, which, when once learned, reduce vocabulary to the minimum. These are mostly in the forms of prefixes and suffixes, which serve as further tabs for handy expression.

For example: *ad* symbolizes a continuation. Thus; *rido*, meaning a "laugh," can be amplified to *ridado*, for "laughter." The suffix *aj* indicates a concrete idea or substance; so from the *ovo*, "egg," comes *ovajo*, meaning "omelet." Thus, Esperanto, in a sense, becomes a language of ideas, in which it is often possible for a speaker to find the right word for an object even though he does not actually know the word in question!

An interesting illustration of Esperanto word pictures can be cited from the term *florbrasiketo*, which appears in the accompanying story, and which means "broccoli." The word *floro* means flower; *brasiko* is cabbage; *et* is a suffix signifying diminutive or small. Thus, *florbrasiko*, literally "flowering cabbage" gives the picture of a "cauliflower," while *florbrasiketo* gives the same picture, in smaller form, thus indicating "broccoli" to anyone familiar with the plant.

Similarly, *brasiketo*, indicating something like a midget cabbage, is obviously a "Brussels sprout." Thus from two words: *floro* and *brasiko*, come five words, which, once learned, cannot be forgotten, because they depend upon logical, well-pictured associations.

There are various textbooks of Esperanto on the market, and one, compact and paper bound, has gone into editions totaling sixty-five thousand. Dictionaries of Esperanto are likewise large in scope, but convenient in size, because of the vocabulary-reducing feature of the language.

Whether or not Esperanto is destined to replace existing languages, and play a strong part in international good will, as its founder, Dr. Zamenhof, hoped, is still a question. It is certain, however, that its simplicity and its appeal to the creative sense increase the interest of those who delve into the language, and that Esperanto, therefore, will always find new enthusiasts.

– MAXWELL GRANT.